

These Words Have Power to Crush Your Daughter—Have You Said Them?

“Your words wear me out.”

Dad, have you ever thought—or said—these five words to your daughter? If so, you’re not alone!

Truth be told, I’ve had more dads than I can count tell me they often are glassy-eyed as their daughters (especially adolescent girls) talk so fast and furious that it’s like they’re standing there looking into a vast abyss of words. They admit to me that this is when their minds suddenly go blank and they can’t even think of what to say next because they’ve taken a detour from the main conversation a few exits back!

Case in point: Just this week, a dad told me he literally had no idea what his teenage daughter was even talking about as he sat there and tried to keep up. My heart went out to him as I validated that his experience was normal. I then encouraged him not to walk away, ignore her and shut her out because in doing so, he shuts her down. Girls take those non-verbal cues and interpret them as rejection, then assuming that something is inherently wrong with who they are because they couldn’t keep dad interested in what they were saying.

With that backdrop, I think you’ll enjoy hearing the backstory to the title of this blog.

I’ll never forget the Monday night when my dad and I were having dinner at Costco (yes, we enjoy fine dining in the Watson family!). As he took a bite of his pepperoni pizza, out of my dad’s mouth popped this unexpected revelation:

“To be honest, Michelle, a lot of the time your words wear me out. I just can’t listen to you as much as you want me to because of there being so many words. Half the time you lose me.”

I’m not gonna lie. I was shocked. I didn’t even know what to say at first, because my dad had never told me anything about this before, and it kind of smacked me upside the head.

But, on the other hand, I was thankful that he was being honest with me. I love real conversations that sit in the center of authentic relationships, even when they’re challenging and hard.

So my dad and I kept talking about it, on and off, throughout that night.

I remember telling him that I realize I do talk a lot, but that I never ever intend to overwhelm or overpower him. I told him that as an extrovert, words just seem to flow easily and freely.

We even reminisced about a similar message being written on almost all of my report cards back in elementary school, “Michelle talks too much.” (Who would have ever thought that my “talking gift” would eventually become an open door to host my own radio program? Perhaps my story can serve as an encouragement to you if your daughter drives you bonkers at times with all her words!)

So what do you do if, like my dad, you have a daughter who has the “gift of gab” where her words really do exhaust you?

Here are a few pointers that might help you to go the distance with your verbose daughter: Hold on to the words of my friend, Joe Kelly (. The Dad Man), who says that “a girl’s voice may be the most valuable and most threatened resource she has,” which means that as you respect and honor her voice, you teach her that what she has to say has merit (even as she’s figuring

out what it is she has to say!)).

Remember that we as girls tend to figure things out by talking; so you are giving her a profound gift just by actively listening as she hears herself process everything out loud.

Rest assured that your idea of what it means to have too many words and her idea of too many words are two different things. And as the adult, it's your job to pace with her—not the other way around.

Make sure your own inner dialogue centers around gratitude that she's actually talking with you, because it sets a solid foundation for her to be open and transparent with you for years to come (and the rest of her life, actually).

Don't shame her or try to change her by criticizing her "mastery of language" (how's that for a nice reframe?).

Remind yourself that God creates—and loves—both introverts and extroverts (where one isn't better than the other), and He's wired her this way for a purpose.

Turn your exhaustion and/or frustration into a prayer for her future, asking God to give her opportunities to use her giftedness with words to speak life and love into those around her.

Find creative ways to support her love for language by encouraging her to:

Try joining the debate class at school job; shadow someone at a local television or radio station where she will get a front-row seat to seeing life as an anchor, reporter, or host (which will inspire her to look toward her future and set goals); write something for the local newspaper or a national organization; submit an article for an online magazine or digital forum; start blogging her own thoughts, passions,

observations, questions and convictions; as she finds her unique voice, begin taking steps to pursue writing a book on a topic that speaks to her heart; volunteer at a nursing home, where older folks who are lonely would cherish time with a talkative young girl while giving her their full attention as they enjoy her company.

In the meantime—before she gets from where she is now to where she will be—be willing to do your own work to grow by challenging yourself to track with her words as you ask questions to draw her out so she knows that the things that matter to her matter to you. (I realize it seems counterintuitive to ask her to talk more, but trust me, it will bear great dividends in her life.)

Dad, decide right now to give the gift of validation by celebrating every word that comes out of your talkative daughter's mouth while reminding yourself that your listening ear communicates loudly and directly to her that she is worthy.

How about letting her know today—by staying for the entire conversation and actively listening—that her words don't wear you out (and even if they do, that can be our little secret). Then cherish the fact that your daughter has a voice and is learning to use it wisely as she practices expressing it.

Summing up: Empowered women have voices. Empowered women use their voices. And when empowered women use their voices while simultaneously having dads who celebrate them, they receive a double blessing.

So Dad, put your love into action today by celebrating the words coming out of your daughter's mouth as you let her know you are listening. {eoa}

Dr. Michelle Watson is a national speaker, author, professional counselor of 21 years, and founder of The Abba Project, a ministry to dads with daughters in their teens and

20's. She writes guest articles regularly for journals and magazines (online and print), as well as her own bi-monthly Dad-Daughter Friday blog. In 2014 she released her first book titled *Dad, Here's What I Really Need From You: A Guide for Connecting With Your Daughter's Heart* and hosts a weekly radio program in her hometown of Portland, Oregon called *The Dad Whisperer*. You can reach her at drmichellewatson@. Visit for more information.