

TALKING *about* **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES** **within our families:**

Cultural differences across generations

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Sometimes cultural differences can be *within* our families. Today we talked about a couple of topics that bring differences in opinion and sometimes conflict between parents, daughters and sons.

Haircuts was one of them. And going out late was another.

One of the parents got things started by talking about how he's tried to respond to his son's haircut.

'I didn't like his hair. In my culture, we have our hair cut and combed and looking nice. But I've had to learn to pick my fights. If I focus too much on one thing that we disagree on - like the hair thing - this could downplay the good things we agree that bring us together ... And I realised he is comfortable with his hair, confident. I've had to learn as a dad to take some time to learn more about my son's point, his perspective.'

One of the younger people then asked an excellent question:

'When you were young did you have anything like haircuts that caused conflict with your parents?'

The older people in the group sure did have some stories to share.

One group member said:

'Yes, sure. I've had times in the past when my dad would hit me if I was late or had long hair. Sometimes I'd be locked out of the house. There's still sometimes conflict with my father and I need to bring in other family members - my aunty or my grandmother - who will negotiate.'

Another one of us said:

'When I was growing up, as a daughter, there were really different rules for me than there were for my brothers. And this made it so much harder.'

A discussion then took place about how some parents think the world is a less safe place for young women, so they have different rules to protect them. But other group members said:

'The world should be safe for everyone' and 'the world is safer when it is fair for everyone'.

One young brother in the group, who was sitting next to his sister, said that:

'It's not fair when there are different rules for brothers and sisters.'

This meant a lot to some of us - when sisters and brothers work together.

We also heard stories of sisters working together - sharing the household work, and always going out together (rather than alone) which means parents worry less.

And if conflict does start with parents, we heard about some of the things that daughters and sons do:

'If the talking is going badly, I try to remember that my parents want the best for me. Because if I start thinking 'why are they against me?' this can lead to hate.'

'I also try to remember that it's not about forcing my views on my parents, everything goes slowly.'

To finish, here are some helpful hints we discussed:

'I've learnt that coming home at the time we have agreed stops a lot of conflict. Or if I am going to be late, I let people know so they can come and pick me up.'

One of us said:

'If the first time I try to talk about something with my parents brings shouting and arguing ... and my parents start to get really angry - well I know they can't think well when they are angry. So I try to stop the talking for a while. And leave it for another time. I try to talk in ways that we can all keep thinking'.

If I try to convince my parents about something and it doesn't work, then I ask them to think about it for a while and wait for a suitable time to discuss it again. Also, sometimes, me being very quiet seems to work.

We hope these ideas might help other families who are going through similar things - who also have cultural differences within their families.

Oh ... one more thing, one of the young women in the group wanted us to know that:

'Girls should be allowed to learn karate and to be strong'



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