



# CBTS NEWSLETTER

MAY 2006

## Teenagers and Consequences

by John L. Lund, PhD

"In nearly 30 years, I have yet to interview a teen who did not understand his or her parents' values. Teenagers do not lack knowledge of right and wrong. What most lack is commitment to their parents' values. This is an important point for parents. Telling a teenager something he or she already knows is much like trying to teach a pig to sing. First, it won't work, and second, it irritates the pig.

When parents overreact to disobedience and the challenging of their values, instead of dealing with the real issues, they allow parent ego, obedience, and respect for parent values to take center stage. Emotional appeals from the parent are met with emotional appeals for freedom from the teenager. Anger is met by anger and resentment by resentment.

Recently two parents responded to my statement that God gives parents children in order to teach the parents that there are limits to what anyone can do to influence another with, 'There is nothing you can do to change a determined teen!' 'Consequences teach,' I responded, 'preferably natural consequences - bumping into boundaries, learning by suffering, the school of hard knocks, experience. Life itself is often the only teacher left standing.' Some people learn by hearing; many learn by watching. But certain lessons can be learned only through suffering the consequences of poor judgment and decisions.

Some parents are held hostage by the fear and reality of lost opportunities for their teenager. 'He won't graduate with his class.' Actually what is at stake is the parent's ideal image of the child. For example, reality is the child lies; the parent's ideal image is 'My child is not a liar.' However, these lost opportunities as a consequence of poor decisions are significant teachers. This is where the well-meaning parent errs in substituting a lecture for consequences.

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Poor self-esteem for poor behavior is OK. What parent would want a child to have good self-esteem for doing inappropriate things? Parents should want a child to feel bad for acting badly. That feeling is guilt and remorse, and it can result in learning that there are emotional consequences for poor choices. And a child can also learn that by making better decisions, you will feel better about yourself.

Parents who are always rescuing their children from the consequences of poor judgments are contributing to the continual delinquency of their minor. The 'con man' is the person who learned he could beat the system and be a law unto himself. He may have learned to cry, say he's sorry, promise never to do it again, lie, or in one way or

another manipulate others to get out of suffering consequences.

Consequences teach if parents have the courage to allow them to work. A greater sadness than a teenager who is spared learning by natural consequences is an adult who refuses to let consequences teach the lesson the parents were unsuccessful in teaching by words alone.

Teenagers do not lack knowledge. Many are making good decisions on a regular basis and need praise and approval. And for teenagers who make poor decisions, consequences that are reasonable, age appropriate, and consistent may be the only voice they hear."

## The Delayed or "Anticipatory" Consequence

Immediate consequences work really well with rats, pigeons, mice, and monkeys. In real-world situations, they typically create more problems than they solve.

### *Problems with Immediate Consequences:*

1. Most of us have great difficulty thinking of an immediate consequence.
2. We "own" the problem rather than handing it back to the child. In other words, we are forced to do more thinking than the child.
3. We are forced to react while we and the child are upset.
4. We don't have time to put together a reasonable plan and a support team to help us carry it out.
5. We often end up making threats we can't back up.
6. We generally fail to deliver a strong dose of empathy before providing the consequences.

The next time your child does something inappropriate, experiment with saying, "Oh no. This is so sad. I'm going to have to do something about this. But not now...later. Try not to worry about it." The anticipatory consequence allows you time to "anticipate" whose support you might need, how the child might react, and how to make sure that you can follow through with a logical consequence. This technique also allows the child to "anticipate" or worry about a wide array of possible consequences.



## Following Confidentiality Rules Helps Foster Children & Parents

Children and the adults in their lives need to have their privacy protected. The Department has made provisions to ensure that privacy is respected, given the special circumstances that bring together kids, birth families, foster parents, child welfare agencies, government and the legal system. When all parties abide by the rules of confidentiality, they build trust and encourage more positive communications, creating a better environment for children.

### *Protecting Children's Privacy*

#### *At School*

It is important that teachers (and other service providers) have information about children to better meet the child's needs. However, it is not the foster parent's role to communicate details about the child's case to teachers. DCFS policy states that the caseworker not the foster parent is authorized to communicate case information on a "need to know" basis. The foster parents and caseworker should work closely to determine how to ensure a child's privacy and get needed support at school.

#### *Among family, friends and neighbors*

Foster parents are bound by rules of confidentiality that family, friends and neighbors are not. Even an innocently asked question about how a child in your family came into care must be answered by saying it is confidential and cannot be discussed. Not telling case information to people who are close to you (and the children) is difficult, but is a policy that must be followed. However, if that person may be a temporary caretaker for the child during a vacation or emergency, discuss with the caseworker what information should be shared.

Think about disclosure in terms of possible behaviors the child might demonstrate and what may be needed to care for him or her.

### *With other foster parents*

The fact that foster parents have shared experiences that are so helpful and comforting can also make it easy to forget about confidentiality. As long as foster parents don't disclose names and case information, discussing issues with other foster parents can be beneficial, without breaking confidentiality rules.

### *With the media*

Positive news coverage about foster care can be a good thing. However, it must happen within the guidelines of confidentiality. Foster parents who are approached by the media must direct all inquiries to DCFS Office of Communications. They will work with the news outlet on positive media opportunities. It will also ensure that confidentiality requirements are met.



#### THANK YOU

to all of the proctors in attendance at our April \*MANDATORY proctor training. We were able to cover many valuable topics pertaining to your important role as a proctor parent. Those in attendance found the information extremely helpful. We also gave away numerous door prizes including first aid kits, smoke alarms, fire extinguisher, etc. Thank you to Kim, Anna and Josh for their assistance with this training.

\*required, obligatory, necessary, requisite, compulsory, essential, imperative

## Using Enforceable Statements

**M**any children have an uncanny ability to get us pulled into trying to control what we really cannot. Truly powerful parents recognize this and avoid this trap by using enforceable statements. Enforceable statements tell kids what WE will do or allow...rather than trying to tell THEM what to do.

**W**hen we set limits by saying what WE will do or what WE will allow:

- ◆ We avoid looking like a fool when we can't get our kids to do what we say.
- ◆ We share some control with our children. As a result, they are much less likely to resist in order to regain control.
- ◆ We avoid getting sucked into trying to control something we really can't.

**E**xamples of unenforceable statements:

- ◆ Do your chores on time or you'll be grounded.
- ◆ Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!
- ◆ Don't come back to this room until you can show some respect!
- ◆ I'm not loaning you any more money.
- ◆ Get this room cleaned up right now, and I mean it!
- ◆ You can't watch TV until you have finished your homework.

**E**xamples of enforceable statements:

- ◆ My car is leaving at 8:00 a.m.
- ◆ I'll listen as soon as your voice is as calm as mine.
- ◆ I'll do all of the things I do for you around here when I'm feeling respected.
- ◆ I give allowances to those who finish their chores.
- ◆ I'll provide TV and Playstation when your homework is done.
- ◆ I'll be happy to buy you the clothes I feel are appropriate.
- ◆ I lend money to those who have collateral.
- ◆ I lend the car to those who have made a deposit equal to the insurance deductible.
- ◆ I'll be happy to listen to you as soon as your father and I are finished talking.
- ◆ I'll reimburse you for your college tuition for those classes in which you earn a "B" or above. I'll be happy to give you the money when I see your report card.

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Note

Friday, May 12th will be Denise's last day as a proctor specialist. She recently received her C.P.C.I. license and has accepted a position as a fulltime counselor. Fortunately, she will be staying on as a contracted clinician for CBTS. We wish Denise the best in her new position and sincerely appreciate her dedication, hardwork and contribution to the growth of CBTS.

## PROCTOR TRAINING

During the month of May we will have three different proctor training sessions. Proctors invited to attend the training on either May 10th or May 17th will receive a separate invitation.

Wednesday, May 10  
6:30 p.m.

Initial Orientation Meeting  
(for new proctors)

Wednesday, May 17  
6:30 p.m.

Gender Specific Training  
(for proctors primarily  
working with females)

Wednesday, May 24  
6:30 p.m.

Proctor Training  
(for all proctors)

## HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT ANYTHING

### *10 Tips for talking with kids about tough issues*

Raising a child is probably the most gratifying job any of us will ever have—and of the toughest. In large part, that's because times have changed. We live in an increasingly complex world that challenges us everyday with a wide range of disturbing issues that are difficult for children to understand and for adults to explain. Our kids are already hearing about these issues from TV, movies, magazines, and school friends. If we don't talk with them early and often—and answer their questions—they'll get their facts from someone else. And we'll have missed an important opportunity to offer our children information that's not only accurate, but also in sync with our own personal values and moral principles.

#### *1. Start early*

Kids are hearing about and forced to cope with tough issues at increasingly early ages, often before they are ready to understand all aspects of these complicated ideas. Medical research and public health data tells us that when young children want information, advice and guidance, they turn to their parents first. Once they reach the teenage years, they tend to depend more on friends, the media and other outsiders for their information. As a parent, you have a wonderful opportunity to talk with your child about these issues first, before anyone else can confuse your child with incorrect information or explanations that lack the sense of values you want to instill. We need to take advantage of this "window of opportunity" and talk with them earlier and more often, particularly about tough issues like sex, HIV/AIDS, violence, alcohol, drugs, etc.

#### *2. Initiate Conversations With Your Child*

Say, for instance, that you and your 12-year-old are watching TV together and the program's plot includes a teenage pregnancy. After the show is over, ask your child what she thought of the program. Did she agree with how the teenagers behaved? Just one or two questions could help start a valuable discussion. When speaking with your child, be sure to use words they can understand.

#### *3. ...Even About Sex and Relationships*

If you feel uncomfortable talking about such sensitive subjects—particularly sex and relationships—with your children, you are not alone. Many parents feel awkward and uneasy, especially if they are anxious about the subject. But, for their sake, try to overcome your nervousness and bring up the issue with them.

#### *4. Create An Open Environment*

Our children will look to us for answers only if they feel we will be open to their questions. It's up to us to create the kind of atmosphere in which they can ask any questions—on any subject—freely and without fear of consequence. How do you create such an atmosphere? By being encouraging, supportive and positive.

#### *5. Listen to Your Child*

It's important to find time to give children our undivided attention. Listening carefully builds self-esteem by letting them know they are important to us and can lead to valuable discussions about a wide variety of issues. Listening carefully also helps us better understand what our children really want to know as well as what they already understand.

#### *6. Communicate your Values*

You have the opportunity to be the first person to talk with your child about tough issues before anyone else can confuse them with explanations that lack the sense of values and moral principles you want to instill. Research shows that children want and need moral guidance from their parents, so don't hesitate to make your beliefs clear.

### 7. Try to be Honest

Whatever their age, children deserve honest answers and explanations. It's what strengthens their ability to trust. Also, when we don't provide a straightforward answer, kids make up their own explanations, which can be more frightening than any real, honest response we can offer.

### 8. Be Patient

Often it can feel like forever before a child gets their story out. As adults, we are tempted to finish their sentences or fill in words and phrases in an effort to hear the point sooner. Try to resist this impulse. By listening patiently, we allow them to think at their own pace and we are letting them know that they are worthy of our time.

### 9. Use Everyday Opportunities to Talk

It's important to try to talk with your children about tough issues often, but there isn't always time in the day to sit down for a long talk. Also, they tend to resist formal discussions about today's toughest issues, often categorizing them as just another lecture. But if we use "talk opportunities," moments that arise in everyday life, as occasions for discussion, our children will be a lot less likely to tune us out.

### 10. Talk About It Again. And Again.

Younger children can only take in small bits of information at any one time. They won't learn all they need to know about a particular topic from a single discussion. That's why it's important to let a little time pass, then ask the child to tell you what they remember about your conversation. This will help you correct any misconceptions and fill in missing facts.

## Ten Essential Steps to Improving Communication with your Teenager

### 1. Ask open-ended questions without interrogating

*(Try asking a question and sharing some information yourself.)*

### 2. Take them out for something to eat

*(Start by praising them for something you appreciate, put the 'issue for improvement' in the middle of the conversation, and then make sure to close your conversation with lots of positives.)*

### 3. Invite feedback

*(Let them know that you welcome input as long as it is given respectfully. Let them know that all subjects are open to discussion, even though as the adult you retain the right to make final decisions.)*

### 4. Listen between the lines

*(If they seem suddenly moody or difficult with you, it might not have anything to do with you. Don't take it personally if they don't want to talk about it. Let them know that you care and if they would like to talk about whatever if bothering them, you will make time to listen.)*

### 5. Offer choices

*(Don't assume that they are in the mood for a chat when you are. Let them offer an alternative time for a discussion if it isn't a good time. You can't force a good conversation.)*

### 6. Keep your sense of humor

*(Laughter really is the best medicine. Be careful to have fun, but never to tease a teen about a sensitive issue. Laugh at yourself, not them!)*

### 7. Enjoy quiet times together

*(Comfortable silence is still communicating the message of caring. You don't always have to be talking to be fostering communication.)*

### 8. Listen to the music your teen listens to

*(You need to know what influences your teen. The same principle applies to TV and movies. Don't be afraid to offer your opinion if you find their choices unacceptable. You don't have to be 'cool,' you are the parent.)*

### 9. Show affection in various ways

*(Don't be afraid to hug, ruffle their hair, squeeze their shoulders, etc. Give verbal encouragement, write little notes, pick up a little gift now and then, etc. They need to feel loved and important to us.)*

### 10. Never give up!

*(Continue to treat them the way you wish to be treated, even when they don't deserve it. Communicate love and compassion even when they mess up!)*



# Help Wanted!

**POSITION:** Mother

**JOB DESCRIPTION:** Long term, team player needed, for challenging permanent work in an often chaotic environment. Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include evenings and weekends and frequent 24 hour shifts on call.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** The rest of your life. Must be willing to be hated, at least temporarily, until someone needs \$5.00. Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly. Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges, such as small gadget repair, mysteriously sluggish toilets and stuck zippers. Must be willing to be indispensable one minute and an embarrassment the next. Must always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst. Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of the end product.

**POSSIBILITY FOR ADVANCEMENT & PROMOTION:** Virtually none. Your job is to remain in the same position for years, without complaining, constantly retraining and updating your skills, so that those in your charge can ultimately surpass you.

**PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:** None required unfortunately. On-the-job training offered on a continually exhausting basis.

**WAGES AND COMPENSATION:** Get this! You pay them! Offering frequent raises and bonuses. A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 because of the assumption that college will help them become financially independent. When you die, you give them whatever is left. The oddest thing about this reverse-salary scheme is that you actually enjoy it and then wish you could only do more.

**BENEFITS:** While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered; this job supplies limitless opportunities for personal growth and free hugs for life if you play your cards right.