

Counselor's Corner, March 2014: Parents, Getting the Cold Shoulder?



By Catherine Findley, LCSW

Where does the time go? One day, your child is your snuggle buddy and proudly walks into school holding your hand. Seemingly the next, you have a stranger (teenager!) who looks at you like you have lost your mind when you go in for the hug.

For many of our kids, as they enter the adolescent world, they often give up expressing and accepting physical affection with parents. Parents may encounter standoffishness and physical unresponsiveness. The old contact you were used to now can feel embarrassing -- or even inappropriate -- to your teen.

What's a parent to do? I have a few thoughts I want to share with you. Continue to offer lesser forms of physical affection. Pats on the back, side hugs, stroking their hair, and offering a neck or foot massage (depending on their hygiene stage!) may be welcome, or at least preferable to your teen. If your teen is already in bed, walk in and pull up their blankets, sort of like the old "tuck me in."

Verbal connections often become even more important when teens are less affectionate. Using words to convey sensitivity, support, interest, attention, approval and appreciation can communicate emotional warmth.

Remember that physical affection may be hit or miss with teens. Try not to take it personally, and remember those three important little words, I Love You.

Do you or your teen need someone to talk to? Catherine counsels clients of all ages on a variety of topics. Call 879.3438 for more information or email her at catherine@cjfsbham.org.