

Connection Conversation: Texts for Hopes and Dreams for Your Child

1. Barack Obama – Excerpts from a letter to his daughters (January, 18, 2009)

Dear Malia and Sasha,

I know how much I've missed these past two years, and today I want to tell you a little more about why I decided to take our family on this journey.

When I was a young man, I thought life was all about me—about how I'd make my way in the world, become successful, and get the things I want. But then the two of you came into my world with all your curiosity and mischief and those smiles that never fail to fill my heart and light up my day. And suddenly, all my big plans for myself didn't seem so important anymore. I soon found that the greatest joy in my life was the joy I saw in yours. And I realized that my own life wouldn't count for much unless I was able to ensure that you had every opportunity for happiness and fulfillment in yours. In the end, girls, that's why I ran for President: because of what I want for you and for every child in this nation.

I want every child to understand the great privilege of being a citizen of this nation comes great responsibility. That was the lesson your grandmother tried to teach me when I was your age. She helped me understand that America is great not because it is perfect but because it can always be made better—and that the unfinished work of perfecting our union falls to each of us.

I hope both of you will take up that work, righting the wrongs that you see and working to give others the chances you've had. Not just because you have an obligation to give something back to this country that has given our family so much—although you do have that obligation. But because you have an obligation to yourself. Because it is only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself that you will realize your true potential.

I am so proud of both of you. I love you more than you can ever know. And I am grateful every day for your patience, poise, grace, and humor as we prepare to start our new life together in the White House.

Love, Dad

2. Sholom Aleichem - Excerpts from Sholom Aleichem’s Ethical Will to His Children (Solomon Naumovich Rabinovich 1859-1916)

My last wish for my successors and my prayer to my children: Take good care of your mother, beautify her old age, sweeten her bitter life, heal her broken heart; do not weep for me -- on the contrary, remember me with joy; and the main thing -- live together in peace, bear no hatred for each other, help one another in bad times, think on occasion of other members of the family, pity the poor, and when circumstances permit, pay my debts, if there be any. Children, bear with honor my hard-earned Jewish name and may G-d in Heaven sustain you ever, Amen.

3. “Teach Your Children Well,” Recorded by Crosby Stills, Nash and Young (1970)

You who are on the road
Must have a code that you can live by
And so become yourself
Because the past is just a good bye.

Teach your children well,
Their father's hell did slowly go by,
And feed them on your dreams

The one they picked, the one you'll know by.

Don't you ever ask them why, if they told
you, you would cry,
So just look at them and sigh and know they
love you.

And you, of tender years,
Can't know the fears that your elders grew by,
And so please help them with your youth,
They seek the truth before they can die.

4. *Iggeret HaRamban* -Excerpts from Ramban's letter to his oldest son (RaMBaN = Rabbi Moses ben Nachmanides, 1195-1270)

"Listen, my child, to the instruction of your father, and do not forget the teaching of your mother." (Proverbs 1:8) Speak with kindness to all people always. This save you from anger, the major cause of misdeed...Always be humble; regard every person as greater than yourself...Study Torah regularly so that you can fulfill its commandments. When you finish your studies, think carefully about what you have learned; try to translate your learning into action...When you pray, do not think about worldly matters, think only of G-d...Read this letter once a week, and be regular in carrying out its requirements. By doing so you will always walk in the path of G-d and you be worthy of all of the good which is due to the righteous.

5. Excerpt from *Raising Resilient Children, Fostering Strength, Hope and Optimism in Your Child* by Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein (2002)

What is it that most parents want for their children? Happiness, success in school, satisfaction with their lives, and solid friendships quickly come to mind. If we examine our parental goals, it would not be an oversimplification to conclude that realization of these goals requires that our children have the inner strength to deal competently and successfully, day after day, with the challenges and demands they encounter. We call this capacity to cope and feel competent *resilience*.