

Giving the Gift of Time; Parenting Alert - Shisha Pens

LIFE TALK® NEWS 27



Empowering youth to make life-enriching choices;
equipping parents for proactive parenting; inspiring families to thrive...

Giving the Gift of Time

The festive season is upon us, and for many, it's all about rushing around buying expensive gifts for our loved ones, spoiling them with things they may not need. But take a moment to take stock, and think about what that perfect gift could be? What does your family really need? Perhaps it could be your 'gift of time' - time, with the special people in your life.

Life Talk, through the work we do, consistently find that parents tell us they are struggling to remain engaged in their children's lives. Time is a precious commodity, with parents often feeling overwhelmed by their many conflicting daily demands at work and at home. Unfortunately something has to give, and often it's the time we spend with our children.

When our children are young, we juggle our time to meet the seemingly insatiable demands for our attention, time and energy. As they enter the teen years, parents have a new struggle – coming to terms with their children's growing independence, peers suddenly appearing more important than family relationships, increased time "shut away" in their rooms, hours spent on social media - in other words, their lack of 'need' for us! It can seem they only need us at mealtimes or for a lift!

Being a parent

In her book, *The Tug-of-Life*, Izabella Gates writes, "Being a parent is probably life's most highly demanding and skilled career, and yet few of us find ourselves equipped with all the necessary skills. Most of us have drawn on what we've learned from our own parents, by observing other families, from the media, and by adapting our observations to what we feel will work for us. So much depends on the mix of our child's particular personality, the environment that he or she is in, our own personality, and other circumstances. Nothing is predictable; no one-size-fits-all guidelines apply."

"Exhaustion is a subversive and common 'Challenger' parents face. Fatigue and exhaustion like to wear us down. The demands of running a home and being a parent (and often juggling a high-pressure career) combined with all our other responsibilities as adults can exact a toll on the strongest constitution. And they play havoc with our patience, resilience, sense of humour, health and marriage."

Another 'Challenger' Izabella writes about is the communication gap. "Sometimes creeping in unnoticed, and sometimes thudding in with meteoric force, communication gaps can be most unnerving. Even though we know that adolescence brings about a separation process, we often feel upset or confused by the reality. As our questions are greeted with grunts and monosyllabic responses, they might either tempt us to withdraw or to release all our pent-up frustrations and hurt (further expanding the divide). Careers, relationships, housekeeping, commuting, financial, health, marital or other worries combined with the 'normal' territory of parenting, all add up to a hefty load. These issues eat up precious time, reducing what is left for family, leisure and opportunities for communication."

Striking the balance

Make family time. It's easy to say we are too busy, that there's too much to do, but taking a few minutes to have a chat can make all the difference. Make your children (and spouse) your focus for that time and they will thrive on it. Family bonds are strengthened, children feel heard, and you will remain involved in your child's life. Spending quality time may help calm things down, reduce the chaos and re-balance the family. In the process of taking time to talk and to really be together, your relationship will also transform. We may get trapped into spending lots of divided time with our children when in fact shorter periods of undivided time are far more effective. As our children become increasingly independent of us, it is critical that we remain their emotional and moral compass, through communicating and remaining involved in each other's lives.

Teens may display a need for independence but it doesn't mean that they can't stay connected to their parents. Allowing them to exercise their judgement and be themselves rather than whom you want them to be is vital. Through the time you spend together, you will be able to gently manoeuvre, guide and advise them. With teens though, the trick is to listen, empathize, but try to keep direct advice to the minimum. Being a sounding board is a good way to keep them coming back to you for advice.

Things as simple as a greeting in the morning or a hug goodbye are opportunities to connect. Don't waste them, make every day count. Spoil your family this festive season with the special gift of your time - is the most precious gift you can ever give. And remember...time for you too!

A Perfect Christmas Gift

Our range of Life Talk Books are a wonderful, meaningful gift options for the whole family – providing a reference point of essential tips and tool on many of the latest issues facing teens, young adults and parents.

The Life Talk series comprises *Life Talk for a Daughter*, *Life Talk for a Son* (for your teens) and *Life Talk for Parents*. *The Tug-of-Life* provides a unique approach to tackling life's challenges. It empowers children and adults alike to avoid these challenges and it helps them to take control of their lives.

Buy all 4 books for R620 and save R180!

Excludes courier costs.

Buy online on www.tugoflife.com or email orders@tugoflife.com

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Sign up for your MySchool card and help enable Life Talk to continue doing our vital work with young people, parents and educators in various communities countrywide. 4 great reasons to become a MySchool supporter:

- **Shop at over 1500 partner stores** where you can use your card to raise funds. Up to 1% of your purchases are given back to Life Talk. Every time you swipe you make a donation.
- **There is no cost to you!**
- **You benefit too:** Get instant savings of at least 10% on over 1000 items with Woolworths WRewards.
- **If you already have a MySchool card you can still support Life Talk:** You can select to **support up to 3 schools and/or charities** so please consider Life Talk as your cause to support.

To apply or add Life Talk as a beneficiary please contact Nicoleen@lifetalk.co.za

Partner stores include: Woolworths, ToysRus, Waltons, Engen, Altech Netstar, Reggies, Kalahari, MegaMobi, QuickShop, PowersA and many more individual stores. Look out for a MySchool Logo at till points.

Parent Alert!

"Vaping" - Electronic Shisha Pens

Life Talk would like to raise awareness with parents on the latest craze to hit the teen scene - electronic shisha pens, also known as shisha sticks or e-hookahs. Readily available, they can be seen for sale at stores in shopping malls everywhere. The experience is similar to that of smoking but without the smoke, ash and burning smell.

How it works

Shisha pens are battery operated and have an atomizer which heats up an e-liquid which turns into vapour that can be inhaled – hence the term "vaping". This e-liquid consists of water, fruit flavouring, vegetable glycerine and propylene glycol (which produces the vapour). These devices can contain nicotine depending on the brand and are available in a disposable and a more expensive reusable form. One shisha stick will give you about 500 puffs – equivalent to roughly 20 cigarettes.

But beware!

Manufacturers claim that they are safer and pose fewer health risks than smoking traditional hookah's. Suppliers warn that they aren't "intended for nicotine replacement therapy nor as a cessation device", that they are not to be used by children, pregnant or breast feeding women. The following needs to be considered:

- Vegetable glycerine and propylene glycol are colourless, odourless non-toxic organic compounds which are used in cosmetics, cake mixes, soft drinks, but the reality is that not much is known about the long term effects of inhaling these substances.
- Propylene Glycol can cause throat and muscle aches.
- It's a dehumidifier, so it can dehydrate your mouth.
- Certain brands can contain varying degrees of nicotine.
- Other chemicals can be added.
- Users can experience light-headedness and headaches.
- There are still many unknown factors as no credible studies have been conducted. This includes the manufacturing process, the chemicals used in the vapours as well as long term side-effects.
- The brightly coloured sticks and their fruity flavours appeal to younger teens – which can set them on the wrong path.
- There is a risk that whilst they seem harmless, the act of smoking them creates a habit – you inhale and exhale just as you would a cigarette.

Other resources: www.quitshisha.com

More info: www.lifetalk.co.za or www.tugoflife.com

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If you are interested please email Nicoleen@lifetalk.co.za. We would love to hear from you!
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