



What Darien Teens Wish Adults Knew

On November 20th, 2022, TYTF gathered a diverse cross-section of 30 Darien 10th-12th graders from three high schools for a solutions-focused listening session – the Darien Youth Community Conversation - about what we wish adults in our families, community, and schools knew about life as a Darien teen.

1. *We wish adults would trust us to make decisions and mistakes, and not try to micro-manage or control our lives for us.*

Examples:

- Some parents check ASPEN all the time - we feel constantly scrutinized and don't have time to correct mistakes before we have to explain ourselves. We wish they would trust us to come to them if we need help.
- Being tracked on location surveillance apps like Life 360 - the older we get, the more privacy is appropriate.
- Some parents want to control who we are friends with - trust us enough to let us make a mistake and learn for ourselves when other kids are a bad influence.

2. *We are so busy keeping up with school, sports, work and activities, there is no time left for us to just be a kid and have fun.*

Examples:

- We feel guilty when we are relaxing instead of doing something productive.
- We need space and a healthy balance between school and fun/socializing.
- It would mean a lot if parents would ask "What are you doing for fun? What brought you joy this week?" versus only asking about school.

3. *We feel a LOT of stress from the expectation to do everything perfectly.*

Examples:

- People contribute to the pressure cooker without realizing it. The worst question you could ask us is "Where are you applying to college? What do you want to major in?"
- The academic pressure ends up causing us to take on a course load that we really can't handle. Since peers prefer to share their better grades, it seems like everyone else is handling a high-stress workload and we should be, too.
- Even comments about how much potential we have feels like pressure, especially when it's potential we might not want to work towards.

4. *We are busier and under more pressure than when our parents were in high school. We wish you would understand that.*

Examples:

- Trust us when we say we're burnt out or need a break, instead of asking why we're so stressed out.
- We need you to see the big picture of everything we have going on in our lives, not just zero in on one part.
- My parents applied to 3 colleges, we apply to 18 - it would mean a lot if you could communicate that you understand it is much harder to be a teenager today.