

Menlo Parent Education Conference 2/3/18 Panel notes

Than Healy in Conversation with panel of the three speakers: Ana Homayoun, Jonathan Scott & Richard Weissbourd

Than: Our faculty meetings are like mardi gras

“vaping” trends

Jonathan Scott trends:

when phone came drug use went down b/c got dopamine rush
6 of 10 do not get high

Ana trends:

How kids are using online communities positively. Kids who see something online and now say something.

We get lost in time spent online as negative; get involved in social activism and then translate into offline communities

Rick trends:

They surveyed and noticed a lot of positive use; finding kids who are like you; and in big picture, we have come light years (LGBT, etc.) a lot better around gender and race.
Hyper-focus on individualism and the self

Ana: when you take one device, know we have another project. Talk to us about sex in a way that isn't awkward. Kids don't go on dates to know people in an intimate way. They go out in groups and go to parties. Problem is that they are not having intimate conversations. But phone is interfering. Education online about sex ed is not great.

Peggy Ornstein's *Girls and Sex*. Dad and his daughter read it, and then discussed it.

Rick: we are doing a poor job of preparing our children for intimacy.

Jonathan: kids want parents to talk to them about subtle complexities of developing friendships. They may not directly thank you

Than: kids are put in a very awkward spot; moral dilemma ~ if you engage in substances there are real effects.

Kids feel: I need to engage in social media but it is killing me.

Ana: cited her Washington Post article ~ 30 year old boys...what do they want to achieve/focus on/ the why? Why are they posting things on social media. Are we “curling” for them (the sport of curling). Making the ice smooth?

I am going to limit myself to one social media platform. A lot of times kids can figure this out on themselves but we haven't given them the space and the time to figure out their own solutions and choices.

Jonathan: there is a sense of vulnerability and sense of risk that kids sense but it won't happen to me. We are also engineered to value rewards that are close. The Reward of the Friend who is going to accept them on Social Media is closer than the heart from parent. They are looking for different rewards.

Rick: his worry about these challenges is that the kids won't talk to you (they will go underground)...if we are too anxious about their drug use/social media use/. Rick stresses the importance of keeping conversation open with teens without much judgement so we can help them.

Don't want them to feel we are so anxious that they can't come to us with their concerns.

Rick: this is the art of parenting; complex choreography of leading and following.

It is a matter of being "in-tune" with your child

Than: let's talk about perfectionism. Not about every detail needs to be done; but an extreme fear of letting others down.

33% spike in that; in order to earn respect of others. Most platforms are built to exacerbate that concern.

What is making a positive difference?

Ana: Instagram that's public (sanitized/tough) or use video or snap chat that is raw and authentic.

Helping these kids realize what is energizing and what is draining. Middle school moms are group of most stressed-out group ever. First time going online. We are not fully understanding as parents. The more time kids are going online and seeing these images, the more they are reflecting them.

Visco (sp) (photo editing app); we have this whole generation of girls using this app. Photographers use.

Instagram is allowing people to disable this

To your point of perfectionism. Sometimes kids don't know they can opt out of a particular app; or certain followers. That is a first step. If a middle schooler has gone too deep into social media, how do you create a long enough opportunity for kids to go "offline" ?

Nols trips or other outdoor programs do allow kids to connect to nature and are offline the entire time

Than: many parents don't know...what is the logic of Instagram? If I don't get a # of likes w/in a few minutes b/c I am not getting the social validation. What should parents know?

Ana: kids are now contacting each other...I just put a post up. Can you like it?
E.g. that photo

Only put things up at 8am b/c that is the best time to get a response.
As parents ask: Is Instagram a way for you to share of ideas and thoughts ... do you think it is only important if people respond to your post/like it? what is changing for many kids is that they are at a unique developmental stage in adolescence that they care what people think of them. And some adults are now using instagram, and also become concerned about what people think of them as adults. Not just an issue for kids.

Not sure it's the media or the platform but how kids are using it. And we are not having conversations about it.

Jonathan: College Exit workshop...out of high school into College entry. Be clear of what your parents' expectations are.

Are we as parents delivering messages

UCLA: 113k applications for 6k spaces (if I am not perfect)

They are trying with their freshman high school daughter.

Take a reach / risk class

Than: my conversation with a student who had substance abuse problems. The stoned kids are the most accepting kids in the school.

Rick: in their college admissions work, for a certain group of people. Need to shove your kids into highly selective colleges. Perfectionism? He is telling the story because he was afflicted with this disease. There are many roads to meaningful adulthood. His kids did not go to highly selective colleges. Until we break the back of this perfectionism, it is going to be hard to make a big difference around this topic

Than: Researchers are calling this Child Contingent Self-Esteem (parents need to have kids with particular achievements to validate the parents sense of self/success)

Than: who is doing this well? As much as you run into dysfunction, you are also running into functional communities.

Rick: mentioned their high school mobilization program. Many of them are doing wonderful things. Encouraging kids to take on bullying and sexual harassment. Menlo has a real sense of public purpose. Responsibility

e.g. Andover is creating a counselor institute for public schools to get their kids into college. Here's one assessment I would ask: to what degree do adults in this building value public caring and someone in my community? We have some work to do. How are adults communicating hope our kids become good citizens

Jonathan: yes, seen evidence. Return to older thought processes. The Crain School. Family System. Arranged into families. They progress together. Older kids protect and mentor the younger kids. The parents willing to engage on difficult topics. In his work he talks a lot about UNH piloting the bringing in the bystander

Redlands University is doing a great program on masculinity. What is it to be a man and to be male?

"hey ~ that's not cool; come down and have another drink with me and play fooseball" when they worry a hook-up between man and woman is not what either would do when not under the influence of a substance (alcohol, marijuana etc). Friends of each should intervene to prevent undesired sexual encounter.

Charlene Wisell (sp?) (teaches women about socialization to be likeable) identify who they are as people. These programs are expensive and there is a lot of resistance.

Ana: Our digital experiences are so new that we are still making changes. Very first school she visited that was bringing in a tablet was 2011 and 2012. Schools that do it best integrate it into their advisory programs. When you bring tablet or computer into classroom, how do you train teachers and students?

How do they minimize the distractions?

Goal is for schools to be the ones that are asking the right, thoughtful questions.

We can't just give an ipad or digital device and not instruct on rules, engagement etc

Kids need consistency to build the habit. They then develop habits for the long-term.

Than: How do we encourage our kids to refrain from substance abuse? Posture of parenting?

Jonathan: talked about the BYU study laissez-faire parenting (do well socially), but not academically. Most likely to engage in drugs and alcohol b/c they don't have standards. When you have expectations of your children.

When your expectations are low. You are not doing your kids any favors.

Opposite is Authoritarian parent (his dad) it inspires rebellion.

Authoritative is the combo of Laissez-faire and Authoritarian.

If you have a rule but you can't explain why you have it, you have to be able to answer why you have it.

Put a white piece of paper on Fridge...let kids define what it means to be a member of this family...what does it mean?

Than: we will start sending out Q of what type of parent are you? Rick?

Rick: for those interested Diana Baumrind...it is never specific enough. A few guideposts:

- 1) as kids get older, create a democratic household. Give them options.
 - a. In some instances, detail some non-negotiables: safety; drugs/ alcohol
 - b. As they get into HS important to help them keep their dignity.
Define decisions; where we decide; they decide and those we make unilaterally.

Than: he likes this q b/c it pushes back on it. Does emphasis on being SAFE affect RESILIENCY? ANA?

Ana: resilience ~ a note gets passed or a photo gets shared. 20 years ago, it would not go viral. Not from a fear-based perspective but a fact-based perspective.

Question; how do we support kids? Supporters and clarifiers. When kids are in crisis they feel they have no one to reach out to, but they are also more apt to engage in risky behavior. Not just about safety but giving them tools so they can be more buoyant

Jonathan: helping them to grow and become more resilient. Can't have a dysfunctional relationship. Sometimes we are confused when we let them go out into the world by exposing them to danger. He is really opposed to teens engaging in drugs and alcohol. If you are in this situation, here is my expectation of you (Jonathan recommends parents set the expectations for their teen/tween).

My expectation is to remove yourself from this.
I will give you a code word.

If he/she fails to do this, there will be a code word.

One thing you do not get better at is drinking alcohol and doing drugs when you are young, but you can get better at exercising control if you practice it.

Rick: we are going to extra lengths to protect kids from things. He disagrees with Jonathan on use of marijuana. Rick believes kids are going to get stoned in high school and college. Parents/adults should tell kids there are dangers to use. Rick suggests parents tell their kids “If you have an experience like this or your friends are in a tough spot, it’s really important for you to talk with me about it”. If parents are too rigid and strict about use, kids may not talk to us.

Than: thank you’s. thank you, parents. For being humble about what we can do. Provided translation services (Elianne) team that put this together. Andrea and Tina.

Than’s wrap up: thoughts and reflections from the conference:

- 1) Ricks’ point that the self grows by being known. When Ana shared the data from our student survey there was a distinctive desire from our kids to spend more time with their friends. That is not something that happens at every school. But also b/c they want to be known. They want us to know what they care about.
- 2) This lands into theme they have been discussing as a school this year. All these things have to do with kids needing to numb themselves to a reality that is really difficult (Rene Brown)
Root cause of desire to numb is the inability to be vulnerable. Our goal is to give kids the tools/ability to be authentic to themselves.
Brown says vulnerability (you can pretend to insulate yourself); the only choice is to engage with this vulnerability. If we bulletproof ourselves, we insulate ourselves from important connections.

Being bulletproof doesn’t exist. Hard for adolescents to be themselves. You buffer yourself by numbing it. Social media/drugs and alcohol/putting on a mask.

These are symptoms of something deeper. Talk about what
Really scary stuff when you are 15 or 50.

Other part about vulnerability. Brown ~ mostly vulnerability is associated with tough feelings: grief/fear/sadness but it is also associated with love/joy/creativity and hope

Vulnerability is pathway to that. Making it safe is really important. We are swimming upstream. Make it safer for our kids to be who they are.

We are all just trying to find our way. Urge you to have these conversations.