

Reader Views

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7101 Hwy 71 W #200

Austin, Texas 78735

512/288-8555

admin@readerviews.com

www.readerviews.com

Interview with Ken Karfeld and Jasmyn Karfeld

Authors of He Said, She Said: A Father Daughter Perspective

Jasmyn Karfeld is the daughter. Ken Karfeld is the father. Jasmyn was what society considered an extreme case of an out of control teen. Now they talk about it. Welcome to Reader Views Jasmyn and Ken.

Juanita: You have written a very unique book that gives a valuable insight into a growing problem that is probably affecting more families than one would think. Why were you inspired to co-author a book about such a raw and personal account?

Ken: While reminiscing with Jasmyn it became apparent there was a misunderstanding of each others intentions and perceptions during her upbringing. The degree of our separation on actual events was intriguing where as our memories of the same events were so different. We believed if we could articulate this in a book we could help others in the same situation gain an understanding that could facilitate growth and healing.

Jasmyn: We thought it was interesting that when talking about various past situations, our perspectives of what happened in any given situation were so different. We thought that reading an account of a child's life from both her perspective and her parent's perspective would have been incredibly enlightening, so we decided to write it.

Juanita: What was the first step in opening the lines of communication between the two of you?

Ken: I think even in our darkest times there remained a line of communication between us. Jasmyn coming to us for help when she was at her worst could be considered a first step

Jasmyn: When I had children and became a parent myself, I was able to appreciate that position a lot more, and was more open to communication and advice that came from my dad.

Juanita: What was the biggest differing perception you realized throughout the process of writing this book?

Ken: I don't think Jasmyn was aware of the turmoil she was creating. A recurring theme in the book is Jasmyn saying "why do they care, it's my life." I think she understands after reading the part authored by me the extent we actually did care.

Jasmyn: It was that my dad's IDEA of what would motivate me was SOOO incredibly different than the things that ACTUALLY would have motivated me.

Juanita: What advice would you give parents in similar crisis?

Ken: Create positive incentives for change. Find an outlet for your child to express themselves and be challenged. The best remedy is prevention.

Jasmyn: To really listen to their kids, figure out what motivates and drives them, and then USE that to encourage the behavior you want from them.

Juanita: What advice would you give teens in similar crisis?

Ken: Advice is so easy to give but hard to take. Sit down with your parents and be honest. Parents really do care as a rule. Let your parents know what your concerns are and try to understand your well being is and always will be their paramount concern. It is your life but it is your parent's goal and greatest wish to help you navigate the pitfalls that will keep you from having a great future. Try to remember you are a teenager for only a very short time, and an adult for the rest of your life. Don't mortgage your future with bad decisions that will stay with you forever. Your parents don't have all the answers but they have been there.

Jasmyn: To make sure to communicate with your parents, and try to take an active role in your life, by figuring out what you want, how to incorporate that with what your parents want, and talk to them about ways to do that. Come at it from a solution standpoint, instead of a problem oriented one.

Juanita: What were the catalyst and /or turning point in your healing process?

Ken: That would have to be when Jasmyn actually asked for help.

Jasmyn: When I realized that kids meant I now had something to lose. I could make sure they had a good life, or cause them to have a bad one.

Juanita: Parents and teenagers by design seem to have challenges in communication. What do you feel is the biggest challenge teenager's face in communicating with their parents today?

Jasmyn: A lot of times parents don't understand where their teenagers are coming from, or how truly important the social aspects and feeling of having some control over their lives is to teenagers. The teenager will be worried about those things, and the parents are more worried about long term goals, such as college and a successful job, so the parent will be concentrated on those things, instead of addressing the immediate.

Juanita: In a situation of so much crisis and fear, how does a parent give unconditional love and acceptance when they are witnessing their teen making destructive choices?

Ken: It's not easy. One of the things Jasmyn said kept her from doing things that she knew were really wrong was that she never had a sense of desperation. She knew she always had the option to come home to loving parents. As a parent, taking that away would have been devastating. Knowing that you are there for your child is a beacon for them.

Juanita: You have suggested that one of the big influences to the downward spiral was that Jasmyn was very intelligent and wasn't challenged enough in school. How big of a problem do you feel this is today and what can parents do to help?

Ken: I think this has been a problem since the advent of public schools. Parents need to get involved with all aspects of their kids life. Finding an activity to stimulate and motivate is the key to communication.

Jasmyn: I think that is probably a big problem today with some kids, and I see it in my own daughter. So what I try to do with her is to give her things to channel that intelligence into- things like books, dance, and I'm thinking about getting her into drama as well. Otherwise, she will get bored and channel her energy into things that may not be good for her.

Juanita: You have been asked to speak at a court mediation group regarding how parents and teens relate. How have your unique viewpoints helped in this process and have you any success stories to share?

Ken: Timely question. Jasmyn is speaking next week at a women's symposium at a correctional facility in Salem, Oregon. As I write this my wife is on the phone with a reader that got in touch with us after reading the book. We are giving her suggestions and support through a very similar situation to our past. We are considering starting a support group as a result of the emails and calls we are receiving

Jasmyn: I think I have a very unique perspective in that I am a parent, but am still young enough to remember what it feels like to be a teen. The fact that my dad and I are so close now makes us a success story.

Juanita: I would like to thank both of you for sharing your thoughts today. With such a unique perspective and unflinching honesty, your book "He Said, She Said" will definitely help many people. Do you have anything else you'd like to share with your readers?

Ken: Yes, Parents can get a lot out of this book and they will read it willingly. For teens, especially troubled teens, if asked to read this it may be looked at as just another lame thing mom or dad wants from them. I suggest picking a chapter that will have particular relevance to your child and making a deal with your teen to read just this one chapter. Then talk about Jasmyn's and Ken's experience in that chapter with your teen. Questions like " Boy, Ken really blew it with Jasmyn there! Have I ever done anything that dumb?" Or " What do you think Jasmyn and Ken could have done differently to help instead of hurt there relationship?" This will open up those depleted avenues of communication. Have the teen also come up with a few questions for the parents. Once your talking your on your way!

