

# Westlake Boys High School



## Being in 'Quaranteen' – what have we learnt about supporting your son in a lockdown?

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### **When we avoid difficult conversations, we trade short term discomfort for long-term dysfunction.**

Seldom do we feel that any family, friends, or colleagues look forward to having a difficult conversation. For some people, it fills them with a level of dread that leads them to avoid this at all costs. At home, many of these feelings are magnified due to living with (and loving) the very person/people that you need to have your difficult discussion with.

Difficult conversations with teenage boys can, and do, go badly wrong. The level of emotion runs a lot higher than if you were talking to almost any other person in your life. Quite often things take a turn for the worse because boys feel like the talk is an 'ambush', which then leads you to getting into a debate for which you are unprepared.

### **How can you better manage the difficult conversations at home?**

Some simple steps and skills can be put in place to better reduce the discomfort for everyone involved. Before entering a difficult conversation with your teenage son, it may be beneficial to pause and think of three things:

- **Positioning** – this is about being prepared, knowing yourself, your son and the issue
- **Participating** - this is about listening, asking the right questions, and seeking solutions
- **Parting** – this is about an agreed resolution, a commitment and leaving with dignity

### **What are the best ways to use Positioning, Participating and Parting to have a more productive difficult conversation?**

#### **Positioning**

- Know your own emotional triggers, failing to manage these will hijack your discussion
- Avoid imposing your own values
- Know the facts around the issue

#### **Participating**

- Be prepared to listen without judgement
- Let your son vent, unloading will eventually lead to explaining
- Agree the facts around the issue. Avoid assumptions, inferences and your pre-made solutions
- Ask what they want. Listen. Adjust. State what you want. Keep it Simple.
- Having stated what you want, ask if that's acceptable to them and close. No need to drag things out.

#### **Parting**

- Leave the conversation with the issue resolved, a commitment to an agreed action being in place and emotions 'flattened out'.
- Move on (teenage boys do this quicker than most) – they will still love you (and vice versa)!