

A Letter Your Teen Wishes They Could Send

Dear Parent:

This is the letter that I wish I could write.

This fight we are in right now. I need it. I need this fight. I can't tell you this because I don't have the language for it, and it wouldn't make sense anyway. But I need this fight. Badly. I need to hate you right now and I need you to survive it. I need you to survive my hating you and you hating me. I need this fight even though I hate it too. It doesn't matter what this fight is even about: curfew, homework, laundry, my messy room, going out, staying in, leaving, not leaving, boyfriend, girlfriend, no friends, bad friends. It doesn't matter. I need to fight you on it, and I need you to fight me back.

I desperately need you to hold the other end of the rope. To hang on tightly while I thrash on the other end – while I find the handholds and footholds in this new world I feel like I am in. I used to know who I was, who you were, who we were. But right now, I don't. Right now, I am looking for my edges and I can sometimes only find them when I am pulling on you. When I push everything I used to know to its edge. Then I feel like I exist and for a minute I can breathe. I know you long for the sweeter kid that I was. I know this because I long for that kid too, and some of that longing is what is so painful for me right now.

I need this fight and I need to see that no matter how bad or big my feelings are – they won't destroy you or me. I need you to love me even when I am at my worst, even when it looks like I don't love you or when I say I don't love you (or that you are the worst parent in the world or any variation of this theme). I need you to find the words to constantly tell me how much you love me and that you are strong enough to handle my anger and disrespect. I especially need to hear those words when I am at my worst, when I am hurting you the most.

Love,
Your Teenager