A Teacher’s Account

During a parent-teacher night, there was a parent who wanted to talk to me about her daughter’s grades. The fifteen-year-old had failed most of her tests and assignments, and the mother blamed me for that. The mother started by asking me if I even paid attention to her child and why I didn’t help her more.

I told her I help all my pupils as best as I can and that her daughter was no exception. But when I told the mother that I believe there might be a problem with the child’s study habits or environment, she got really upset.

The mother started telling me off that I knew nothing of their home situation and that it was none of my business either. She asked me how I dared even consider linking her bad grades to her family.

I told the mother: to get good grades in school, a pupil needs to study well, have a good studying environment at home and needs to get proper support from the parents.

Again the mother attacked me to evade her responsibility to help her daughter get better grades. But her daughter doesn’t only perform poorly for maths. I’ve been talking to some of the colleagues and I definitely think the problem lies at home.

When I tried asking about the daughter’s studying habits again, the mother said she didn’t know much about those. At this I replied: “Ah, that might be where the problem lies. If you don’t even know about her habits, how can you properly support her?”
A Compassionate Teacher’s Account

During a parent-teacher night, there was a parent who wanted to talk to me about her daughter’s grades. The fifteen-year-old had failed most of her tests and assignments, and the mother blamed me for that. The mother started asking me if I even paid attention to her child and why I didn’t help her more.

The mother was clearly upset and believed that I was the cause of this emotion.

“Are you upset because your daughter has bad grades?”

“Of course, I’m upset that she has bad grades and you are doing nothing to help her!”

This was of course painful to hear, but I needed to listen through her harsh words and hear what she was actually saying. What I heard was that she’s feeling anxious about the thought that her daughter might not be doing well in class and might not pass at the end of the year. She might not know what I do in class to assist her daughter through her learning process, it might be best to help her see that so that we can both look for a way to get the pupil to perform more satisfactory.

“I understand. I myself am very unhappy about your daughter’s results. My goal is to help my pupils as best as I can so they can study successfully and pass their exams.”

The mother calmed down a little bit, but naturally still didn’t seem to feel comforted. I had done nothing to prove that I mean only good for her daughter, as intentions are worth nothing without actions.

“Would it maybe be of help to have more insight on your daughter’s class learning process and my methods and check if that is enough for her to manage herself at home? We could go through it together and if you feel there’s something missing, we could discuss ways to make it better.”

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Loaded Language: Feelings?

In each of the following statements, do you regard the speaker to be expressing her or his feelings? If not, please play with the sentence until it does feel like it’s properly expressing the speaker’s feelings.

Always motivate your answer.

The Statements:

1) “I feel dismissed when no one at work responds to my suggestions.”

2) “It feels completely incomprehensible how you can do such a thing.”

3) “I’d be furious too if that had happened to me.”
4) “You’re wearing me out.”

5) “I feel independent, now that I have my own car and paycheck.”

6) “I am flabbergasted to see her picture on the frontpage.”

7) “I feel you’re annoying me on purpose.”

8) “I feel displaced, with all this new technology coming in.”
9) “I feel I’m being unkind to them.”

10) “I am feeling how disappointing it must be for her to see the house all empty now.”