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To Post or Not to Post?

The Case Against Posting Your Kid's College Acceptance News on Facebook

Anne Postic Jan 20, 2016

The teen years can be rough, and it's nice to have some great news. (As an aside, if your perfect kid's teen years have been a dream, I'm totes happy for you — but shut up.) You just want your teen to know how proud you are and share it with friends who will be really happy for you and your child. And your best friends love yours like they love their own.

But, real talk. During this season of college acceptances and rejections, please think before you post.

I know. Buzzkill.

Your son or daughter is understandably thrilled — and relieved — that they got in. You're over the moon, and heaving your own sigh of relief. The empty nest is within reach. College is happening! For real.

So, why do I begrudge you your Facebook post?

It's Not Your Moment

First of all, you don't own this news. Your child is almost an adult. (I mean, OK, I'm pretty old and have recently realized what an immature moron I really am, but technically, they're almost adults.)

One of the worst things about getting older is the lack of occasion for personal celebration. You already got your driver's license, graduated from some sort of school, got married or found a partner, had a kid or two, turned 30, bought a house, got your first big promotion or dream job — though not necessarily all of them, and not necessarily in that order.

Your milestones from here on are crappy. Your parents will die. Your kids won't be perfect, and they'll do horrible things. You'll never save quite enough for retirement, and if you aren't a millionaire yet, you probably won't be. Your romantic relationships might wax and wane or fail completely. You'll get wrinkles.

Sorry. It stinks, but there it is.

But you're mature enough to know what you do have and you can cherish the happy and thrilling moments — like the day your son or daughter gets that thick envelope. (Or, um, the day they log in to the college's online notification system and find out they were accepted, and let you know via text or muffled whoop from their bedroom.)

This isn't your moment, as much as it may feel that way. Let your kids bask in their own glory.

You Want Your Kid to Be Humble and Empathetic

By letting your children tell people about an exciting achievement on their own, you let them practice humility. They can take time to be empathetic and consider what their peers are going through. You're teaching them to value accomplishment for its own sake, and not for the attention it brings. You're raising an adult who can connect to other people and make lifelong friends. A wise parent once said, "My main job is to make sure my kid doesn't become a douche." We can't always succeed, but letting them spread the news selectively is a great start.

You aren't the only parent of a teen on Facebook. Over the years, you've met approximately 1 million other parents with kids the same age — at school, on the soccer field, at dance class and at all the other places you've bided your time while your son or daughter became a better person. And those parents are probably your friends on Facebook, from back in the day when you needed to facilitate carpools and team snack rosters.

You may not have kept up with them as your kids grew older and quit soccer for baseball, or dance for band. You might not even remember they're still on your friend list. But they're lurking. A lot of their children are still hoping for good news, or got wait-listed, or didn't get into their first choice school, or even their second or third.

Some kids won't get in anywhere. Some kids are breaking their parents' hearts, living every parent's worst fears. Those parents may not know if their once-upon-a-time baby will even make it to the end of senior year. And you don't always know who they are.

Some kids will get into a great school, but won't be able to afford to go. Think about that before you post about the scholarship letter your daughter just got, the letter that's icing on the cake, because you've been saving for years and weren't worried about paying for college anyway. Posting the second, third, fourth and even fifth acceptance letter lets people know that not only did your kid get in where theirs did not, they aren't even taking the spot. That news can be a real blow during a stressful time. Slip on that other parent's shoes for a minute.

Share the News with People Who Care – In Person

I disagree with people who say we need to be more honest on social media. No one wants to hear about your kid's drug problem, your divorce, your craptastic day at work, or your literal and figurative dirty laundry. (Well, your best friend does. So pick up the phone.) You don't have to share your unhappiness, but you don't have to go overboard sharing the great moments, either. There are always people who want to celebrate with you, and they'd rather hear it in person.

Call your parents, your best friend or your future scholar's godparents, and brag away. Most parents have a list of people who will share their joy. The top people on mine are my siblings and my sister-in-law, who are always ready to share my happiness. One big post on Facebook would only give me one chance to brag – and I want to brag 20 times, to 20 different people, and relive my joy every time.

And don't worry. The lack of a post won't make people think your kid is in jail, rotting away without a college acceptance letter. They'll eventually figure out that your kid is in college the old-fashioned way – by asking their own kids.

Revel in your big news, and praise your child up and down the street to her face, but think about other people's feelings and revel a little more quietly.