Dear Alice,

It seems as if anything I do is not enough for my dad. I don't get in any trouble at all, I'm on the honor roll, I don't go out, I obey him, I don't talk back, I clean his shoes, I heat up his car, I cook for him, also. I do all this and it's still not enough. He never smiles and he never appreciates anything I do for him. I love him so much and I want him to love me back, but it seems as if I'm not good enough. Please tell me what I should do. By the way, talking doesn't help much. I tried and he never changes. Please suggest another solution because it really hurts me.

Sad and Unhappy

Answer

Dear Sad and Unhappy,

Your dad's lack of response to you and your good deeds most likely has little or nothing to do with you. Dad, himself, may be sad, unhappy, angry, upset, or even clinically depressed about something that may not be in his control or range of understanding. This doesn't mean that you need to stop trying to communicate your feelings, or that you need to cease providing him the things that you described.

Speaking of your description, what if you printed out your letter to Go Ask Alice!, but address it "Dear Dad" instead? Your clear and heartfelt words may cause him to respond to you in a way that your past verbal attempts have not. Writing can be great practice, or even a script, for saying or delivering your feelings to the person at the heart of your concern. Sometimes, people have no idea of the impact their behavior has on someone else.

Whether or not this suggestion works, do you have others close to you in your life who support and appreciate you as a daughter/son, sister/brother, cousin, or friend? You obviously deserve this recognition, and if your father cannot, or won't, give it to you now, it is useful and essential to get it from somewhere else. These close contacts may also be able to help your father, too.
If this kind of caring isn't a part of your life, and if you're not sure who to go to for some TLC (tender loving care), a number of resources are available that can help you. These include your guidance counselor, your pediatrician, your school's health service, a social worker, or therapist. In addition, you may want to check out the following resources:

- **YOUTHLINE**: toll-free information and referral service for youth, families, and communities [2]. If you need help, you can call their bilingual hotline at (800) 246-4646.
- **National Mental Health Association** [3]

You may find that speaking with a professional counselor provides a safe and supportive environment to voice your feelings. In addition, s/he may be able to give you some tips for speaking with your dad.

Wishing you fulfillment in all of your relationships,

Alice!

**Category:**
Relationships [4]
Talking With Parents [5]

**Resources**

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [11]
- Mental Health Service (CUMC) [12]

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