

Get Lost!

Do you have a teenager that rarely speaks to you other than to ask for money or a ride somewhere? I currently have two and find myself wondering what happened to the days when we actually had conversations. Here's one unexpected way that I got a bit of that back recently:

I was driving my sixteen-year-old to drivers' education class on the last evening of school's Christmas break. If you haven't gone through the driving school experience yet, it can be stressful and I'm not just referring to sitting in the passenger seat while your "baby" is in the driver's seat. If their high school doesn't offer classes, trying to schedule six different four-hour classes plus in-car education around their already busy schedules is a challenge in itself. The reason that we chose the driving school that we did was because of the multiple locations, dates, and times of the classes, and oh yeah, they had a discount coupon. On this particular evening the class was scheduled in a part of town with which we were unfamiliar. We got lost....real lost! While a GPS is probably in our future for our directionally-challenged driving student (OK, yes...I was driving), we don't have one yet. Luckily, my fourteen-year-old was at home and was able to pull up MapQuest and get us from the wrong address to the correct address. Once we found the correct street, we couldn't find the building. It was at that point that we decided to give up our frantic search for the obviously obscure location. That's another thing that you should know about these driving schools...they're not schools, they are little classrooms inside of multi-unit office buildings and the signs can only be seen with magnifying glasses by young eyes in bright daylight!

We needed to stop for gas, so he at least got an education on how to pump gas from beginning to end, including safety tips and paying. Then we began our journey back home completing our big circle around the east side of the city. We were about halfway home when I realized that he had not stopped talking for almost an hour saying more to me than he had the entire break combined. He wasn't mumbling, complaining, asking for money or even texting his friends. He even turned off the radio himself and was actually engaging in conversation with ME. I wanted to keep driving until we emptied that tank of gas that we had just filled!

With all of the school, sporting, and social activities that teenagers are involved in these days, it's sometimes difficult to find the one-on-one time that we all need. I'm not sure if he got as much out of it as I did, but getting lost on the way to driving school was one of the best things we did on Christmas break in my opinion. Maybe the advice shouldn't be to get lost, who needs more stress in their lives, but sometimes kids will talk in the car when there are no other distractions and it's just the two of you. So go ahead, drop what you're doing, drive them somewhere when they ask and even pay for the gas. You can slip in teachable moments like what to do at the gas station and how to adjust when things don't turn out as planned; they'll hardly notice.