

**“Parent’s Guide to Surviving Awkward Conversations with Teenagers”**  
**Workshop with Ron Feinberg and Sue Bennett**  
**University Prep - April 15, 2009**

**The Four Questions—A tool for parents to:**

- a) earn their child’s trust by giving trust
- b) share power by acknowledging their child’s power
- c) demonstrate respect by listening without bias or “agendas”
- d) create the possibility of the child really looking forward to being open with the parent
- e) create the possibility of getting to know the child for who s/he really is and share in the child’s world
- f) facilitate the child’s development into a confident independent person

**The Four Questions:**

1. What do you see going on? (Observation, description, trust)
2. What does it mean to you? (Self-awareness, trust)
3. What are your options/choices? (Brainstorming and creative problem-solving)
4. What do you want to do? (Decision-making, discrimination, commitment)

**The Rules:**

1. The child goes first and gets to answer all four questions before the parent’s turn to talk.
2. The child is free to decide whether and to what extent or depth to answer the questions, and how long to talk. This is a no-demand engagement.
3. After the child has answered the questions, the parent “micro-intervenes”.
4. The child gets to determine all the other rules to this engagement.

**The “No-no’s”:**

Create your own list of your favorite methods for giving your child reasons not to talk with you. Write them down, ask your child to review the list with you and add more if necessary. Post them somewhere and commit to self-correction when you slip into bad habits.

**Outcome-Based Parenting:**

A process by which a parent intervenes only when necessary, supporting the child’s development of independence, psychological autonomy, and self-confidence.

1. The child requests, or the parent suggests, a particular form of independence, for example being responsible for getting enough sleep without having a parentally imposed bedtime, or coming home safely and at a reasonable time without having a parentally imposed curfew, or getting to school on time in the morning without being awakened by a parent.
2. The child identifies what success would look like if the child were to self-manage the process and be responsible for the outcomes. The list of “success outcomes” becomes the commitments for accountability.
3. The parents and child agree on the terms for data collection and review and periodic self-evaluation.
4. If and when the child fails to meet the agreed-upon success outcomes, the parents temporarily intervene to help the child get back on track to being successfully independent. The intervention is arrived at through use of the Four Questions, and through compromise and power-sharing whenever possible.