

Is This Why Your Workouts Don't Work Out?

In the past two posts, I explained how poor nutrition and insufficient sleep are often to blame for the seemingly inexplicable halt in our fitness progress.

Many people find that simply adding a few hundred calories to their diets, keeping a food journal for a week or tweaking their carb intake is all it takes to propel them off their plateaus. For others, prioritizing an early bedtime and getting at least seven hours of sleep each night nudges them forward, and they begin to see results again.

This week, in the third and final installment of this series, I'm going to reveal Culprit No. 3, as well as my top tips for how to combat it.

Subpar Workouts

I have witnessed this scenario time and time again in my 13 years as a self-proclaimed (and proud!) gym rat:

"Unfit Fiona joins gym and gets plugged into a high-energy kickboxing class.

After just a week, Unfit Fiona feels phenomenal (say that five times fast). She's sleeping better. She's thrown out all the processed and sugar-laden junk from her pantry. She's bought new Nikes and a smaller pair of yoga pants than what she normally wears because she's so confident the weight is going to melt off of her.

After six weeks, Unfit Fiona is a whole new woman. She's attended her class religiously, slept like a baby, and eaten like a sugar-shirking cave woman. She's dropped 30 pounds, just 10 pounds away from her goal weight.

Two weeks later, the scale hasn't budged. She tries cutting back on her calories, but that only makes her tired, cranky, less motivated to work out, and a respectable online article tells her that's not the right tactic.

For two weeks, she ups her class frequency from two to three days a week to five, and still, her clothes fit exactly the same. She can almost hear her archnemesi, the scale, laughing at her when she steps on.

What's Fiona to do?

The answer: *something different.*

In Fiona's case, she needs some weightlifting in her life, as do the vast majority of women I've heard from who are frustrated and confused by their weight loss woes. They had a good thing going for so long—why did it stop working?

I've written previously on why women should lift weights (and heavy weights, at that), but for time's sake, I'll offer the key points of that article:

Weightlifting Raises Your Metabolic Rate

Your metabolism is the amount of energy your body needs to sustain itself. Because muscle requires calories (aka energy) to survive, increasing your muscle size and density will increase your metabolism.

Since we work against a high degree of resistance with heavy weights, we create tiny muscular tears throughout the body. We expend a greater number of calories post-workout to repair those tiny tears, thus increasing your overall calorie requirements. Lifting weights will raise your metabolism long after you're finished. In fact, experts estimate that your metabolism stays elevated for up to 15 hours after you train. Again, this is because lifting strains your body so much that it needs extra time to recover.

Greater Muscle Definition

The next benefit to lifting heavier weights is that you'll see greater overall muscle definition. When you lift a light weight lots of times, as most women do (no joke, I once spotted a woman doing a three-pound tricep kickback with one hand while chatting on her cell phone with the other for a solid two minutes), the muscles are barely challenged. As a result, your muscles won't feel any need to adapt (grow) since they can easily handle what you throw at them.

Functional Strength for Daily Life

The final benefit you achieve by lifting heavier weights is that you improve functional strength capabilities. Since you get *much* stronger by lifting heavier weights, everyday activities will get much easier over time. You won't need to call your boyfriend to move a couch or ask your husband to hoist the bag of dog food out of the trunk. Muscularity also means a lower chance of injury if you participate in sports or other activities.

If you can identify with Fiona, my first suggestion would be to add a 45 to 60-minute weightlifting session to your workout schedule two to three times a week. Consistency is key here, so don't expect to see results if you only pump iron for a week. Give it six to eight weeks and I can almost guarantee that stubborn plateau will be nothing but a speck in your rearview mirror.

If you've been lifting weights for a while and you've stopped seeing progress (we'll call you Frustrated Frank), I would be willing to wager the simple reason is that you haven't switched up your rep scheme or upped the poundage of the weights you're lifting. Here are a few signs you need to increase the load:

- 1. The dumbbell feels like a Barbie doll.** If your weight feels light, that's a problem! According to certified personal

trainer Terry Asher, owner of , “Lifting a weight that is too light for you is counterproductive to your strength gains, fat loss and overall health.” In fact, Asher believes “you should not train with a weight that doesn’t require your full concentration and strength to move safely before you even start your sets.”

In other words, there’s a reason it’s called *working* out—it shouldn’t resemble playing!

2. You don’t feel the burn. If you don’t feel your muscles contracting with every rep, it’s time to up the weight. According to certified trainer Kendall Wood, NASM and coauthor of *Core Fitness Solution*, “If you’re not feeling each contraction on every rep of your workout, you’re not doing everything you can to spark positive changes in your body shape, fat loss or strength gains. A real workout means putting in effort in the gym, and that means feeling the burn while you’re training and subsequent soreness the next day,” Wood said. “If you’re not feeling it, that’s why it isn’t working.”

3. You ain’t skeered. When our CrossFit athletes are trying to decide how much weight to put on their barbells for a particular WOD (“workout of the day”), I like to encourage them with this one-liner: “Do what scares you.”

If they’re confident they can do 30 repetitions of 225-pound deadlifts in under two minutes because they’ve done it before, it’s not scary—it’s comfortable. If they approach a 135-pound power snatch without pause, it’s not scary—it’s comfortable. And comfort is the antithesis of progress in every arena of our lives. Get mad at it. Break up with it and block its number. Shed not one tear nor eat one chocolate over it. It never loved you anyway.

Just before my remote trainer, Michael Prince, sends me a workout (he lives five hours away and texts me my routines), I

always feel a few butterflies fluttering around in my stomach. Without fail, I feel a little scared to see what will pop up because **he is always pushing me past my limits**, and as a human being, leaving my cozy comfort zone is often a Herculean task. But you know what? I'm the better and stronger and fitter for it, mentally and physically. And you will be too!

Here's the bottom line: Whether your goal is losing weight, defining and shaping muscle, gaining strength and muscle mass, or running faster, lifting weights is essential if you want to progress. Sooner or later, coasting through workouts will run you straight into a plateau. Gradual increases in weight, tweaks to your rep schemes, and new exercises will ensure you're always improving and having fun with your fitness!

I hope you've found this week's article helpful! If you have, please leave a comment below or tweet me [@dandersontyler](#)! Let me know how you've plowed through plateaus, or whether you're going to use one of the above tips to do so soon! {eoa}

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3 Things That Are Guaranteed to Wreck Your Faith

For the last several months, I've had the privilege and challenge of being on the teaching team for a second grade Sunday School class.

Over the course of the last 15 years, I've had the chance to be in a lot of rooms, lead a lot of discussions and preach a lot of sermons. This is one of the most intimidating. But it's also one of the most encouraging.

It's encouraging, not only because of what we get to see happen in these children, but because of what I hear myself saying every single week. We talk to the kids about the promises of God and about how we can trust Him to make good on what He says.

We can take God at His Word because He always keeps His promises. True enough, some of these promises are easier to accept than others, both for the children and for the teachers. But regardless of our opinions or feelings in the moment, they're all true.

Every last one of them.

3 Things That Hurt Our Faith

Believe in God's promises. Sounds simple, right? But it's not. Maybe even more so for adults than children.

There are certain things that can erode our confidence in either God's ability or His willingness to keep His promises. What are those things?

The easy answer is *circumstances*. We encounter times of difficulty and trial, and we think that those circumstances chip away at our resolve to believe. While that might be true, there are other things, too, that erode our confidence. But worst of all, they also can hurt our faith, if they go unchecked.

1. A lack of scripture grounding – One of the most basic reasons our confidence in God's promises erodes is that we simply don't know them, or at least we don't know them as we should.

If we believe that “God helps those who help themselves” is a promise of God, then we’re wrong. God didn’t say that, but Benjamin Franklin might have. That, of course, is an obvious example, but there are other ways in which we display our lack of scriptural grounding. We might still believe that we’re on an exchange basis with God—that He’s going to reward us in this life with ease and prosperity when we give Him our acts of righteousness. Though less obvious, this, too, is an example of our lack of scriptural grounding.

In order to believe the promises of God, we must first know the promises of God. And we must know them as they are, not as we would wish them to be.

READ: How to Stick with Your Daily Bible Reading

2. Selfish ambition – Ambition can be a very good thing. We are to be ambitious in the things of God, “reaching forward to what is ahead” (Philippians 3:13). But ambition can also be very selfish. That’s exactly what Paul warns against in Philippians 2:3-4. Ambition is one of those things that can erode our confidence in God’s promises and hurt our faith. It happened to Moses.

You might remember that Moses had the right idea. He wanted the freedom of his people, the Israelites, from their bondage in Egypt. He was so passionate about it, in fact, that he killed an Egyptian and hid his body in the sand (Exodus 2:12). Right idea—wrong timing. Instead of trusting that God would deliver His people, using Moses as God’s instrument, in the right time, Moses took matters into his own hands. And we do the same thing, all the time.

Discontent to trust and wait, we want to make “it” happen on our own. So we move, we act, we pursue—and though we might have the right idea and even some good intentions, we find all those efforts going nowhere. Our ambition has led us down the road of supplanting the work of God for our own. As a result,

we might well find ourselves like Moses, hiding in a desert of doubt about whether or not God is actually true to His word.

3. Short-term memory – The Psalms were the songbook of the children of Israel. It was the tool of their worship, but it was also one of their tools for theological education. Through these songs, God's people were reminded again and again of who God was for their ancestors and who He still was for them.

There is a near constant refrain through these songs—it's the call to remember.

- Remember the Lord.
- Remember the Red Sea.
- Remember the great acts, signs and wonders.
- Remember the past and be encouraged in the present.

Sometimes our confidence in God's promises wanes because we have incredibly short memories.

We fail to look back with gratitude on what God has done in the past—the way He has delivered us, provided for us, and showed Himself to be good and wise through all the particular twists and turns of our various stories. And of course, we forget to look back to the cross—the ultimate and lasting demonstration of God's love, wisdom and trustworthiness.

It was there, once and for all, that He let us know that He has and will keep His Word to us.

Have You Taken Matters Into Your Own Hands?

If you find today that your confidence in God's promises is being chipped away, then get in the Word.

Read His promises. Check your ambition.

Have you taken matters into your own hands? Then spend a little time thinking about who God has been for you in the past, so that you can remind yourself of who He is ... even now.

{eoa}

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‘Finding Dory’ Just Keeps Swimming With A Lot of Heart, Laughs

Thirteen years after *Finding Nemo* created a big splash—grossing \$936.7 million worldwide, winning the Oscar for best animated picture and becoming a modern classic—Pixar Animation Studios finally returns to the ocean with a sequel, *Finding Dory*.

The long-awaited follow-up to the 2003 smash hit cleverly flip flops the premise of the original. In *Finding Nemo*, the story was about a parent searching for his child. In *Finding Dory*, it’s now about a child looking for her parents and herself eventually.

The sequel is sweet, funny and will likely leave some moviegoers all choked up as it dives deep into the importance

of family, friendships and never giving up.

Featuring the tagline, “an unforgettable journey she probably won’t remember,” *Finding Dory* focuses on the memory-challenged, little blue tang fish voiced by talk show host Ellen DeGeneres, who searches for her own family—if she can remember what they look like and where they could possibly live.

The computer-animated film reunites Dory with Marlin (voiced by Albert Brooks), the clownfish father of Nemo (this time out voiced by Hayden Rolence). *Finding Nemo* director Andrew Stanton returned to direct *Finding Dory* alongside co-director Angus MacLane. Stanton also does voice work, returning as cool turtle Crush, while Bob Peterson is back as Mr. Ray, the teacher of the reef.

The story begins 12 months after *Finding Nemo* ends, and Dory remembers that she has a family and wants to set out to find them—even as she battles an endless wave of amnesia.

Accompanied by Nemo and Marlin, Dory must somehow make the trek to the Marine Life Institute (MLI) of California—a large rehabilitation facility for marine life—where she was born and raised. Patterned after the famous Monterey Bay Aquarium in Monterey, Calif., MLI is basically a theme-park conservatory watched over by the hilarious recorded voice of Sigourney Weaver on the loudspeaker.

When Dory arrives at MLI, she hooks up with new friends, including a white beluga whale who can’t echolocate named Bailey (Ty Burrell), near-sighted whale shark Destiny (Kaitlin Olson) and cranky octopus Hank (Ed O’Neill).

The MLI’s fish-friendly mission of “Rescue, Rehabilitation, Release” catapults the movie into a slapstick adventure because Hank will do anything to remain in captivity rather than being returned to the wild. In order for this to happen, he needs a special tag marking him to be shipped to a

Cleveland aquarium, which Dory has and would gladly give him if he helps her find her parents.

Hank's wide-ranging physical movements, which includes lots of shape- and color-shifting along with wry comments keenly delivered by O'Neill, generates most of the film's laughs. Idris Elba and Dominic West also provide some humor in voicing a pair of lazy sea lions.

With the film's title, it's a given and not a spoiler that Dory will reunite with her parents, Charlie (Eugene Levy) and Jenny (Diane Keaton), but the fun, touching and poignant part is how they come together as one big family.

Finding Dory is a family-friendly movie that kids will love with even better animation than *Finding Nemo*, likable new characters, some very heart-felt scenes, but not as amazing and brilliant as the first movie.

"I'm very aware how beloved the first film is, and I'm very grateful for that," Stanton recently said of the new undersea voyage. "You don't think you are necessarily striking lightning twice all the time. The only thing I could put my chips in was that it was a story that I would emotionally want to tell even if there wasn't a film before it. I sat on this idea internally for close to a year, letting only a few people know I was thinking about it. I knew the minute it got out I wouldn't be able to put the horse back in the barn."

Translation, Dory just had to keep swimming for this sequel to happen.

Content Watch: While *Finding Nemo* was rated G, *Finding Dory* is rated PG for mild thematic elements. There is at least one frightening and intense scene, which features a large squid attacking Marlin and Nemo that could be scary for small children. There is talk of worshiping a fish. Overall, the film is very kid friendly and adults will get a snicker or two from some cultural references.

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Why the Threat of Divorce Is Hard to Spot Among Churchgoing Couples

Before a divorce, churchgoers in troubled marriages look a lot like their happily married counterparts at church—participating, serving and leading at similar rates.

After a divorce, the differences can be stark. Twenty percent have dropped out of church entirely. In many cases, their children have stopped attending too. A third give less to the church than they did before. Their churches report leadership voids and fractured relationships.

Yet pastors may have difficulty helping couples save their marriages because churchgoers on the brink of separation often keep quiet at church about their marital woes.

Those are among the findings of new research by Nashville-based LifeWay Research. The study, sponsored by Focus on the Family, surveyed Protestant pastors, churchgoing Americans in healthy marriages, and churchgoing Americans who divorced in the past five years.

The research points to a problem with church culture, said Scott McConnell, LifeWay Research vice president. If couples are unwilling to discuss marital struggles at church, they don't get the help they need.

Many couples also may not realize help is available. While most pastors say their churches offer counseling referrals and

other marriage aids, fewer churchgoers agree.

“Either pastors are overstating what they’re doing or not everybody is noticing what their church is doing,” McConnell said. “There are clearly gaps in communication when people don’t even know help exists.”

Divorce is a widespread issue for Protestant churches. Forty percent of pastors say at least one couple in their church separated or divorced in the past year.

Yet among regular churchgoers—those who attend once a month or more—church involvement offers few clues to distinguish troubled marriages from healthy ones. Three months before their separation, 7 in 10 regular churchgoers who divorce are attending church once a week or more. For those in healthy marriages, the rate is 87 percent.

The two groups also report similar levels of involvement in small groups at church (46 percent for those who divorce vs. 41 percent for those in healthy marriages), serving in community ministries (34 percent vs. 31 percent), and positions of responsibility at church (39 percent vs. 45 percent).

“Many of the people who end up divorcing are average churchgoers,” McConnell said. “You’re not always going to see it coming.”

He noted one exception—regular churchgoers whose spouses do not attend. Eighteen percent of those who divorced say their former spouses never attended church three months before their separation. In contrast, just 2 percent of those in healthy marriages say their spouse never attends.

“It is courageous and often uncomfortable for a married individual to attend church alone, but it is also an indicator they’re going two different directions in their lives,” McConnell said.

Effects of Divorce

After divorce, 8 in 10 still look like average churchgoers. They may switch churches, but they're as involved as ever.

Twenty percent, though, no longer attend church—and the loss among their children is even higher. Among those with children who attended church before the separation, 35 percent say at least one child no longer attends.

Nearly half of those who divorce (47 percent) leave the church they attended before their separation. Rarely will both members of a couple remain at the same church after a divorce (10 percent), McConnell said. He suggested helping spouses find new places to worship so they don't step away from church entirely.

A third of those who divorce (32 percent) say they give less to their local church than they gave before their separation. More than a quarter of this group stops giving at all.

Pastors say the repercussions of divorce affect others as well. Thirty-one percent say divorce has fractured other relationships in the church, and 16 percent say it created leadership voids. About 1 in 10 say divorce has hurt the church's reputation (11 percent), halted its momentum (10 percent), or disbanded an adult small group or Sunday school class (9 percent).

"The vast majority of churches do not have an effective marriage ministry," said Greg Smalley, vice president of Focus on the Family. "In fact, most pastors are so busy doing other things, they often don't consider the negative impact failed and mediocre marriages have on the mission of their church.

"The church should be the number one distribution center for healthy marriages because of its unique role. Eighty percent of marriages began in church, giving the church a unique opportunity to build a relationship with couples that can last

throughout their marriage.”

Culture of Silence

Nearly 8 in 10 churchgoers—and 94 percent of pastors—say their church is a safe place to talk about marital difficulties.

Experience, however, tells a different story. Among those who divorced, only 48 percent discussed their marriage problems with the lead pastor. Even fewer talked to anyone else, such as another staff member (13 percent) or a member of a small group or Sunday school class (11 percent).

Thirty-one percent told no one—a troubling sign of church culture, McConnell said.

“If churches are dogmatic and not realistic about relationships, then those who have trouble in their marriage are never going to tell anybody,” he said. “That’s a wake-up call to the church.”

Offering Support

Pastors say their churches offer a wide range of marriage support services, including resources such as books and videos (77 percent) and referrals to professional counseling outside the church (75 percent).

Many churchgoers, however, seem unaware of the services. Just 38 percent of those in healthy marriages and 21 percent of those who divorced believe their church offers books and videos about marriage. Thirty percent of those in healthy marriages and 23 percent of those who divorced think their church refers people to outside counselors.

Churches can be more effective by being more proactive, McConnell said. He pointed out that two-thirds of pastors say their church has no lay leader responsible for marriage ministry, and 43 percent have no written plan.

“As much as churches already do things to help with marriage, there is still a huge opportunity to do more and to do it better,” he said. “I think the typical pastor would check the box and say, ‘We’re already doing this.’ And yet when we look deeper, there’s so much more that could be done.”

Deeper involvement by churches is critically important, Smalley said. “While the impact is not always immediate and obvious, nothing can negatively affect a church’s ministry and mission, and thwart future health, more than hurting marriages and divorce.” {eoa}

***Lisa Cannon Green** is senior writer for Facts & Trends magazine.*

For the original article, visit .

A Simple Healing Story Jesus Would Be Proud Of

New Testament Christianity is being restored to America. Read this testimony by George Medellin and be inspired. Say, “I can do this!” And begin looking for people who are hurting and offer to pray for them.

Lord, give us faith to share Your power as a demonstration of Your love to those we meet today!

George’s Story

I’m cleaning a roof in Seattle today, getting a good upper back and shoulder workout! A petite lady working for the post office comes by and starts asking me about my work.

We chat for a bit and I notice she walks slightly bending forward. I ask her, "Are you in pain?"

"Oh, yes, every day."

I respond, "I'm a Christian. Sometimes when I pray for people they get healed. May I pray for you for God to heal you?" She responds with a smile, "Oh, yes!"

I ask her to gauge the pain on a scale of one to ten, one being a little pain and ten being tremendous pain. She rates her pain at an eight.

I look with the eyes of my heart and see the Holy Spirit flowing like a river on her. I pray something like this, "I break the curse of pain over you in Jesus' name. I release peace and healing to your body. Pain, go in Jesus' name."

I again ask her to rate her pain on the scale of one to ten. "No pain," she says. "Thank You, Jesus!" I think to myself. She has to go back to work.

I wonder if I will ever see her again and if the healing will stay. Several minutes later she yells out from across the street, "George! The pain is still gone!"

She has tears in her eyes. {eoa}

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For the original article, visit [.](#)

5 Things to Do When Tragedy Strikes Your Family

It was a sunny September day in the year 2000, and I was driving home from work, ready to clean up and go to a prophetic conference with friends. I was about to turn on the dirt road to go up the hill when I saw my parents' vehicle turn on the concrete road and slow down toward me.

Seeing this, I rolled down my window as I saw my father do. He said, "I'll need you to park your truck and get in with us, son." Without saying anything, I followed his instructions and got in to the rear passenger side door and said, "OK, I'm prepared for the worse."

My dad said, "It's the worst ... deputies came today and said they found your brother Eli." Upon saying this, his voice seemed to fade in the distance. It was like I was punched in my stomach and lost my breath. I immediately reached forward to touch my mom's shoulder, who then held my hand.

Everything else seemed to be on auto-pilot and in slow motion as shock affected each one of us. We had to deliver the devastating news to my grandma, and then make some phone calls in order to pick up my little brother from a friend's birthday party to tell him the heartbreaking story.

From there we went to my oldest brother's house and waited for him to return from work. While waiting there, I had to make a phone call to my twin brother who was on the east coast, serving in the Navy. I told him the tragic news over the phone, and I started to cry, hearing his response. He was released on emergency leave orders to help us prepare for the funeral service. Our family would never be the same again.

Suicide has been said to be like someone throwing a grenade into the middle of a family and expecting them to put

everything back together again after it explodes. In our particular situation, Eli had fought drug addiction since he was 11. He received treatment and was sober for one great year, but relapse is commonplace.

I prayed often for him, and after the drugs damaged him severely, we tried to have him placed in a psychiatric hospital. But after a court hearing, they released him. A few months later, we received the devastating news. Even though I was asking why God didn't answer my prayers, all I could do was run to His presence in the secret place of prayer, church revival meetings and street ministry.

I was a part of a ministry team that saw people receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit as well as salvation wherever we went. I shared my situation and the love of God with anyone who would listen. People walked in to our services saying they felt something urge them to stop by, we would pray for them, and they would be filled with the Spirit. Although I was in deep grief, God was using my late brother's story to bring people to Him.

During this time of deep pain and turmoil, I learned that if tragedy strikes your family, you should:

- **Honor your loved one's memory.** Write or draw about them, give photos to other people and share personal memories with friends and family. Laugh and cry as you remember them.
- **Turn your loved one's personal story into one that can help others.** Some people provide scholarships in their loved one's name or raise awareness and share their story wherever God opens the door, whether it is at schools, AA meetings or churches. Share the story. It will help others and also be like healing balm on your heart.
- **Pray, and pray a lot. After a tragedy, you will need the Holy Spirit more than ever before.** It is a difficult

road to travel, but He is there with you as you navigate everything.

- **Surround yourself with a community of people who pray and love you.** I am so thankful for the team we had, who carried the responsibility of ministry and were a constant encouragement to me, laying hands on me, praying and seeking God during my grief.
- **Give God your emotions.** He created them and He can handle your rage, anger, sadness and tears. My emotions were similar to a roller coaster ride. When tragedy strikes, you may not be able to state where you are emotionally, but give everything to God. He will comfort you (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

It has been nearly 16 years since we received the devastating news. Because of this experience, I vowed to do anything I could to be used by God and help bring others out of darkness. Some of the emotions I felt then have dulled or faded, while other emotions seem fresh at times. But no matter what, I ask the wonderful Holy Spirit to help me and He never fails.

Life has its challenges and difficulties, but when you walk with the Spirit of God, He is with you through it all. John 14 says, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, that He may be with you forever: the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, for it does not see Him, neither does it know Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you fatherless. I will come to you" (John 14:16-18, MEV). {eoa}

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his country.

3 Ways to Break Down Barriers With Your Teenage Daughter

When she was a little girl, it seemed a lot easier, didn't it? Your conversations with your daughter just started more naturally, your interests seemed more aligned, and you could buckle her into her car seat and go.

Now you've got a young woman on your hands. She's still your little girl, but ... well, different.

She's full of opinions and her own way of looking at the world. She makes some great choices and some terrible ones. On top of all that, she's turning into a woman. It's beautiful to see, scary and just plain *different*.

These days, it can be hard enough just to get a normal conversation going. Even in easy situations, we wonder, "How do I connect with my daughter? What do we have to talk about? How does this thing go again?" But now add another layer of complication: You've got a tough moment on your hands.

Something's gone wrong somewhere. She is going down a dangerous path or something bad has happened to her. You're a dad staring across the room at your sweet daughter, knowing you've got a conversation to start. Having difficult conversations like these can be scary. What are you going to do? What do you need to keep in mind? Want a few suggestions?

Here are three to consider:

1. Figure out how to make it safe. There may be an impending

danger to your daughter that needs immediate corrective action. Her life or well-being might be compromised. In that case, attending to safety means speaking quickly and directly. Name the issue. Put out the fire.

Sometimes, safety means making an effort so that your daughter is as OK as possible with the conversation. She might need a moment's preparation to collect herself. She might need privacy, in which case you would take her on a walk instead of having the conversation in the middle of the family room. Maybe she just needs reassurance that you're on her team, that you really are there to help. What will it take to help her feel safe in this conversation?

2. Assess what kind of help or intervention your daughter needs. All kinds of things can happen, and one conversation doesn't fit all scenarios. There's a big difference in starting conversations about bad choices your daughter might be making versus trouble she's getting into (at home, or at school, or with the law) versus her being in over her head and needing help (eating disorders, pregnancies, being bullied).

At one end of the spectrum, you might need to help your daughter notice the possible consequences of her actions. At the other end of the spectrum, the consequences of her actions might be all she's able to see. You might need to communicate to your daughter that the love you have for her won't go away, no matter what. You might need to find a balance of truth and love that best fits the needs of the moment.

3. Be the adult. This means being both proactive and mature. Your daughter has between 13 and 18 years' worth of experience in living. You have more. She doesn't have the life answers she needs. She couldn't possibly in 15 whole years. This doesn't mean you have all the answers, either, but it does mean you are bringing the benefit of your experience and wisdom to your daughter as a gift. You know as well as I do that she won't always want to hear it. (I often resist wise

counsel too.)

But being the adult involves moving toward her proactively anyway. You have something she needs whether she knows it or not. And it won't always be this way. When she's an adult, she won't even have to listen. So while she is in this in-between place called being a teen, move toward your daughter even if it feels like taking a risk. Give her the blessing of your perspective. Of course, you will always want to couple this with maturity. That, too, is part of being the adult. Even if your daughter is being immature (which, by definition, she often will), you are called to be mature, self-controlled and wise. If you're not ready to present your emotions with control, you're not ready to talk.

It was, in fact, easier when she was little. But you're growing into something that has the potential to be even richer as your daughter grows. Keep at it. This can pay a huge and delightful reward.

What has worked well for you in starting conversations with your daughter? {eoa}

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