

Positive+Parent™ Newsletter

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LABELS ARE FOR CANS, NOT PEOPLE

“Labels are for cans, not people.” ~Anthony Rapp

I had a weird experience this past weekend. My youngest son and some of his friends had a bonfire on Saturday night. (Don't worry, I watched the whole thing and it was all done safely with the fire doused at the end.)

One of the young ladies at the bonfire arrived with friends and toward the end her Mom came to hang out and then take her home. I have seen the Mom around school but I don't know her.

When the daughter saw the Mom, she said, “Oh, no!” I understood it to be mostly out of surprise, perhaps not expecting to get picked up or not expecting her Mom so early. Her mother's response was, “Yes, the witch has arrived.” The Mom referred to herself a few more times during the evening as “The Witch”.

Now, as I said, I don't know the Mom or the daughter and I really don't know the relationship they have, but I was so bothered that this woman would accept the label of “Witch”. Deep down, every child knows that what their parents do is out of love and wanting to protect and nurture their children. Often, children will disagree with the means to that end, but rarely is the goal disputed. And some children may harbor some doubts about the goal, but, I believe, they are pretty sure that their parents want to support them.

But if you tell your child that you are a witch, they may have more doubts than average. They may be

less and less sure that you only have their highest good in mind. When you label yourself it is often limiting and usually negative. Even the label “parent” often limits us in how much we can be our children's “friend”. We certainly act in a friendly manner, but there is a limit. This is not bad, but it is limiting.

Imagine the limits you are putting on yourself when you label yourself “Witch”. Or if you label yourself “Uncaring”, as in “I don't care what you think or what you want”.

Imagine the difference if you give yourself the label “Loving” as in “You have to go to sleep now because I love you and I think it is the best thing for you.”

Obviously, the remarks that I heard were said against a background of a deep relationship. Some parents purposefully steer their relationship with their kids in a certain direction. Some parents rarely give it a thought and are then surprised when the relationship turns out to be negative.

So think about the labels you and your kids might put on your relationship and how those labels might change the relationship.

And while you are at it, think about the labels you put on your children. Perhaps “lazy”, perhaps “sloppy”. I used to use a label of “not careful”.

So be careful with your labels, be careful with your words and, most of all, be careful with your relationships!



You can reach me by email at DrShaya@PositiveParentPlus.com I love to hear reader comments.

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