



Guram Megrelishvili "How to Speak with Children"

Author and screenwriter Guram Megrelishvili has been a teacher since 2009. He has been working with teenagers in the spheres of literature and creative writing since the establishment of "Thinking Academy".

The letters published in this book are a summary of many years of pedagogical experience, which were written in different years for our loyal readers and for the different journals.

Whom are our children talking to?

My son Mate is 9 years old. He is not a conflicting person by nature, but he likes to complain, and he intensely experiences each problem that he encounters in life, he shares and likes to discuss it with us, with his parents. Despite this, suddenly I missed one of the main problems in his life.

Here is the story:

The solfeggio teacher at the music school was bullying my son for the whole semester.

As a parent, I know by heart the instruction that I need to find time during the day to talk to my children. The more child grows, the less your child talks to you, so the period when the children take steps and want to share every experience, shouldn't be missed. I think I always listen to my kids and my students, but it happened so that I missed this event, I was not attentive enough, or maybe I didn't have time as my work deadline was approaching, I wasn't in the mood, I thought some scandalous speech of a politician was more important or I was just lazy, but the fact remains that I missed an event that happened to my child.

Later I got to know that he suffered a lot about the issue to the extent that he hated going to music school.

At the Sunday school of the "Thinking Academy", I teach literature. Communicating with children helps my personal growth. Certainly, I am not trying to communicate with pupils at the expense of the "trial and error" method, but occasionally I realize something important too late, and I regret the time that I missed with the previous groups. The same thing happened last year when during the break I asked the pupils about sharing their problems and secrets that were important to them and that worried them. It appeared that most of the pupils only share outside of their families, and some of them don't even have a person with whom to share. In best cases, they share their worries and problems with their mates, who often are less competent than they are.

As much as I can tell from my knowledge and life experience, the adults arrange the communication channel as follows (the style, as I understand, will follow us to the end of our lives). A parent or parents are the first and the main line to overcome the uncertainty between the child and the outside world. In the best cases, they might be replaced by the teachers or by a priest (depending on the sub-culture). Maybe this middle link is the main, or of decisive importance in terms of how the adult will learn to cope with his/her problems.

When the first lifebuoy, let's call it, the front-line ally - the parent does not show up in time, the teenager begins to deal with the problem alone or seeks to find another, less secure ally.

When does a child avoid this first lifebuoy? When the parent is busy, always despises the actions of a child, and doesn't take the child's problems seriously (the problems may seem funny to us but the child experiences it so painfully he/she may think that his/her world collapsed). A parent might even be listening to his/her child without paying attention, making the child feel uncomfortable.

The second circle doesn't appear smoothly and naturally. When an adolescent has a feeling of frustration about his/her parents, he/she tries to find an ally, a person to share feelings with, and a listener. The adolescent does it with great caution, with suspicion, or worse, with anger, and trust (often used by malicious people), during which his/her series of disappointments continue. In other cases, in good ones, this second circle turns out from a group of friends of like-minded children who advise one another, but these devices are sometimes very far from logical.

During emotional self-determination, adolescents require a lifebuoy. In addition, in today's reality, a third lifebuoy, the internet comes into the scene, where the control of information is unimaginable.

Fake information, which is shared without control, different assumptions, and "convincing lies" eventually destroy the emotional state of a teenager, and they start looking for a ready-made model, to imitate and resemble. The children become a part of the impersonal crowd, where the behavior and lifestyle of a specific person, at least the outside image, is neat and stunning, hence it is good and comfortable.

To safeguard children from this primary psychological stress (and if someone will ask me why we need to protect them as life is a struggle, I will answer that then let's leave our infants at the maternity hospitals and allow them to come home by taxi) the parent must think of the best ways to open up their children, so that child shares everything, the good and the bad, and receives advice and instructions from the trustworthy parent. Otherwise, they might find a third person who in the best case scenario has his/her problems to deal with and in the worst case ends up being a very unreliable "good uncle".

Perhaps, the most classical and accepted method to open children up is to make friends with them. In this case, a child knows that his/her "bad" behaviour will not be punished and judged, but it will be followed by a discussion to overcome the problem together. If someone bullied your child and you shout at your child: "how they could do it to you?" it is clear, that next time the child will not tell you a similar story, and these stories might pile up.

I remember that in my family we had a family dinner or supper together to share our stories and my late Grandpa would ask each of us about the interesting things that happened in our lives that day. Now this method doesn't work anymore due to the chaotic rhythm of life, my family members and I very rarely have dinner together, so I chose one evening a week when my son, Mate, tells us the news of that week.

It seems that on one such day when I thought that "nothing would be harmed" by dropping it, he failed to tell me about the teacher, and then, as it happens, he hid or "forgot" the problem.

The issue was that probably the teacher, who had to deal with his/her problems, singled out my son, who usually talks a lot. We have seen how teachers single out students, but in this case, this action was incorrect, as the teacher told an eight-year-old child that he was not talented enough and the government couldn't compensate him/her for the resources he/she was wasting on him.

It appears that this dialogue impacted the child greatly, his grades in piano decreased and in general, he lost his interest in this branch of art.

I, as a person who is under the influence of certain stereotypes, decided, that losing interest in music was logical and even looked a little indifferently at my son's complaint that he had to quit school.

The story was revealed by itself and easily. Once, I brought my son to school in a very good mood, to the door of the music school, I shook his hand as a sign of goodbye and noticed that his hand was shaking. I realized that something was not as it should be, and I began to find out the story carefully and with caution.

As hay can't hide a fire, so this story couldn't be hidden. My son, who was transferred from the class, met the teacher in the corridor and the latter started discussing the case loudly with him. This was witnessed by other adults and then, as it usually happens, the story reached us, the parents.

Fortunately, the management's response was timely and correct, but it took me a few months to turn Mate's heart back to music.

This story turned out to be a very good example for me to always find time to be my son's lifebuoy to his first sharing.

I think that listening, being ready to support, responding moderately and adequately to false alarms, and admitting that you can't do anything when you can't solve the problem, are important.

A child doesn't need a superman father and a mother, but a person by his/her side. Thinking that "I will listen tomorrow" is probably the same for a child as telling a person who fell into the sea and is waiting for a lifebuoy, that "I will roll the dice and I will come back to rescue you after."