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# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

### Adolescent Back Talk

An enlightened father recently noted, "The more responsibility I give my son—without being overly protective—the nicer he is."

This parent has discovered that back talk ceases when we allow our teens enough opportunity to suffer and learn from their own mistakes. Generally, adolescents who talk back have parents who get angry and rescue them from the consequences of their actions.

There is hope for teens who display obnoxious, rebellious, and difficult behavior. The following explores ways to handle the three main reasons for back talk.

#### 1. Teens talk back when we threaten their autonomy and independence

If your child was basically loving through the fifth or sixth grade, back talk usually clears up when you listen to your son or daughter's ideas and when you present your thoughts without trying to make your teen adopt your position. This approach provides your teen with love combined with the right to fail.

Teens may test us to see if we will rescue them. But most back talk ends after they find out we will only continue to lovingly provide our point of view in a non-angry way and allow them to suffer the consequences of their behavior.

A conversation that lets teens know they are responsible for their actions might go something like this:

Mom: "Robert, sometimes you and I have a difficult time together. How do you feel about this?"

Robert: "You're always on my case - you tell me what to do all the time. It makes me mad!"

Mom: "I know it does. I realize that I'm always trying to make sure you do the right thing and not get into trouble - but I'm not giving you the right to 'blow it' for yourself. I just wanted to apologize. Everyone has the right to make mistakes. I love you too much to keep trying to save you and make sure everything goes all right."

Robert: (stunned) "Well . . . that's okay, Mom."

2. **All of us have the inalienable right to protest**  
Just as griping about taxes makes us feel better about having to pay them, teens often feel more understood when their parents accept their protests. There is then no reason for them to up the ante to disrespect. But, in cases of extreme disrespect, it may be best to ask your teen to come back later. A wise parent says, "I have trouble listening to this," rather than, "Don't talk that way!"

#### 3. Back talk may be a symptom of a deeper problem

When back talk is one of several other symptoms, including poor school behavior or irresponsibility, a different approach may be necessary. Instead of allowing more freedom with consequences, parental structure may need to be tightened and consequences imposed rather than being allowed to occur naturally. Professional help is in order when teen problems are deeper than back talk and failure in school.



*Teens talk back when we  
threaten their independence*

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#### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### **Angry Kids**

"Why does my child always have an attitude? She's often disruptive, disrespectful, or picking on other children. She's always the one with a chip on her shoulder." This frustrated parent expresses the feelings of many—Why is my child angry and how do I deal with it?

A child who acts out may be expressing other emotions through anger. A youngster may be experiencing a loss, a divorce, or a move. A child may be trying to let the world know that his/her life is not what it ought to be. Regardless of the reason, it looks the same. How can we deal with this angry attitude without being a psychologist?

***A Parent's Job is to Understand,  
Not to Fix Things.***

Listening for understanding is impossible when a child is "drunk" on anger. Never reason with an angry child. Instead say, "It sounds like you're really mad. I want to listen and understand. I will listen when your voice is as calm as mine. Come back then." If you can't make the child leave, you leave.

Be prepared to repeat your calm statement if the child is determined to yell out the anger without leaving. "Don't worry about it now. We'll talk when you're calm." You may need to say this several times. Be prepared to play "broken record" with, what did I say? Use these phrases instead of reasoning. Reasoning will only fuel the anger.

#### **Thanks for Sharing That**

Once the child is able to discuss the anger, listen without reasoning. Try to avoid telling the child why he/she should not be angry. Avoid telling them that things will be okay and how to make it better. Your job is to prove that you understand—"It sounds like you get mad when I tell you it's time to do your chores. Thanks for sharing that with me. I'll give it some thought. If you think of a better way for me to remind you, let me know."

#### **Parents Can Make It Worse**

Parents who do not treat their children with respect send a message that says, "You're not worthy." These parents often communicate with a lot of yelling. This encourages the child to yell and scream back while the parents retaliate by getting more mad. It's a vicious cycle that breeds chronic anger in the child.

In place of anger, parents should work on listening to their children in a non-threatening, honest, and open manner. Most children will talk openly only after they truly believe their parents are interested in what they have to say and recognize their feelings.

#### **When Anger Continues**

If, despite your best attempts to understand your child's anger, there is no change in behavior after three months, parents should seek professional counseling for their child. In some instances, chronic anger is best helped by a professional.

#### **Never reason with an angry child. Use empathy and understanding instead.**

"It sounds like you're really mad. I want to listen and understand. And I will listen when your voice is as calm as mine. Come back then."



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### Arguing

Young people need to know their parents mean it when they set limits. Parents need to know that there are ways to say "no" without waging a major battle.

I wish your children would thank you for having the strength to set limits. But children have never been known to say, "Thanks, Dad, I feel a lot more secure now that I know you mean what you say. Thanks for loving me enough to set these limits." Instead, they may pout, complain, stomp around, run to their rooms, whine, or talk back. This often leaves the adult angry and confused.

Why are children so testy when we give them limits that help build their sense of security and self-confidence? Children need to test limits just to make sure they are firm. Each youngster seems to have his or her own special testing routine. Some use anger, some use guilt, some are sneaky, while others use forgetting to test your resolve.

It helps parents to remember that kids hear the word "no" far too often. It seems to be a call to arms, a fighting word. A child often wages war against "no" in a very subtle way-by trying to get the parent to do all the thinking while he or she stands back and criticizes.

You can turn the tables on children by forcing them to do most of the thinking. **Just replace "no" by saying "yes" to something other than the child's explicit request/demand.** Use "thinking words" instead of "fighting words." For example:

**Fighting words:** "No, you can't go out to play. You need to practice your lessons."

**Thinking words:** "Yes, you may go out to play as

soon as you practice your lessons."

Most youngsters will try to argue when faced with "thinking words." However, since you started the conversation with "yes" instead of "no," you shouldn't feel guilty or explain or justify anything. State-of-the-art arguing is now in your hands. No matter what your child says, simply agree that it is probably true. Then add the word "and." Follow this by repeating your first assertion.

### Compare these two approaches:

Teen: I need to use the car to go skiing.

Dad: You can't use the car until you pay your gasoline bill.

Teen: But, Dad, I promised my friends.

Dad: Why don't you make them drive?

Teen: But you don't like the way they drive!

### Here's how Dad could guide the teen to do all the thinking:

Teen: I need to use the car to go skiing.

Dad: Feel free to use it as soon as your gasoline bill is paid.

Teen: But, Dad, I promised my friends.

Dad: I'm sure that's true ...and... feel free to use it as soon as you pay the bill.

Teen: But I have to buy the lift ticket.

Dad: I bet that's true too ... and ... feel free to use the car as soon as you pay ...

Teen: I know! Don't say it again.

Easy-to-learn tools like the above example can be used to eliminate fights with your children.



*There is nothing wrong with a child that a little arguing won't make worse*

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## Avoiding Control Battles

Avoiding control battles is not always easy, but is an essential, learnable skill. Such battles often occur when a parent gives their teen an order the parent can't enforce, such as: "Pick up that stuff right now." "Move fast." "You're not leaving this house with *that* on." Teens will find many other things to do, rather than pick up their stuff, "right now." No one can *make* a teen move faster. Many teens sigh and move more slowly when asked to speed up.

In most situations, where parents give orders, they should start their sentences with the word "if." "If" can always be used to indicate choices and consequences. For instance, the parent might say, "If you get your stuff picked up by dinner, then you'll be eating with us," or, "If you move really fast, I'll feel like moving fast for you, and I'll start dinner."

Using enforceable statements is another essential element in avoiding control battles. When using these, the wise parent talks about himself or herself: "I will be doing the laundry

that has been brought down to the laundry room," or "I will fix dinner as soon as the rooms are clean."

Unwise parents set up control battles by saying things like, "We're leaving at 8:00, you've got to be ready." even United Airlines doesn't say, "We're leaving at 8:00, you've got to be ready!" United says, "We're leaving at 8:00 and if you're there 10 minutes ahead of departure, we won't give your seat away."

Control battles can be avoided by parents and teen problem-solving together:

Parent: "Honey, do you have a minute?"

Teen: "Yeah, sure."

Parent: "Lately you've been leaving your school work scattered throughout the house."

Teen: "Yeah, I know."

Parent: "What's a solution? What do you want to do about it?"

Teen: "Put it all away, I guess."

Parent: "Well, that would be great!

That would handle it this time. But this seems to be happening a lot.

What do you want to do about it all the time?"

Teen: "Put it away after I leave it out."

Parent: "That would be great. What if you still forget? It's easy to forget, you know."

Teen: "You pick it up?"

Parent: "Well, maybe I could. How about if I just sweep through the place and put all your stuff in a garbage bag and put it in the rec room? Then you'd know where it is and it would only take me a second."

Teen: "All my books and shoes and stuff together?"

Parent: "Yeah, probably."

Teen: "I think I'll remember to pick it all up."

Parent: "Well, I hope so, but I do understand that forgetting is easy."

This parent avoided a control battle by problem solving around consequences, without anger. It's simple once parent practice and get the knack.



### *Rules for avoiding control battles:*

- 1. Don't give an order that you cannot enforce.*
- 2. Tell the teen how you stand, rather than what he or she must do.*
- 3. Give the teen choices.*
- 4. Problem solve together while understanding your teen's feelings.*
- 5. Give only reasonable consequences that you can live with yourself.*
- 6. If you've made a mistake with your teen, admit it without overdoing the apology.*

*Parent expression of frustration and anger almost always means there has been a control battle, and worse yet, the teen has won!*

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### Building Cooperation with School People

The ideal role parents play in their child's school life centers around encouragement and good modeling. They leave the school discipline to the teachers and administrators and allow the child to handle his or her own school problems. However, there are times when things are not ideal and a parent must become involved in the school situation. This can be a difficult position. If it's not handled with tact, your child may feel unable to handle his/her own problems in the future.

Instead of storming into the teacher's room offering solutions, we need to collect information and think about the choices given. Parents make three common mistakes when talking with teachers:

1. We tell the teacher what to do. When we say, "I want my kid out of that classroom," what we are really saying is, "You aren't smart enough to figure out what to do, so I've got to tell you."
2. We go into the school with threats, "If you won't help, I'm going to go to the principal." This creates even more problems than we had when we came in.
3. We muster an army of like-minded parents to assault the teacher en masse. Any victory in this sort of confrontation will be short-lived, for the teacher will fight for his or her life. A variation of this tactic is saying, "I'm not the only one who's upset with this situation. A lot of others are too."

Parents who get the best results with teachers use the magic word "describe." It's magic because when we use it we aren't judging: "I'd like to describe something that's happening, and then give you my interpretation of it."

When we've had our say, we can use some more magic words - "I'd like to get your thoughts on that." By saying this, we are telling the teacher that we have confidence that he or she can think for himself or herself. It is also a way of getting valuable and surprising information. For example, a child who is easy to work with at home one-on-one, may not respond the same way in a larger group. The teacher's reading of the situation is usually very helpful. We are able to get the teacher's best suggestions if we don't put the teacher on the defense.

Another approach is to ask, "What kind of options are available to solve a problem like this," and then allow the teacher to do the thinking for a while. This shows the teacher that we are open to looking at more than one way of solving the problem. People who use this technique find that others are much more friendly and helpful.

In the event that we do not get satisfaction with the teacher and want to kick the problem up the ladder, we should say, "Would you mind going with me to see if the principal has any thoughts on this?" That's a whole lot better than saying, "If I don't get my way, I'm going to the principal."

Our chief mission in approaching a teacher is to discuss our child's problem and resolve it—to talk as well as listen, to suggest as well as take suggestions. Good common sense values of communication and respect for others are much more effective than commands and threats.



*"What kind of options are available to solve a problem like this?" "I'd like to describe something that's happening."*

# **MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC**

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## **Consistent Messages Produce Positive Results**

When parents give inconsistent messages, they tend to raise negativistic and strong-willed children. As most children learn from modeling, the parent may not be modeling behavior they want the child to grow into! In short, it is hard for a child to really respect an inconsistent parent.

**Two guidelines to follow in order to be consistent**  
Too many rules can cause parents to be inconsistent, or paint themselves into a corner. For example, you may decide your teen cannot stay out past 11:00 p.m. and then a special occasion comes along and you allow him/her to stay out later than 11:00 p.m. You have become inconsistent in your message. Instead of making hard and fast rules, treat each situation on an individual basis.

Sometimes parents are inconsistent because they give a consequence without really thinking it through. Parents are usually inconsistent if they come up with a consequence when they are angry.

An example might be, "Cindy, you're grounded for two weeks!" Later Cindy comes and says, "Gee, Dad, next week is the Senior Prom. Surely, you're not going to be so cruel you ground me from that?" The father is in a bind. If he doesn't go back on his word, and is consistent, he's really mean? On the other hand, giving in may breed disrespect. It's better to wait for calm times to consequence your teen's behavior.

### **Teens have three options**

**Teens who hear inconsistent messages tend to think:**

- Their parent doesn't think things through, but rather shoots from the hip
- Wonders if their parent is basically a push-over
- Wonders if their parent has their best interests at heart

### **Parents can change**

Parents who give inconsistent messages can change by first admitting they are inconsistent and allowing the other parent to handle certain situations.

### **Or the inconsistent parent can talk it over with his/her teen:**

"You know, John, I don't think I'm helping you very much because I'm inconsistent. I tell you one thing one minute, and then I tell you another thing another minute. I bet that leads you to think I don't know what I'm talking about most of the time. So I'm going to try and do less of that. If you see me being inconsistent, you may want to remind me about it in a thoughtful way."

Keep in mind, though, your teen may only remind you when it's in his/her favor to do so.



### ***Consistent Parents. . .***

- 1. Treat each situation on an individual basis, instead of making hard and fast rules.***
- 2. Wait for calm times to consequence behavior.***

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#### **Curfews**

If the subject of curfews brings to mind endless battles with your teen, here's a new approach to try. Treat the last three years your teen is home as practice for the real world. The fewer the rules, the better. Ideally, those rules should be the same as in the real world.

In the real world, there are only a few dorm rules, and those who live in apartments set their own rules. But don't panic! That doesn't mean a teen has total freedom. Instead, we ask them to begin making their own rules.

Instead of telling your teen when to be home, ask, "Where are you going?" "Where can I reach you?" and "When should I start worrying?"

The teen should set the curfew. It may be different each time, just like in the real world. What we're doing is preparing our teens to live as adults.

#### **Negotiate**

Parents can negotiate with their teens on behavior they can both live with. If a teen says he'll be home at 5:00 a.m., that's unacceptable. A parent can say, "I'm not up to worrying that late," and recognize the teen is just testing.

#### **Two-way Street**

An experienced father of five learned to allow his son Don to make the most of his own decisions, including how late he stayed out. His dad made a deal with him: "I won't hassle you if you let me know where you are and how to reach you, in an emergency. I'll do the same for you, so you'll always know where I am."

This dad learned that curfews are a two-way street. Once he arrived home two hours late to a household of children who were worried sick. From then on he called if he was going to be late.

#### **Promise Not to Worry**

Expressing fear and concern has a lot more impact than expressing anger with teens who stay out late without letting us know where they are. A wise parent lets their teen know they're the type who doesn't worry: "If you're late, and I don't know where you are, I imagine you could be lying on the side of a road—and fifteen minutes could mean the difference between life and death if you need a transfusion. But if you agree to always call when you're late, I'll know nothing is wrong."

#### **Anger Doesn't Work**

When a teen walks in the door late and is not even sorry, it naturally makes a parent mad. But yelling only makes things worse. Instead, say, "It's lucky for you that I'm angry because I'm not going to talk to you about being late until tomorrow, when I can think better."

As difficult as this is, it helps to remember we can't reason with teens when they're in an emotional state. And the words we use when we're emotional are often the ones we wish we could take back.

It's far more effective to deal with children when they can really hear us; when we're happy and when they're happy.



*Replace anger with concern*



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#### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### Does Repeating a Grade Ever Work?

"My son's teacher says he needs to repeat his grade next year. I want him to do well in school, but this has to be a terrible blow to his self-confidence. What do I do?"

I hear this question over and over each spring. It's a parent's expression of frustration and anger about the fact that their child's achievement problems have not been solved. It's a time of shattered dreams. It's also time for some very serious decision making for both school personnel and parents.

The decision to retain a student is a decision that must not be made lightly. The fallout from this decision can have a lasting impact on the child.

#### **Punishment is tempting**

The temptation is often to do something to the child to show that he is not going to get away with poor school performance. Retention and/or threats of retention are often the first things that come to mind.

Rather than doling out punishment or threats, time can be better spent discovering the root causes behind a child's lack of success in school. Professionals have just recently discovered that 97% of the children who avoid their schoolwork have self-concept problems.

#### **When to retain?**

##### **1. Identify the root causes**

Until the root causes of a child's academic problems are found, retention will not only be fruitless, it will be

permanently damaging.

Identifying the root causes of the problem is something that requires the cooperation of both teacher and parent. It cannot be done by either teacher or parent alone since it requires looking at family patterns and the reactions of the child at school. Caution! Do not consider retention until this first step has been achieved.

##### **2. Create a plan for success**

Once the root cause has been identified, a plan can be developed. Unless a solid plan that indicates a 90-100% chance of success exists, retention not only will be wasted, but may be permanently damaging. This plan usually includes changes at home, strong cooperation between school and home, some individual counseling for the child, as well as different teaching and relationship strategies at school. Do not consider retention until this step has been achieved.

##### **3. Administer "Light's Retention Scale"**

H. Wayne Light, Ph.D., discovered there are 19 different aspects of a child's life that need to be considered before deciding to use retention. He has developed a scale that is very helpful when parents and professionals work together to make the retention decision.

##### **4. Provide effective counseling**

It is important that child, parent and teacher each feels good about retention. If any one of these does not, it is doomed. It is especially important for the youngster to feel good about this decision. Children who are not adequately and effectively helped with their beliefs about retention usually suffer long-term self-concept problems, resulting in additional learning problems as the years go on.

Retention is rarely a solution for underachievement problems. It is effective only when all the following questions can be answered with a resounding "yes."

1. Have the root causes of the problem been discovered?
2. Has an effective plan of treatment been developed and accepted by both the professionals and the parents?
3. Does the *Light's Retention Scale* indicate the child is a good candidate for retention?
4. Does the child feel good about the retention?
5. Do the parents feel good about the retention?
6. Does the school feel good about the retention?
7. If any one of these questions receives a negative answer, forget about retention until all six questions receive a resounding "yes."



***Do not retain a child unless you have an effective plan for treating the underlying cause of the problem***

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#### **Don't Shoot the Teacher!**

Some children are pre-conditioned to be underachievers before they ever enter a school. The teachers and parents of these children often spend years of frustration trying to get these youngsters to achieve their potential. They are often faced with discouragement and disappointment as they watch bright children who seem to want to achieve, but just can't seem to put out the effort necessary for success. It is almost as if these children have learned to avoid the very things they need in order to be successful learners. It is so easy to blame the school. However, there are many learning related problems that do not start in the school, and cannot be cured by having more discipline, more understanding teachers, or more time spent teaching the basics.

Consider the following situation in which one parent had to struggle for everything she got as a youngster. As an adult she is dedicated to making sure her child does not have to experience the same pain. At the same time, her husband believes it is best for children to earn what they get. This provides the potential for a family pattern that can create an underachieving child.

The child in this family soon learns how to get what he wants. "Daddy, I need some more money. My allowance ran out." Father will answer, "That's sad. You'll have to wait until Saturday for your regular allowance."

The youngster goes to Mother with, "Mom, look how mean Daddy is!" Mother, who is dedicated to making sure the child experiences no pain, finds herself saying, "Now, now. Don't worry. Daddy's just tired and doesn't understand. I'll get you some money, but be sure you don't tell Daddy."

Mother is hoping to show that she is a loving friend. The sad truth is that the foundation for

underachievement has just been laid. Yes, the child may see Mother as loving; but a devastating lesson has just been learned: you get what you want through manipulation, not through effort.

This attitude may be firmly in place by the time the child goes to school. You can guess what the youngster thinks when the teacher says, "Here is some schoolwork to do, it will take some effort." This poor child thinks, "No! Effort is not the way you get what you want. There is an easier way."

It will not be long before this student tries to defend poor grades by saying, "Look how mean the teacher is. She just doesn't understand." This seems so sincere that, before long, the student has manipulated both parents into joining with him or her against the school and the teacher. The child now has more power than either the parents or the teacher.

It is not unusual for parents in this situation to be confused, first blaming the school, then blaming the child and then blaming themselves; all with no success in getting the child to live up to his/her potential. Attempted interventions include daily reports from the teacher, more homework, rewards, punishment, school conferences, labels such as "learning disabled," and special education classes to explain away the problem.

None of these will work because they are not at the root of this youngster's problem. The problem will be solved when the parents discover that they need to have a consistent set of expectations for the child: "We both want the best for you and we both know that it will come from effort, not from manipulating one of us against the other."



*Kids Need Consistent Messages About Effort*

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#### **Fighting and Bickering**

Childhood fights. They can be tough on parents as well as on children. Luckily, there are guidelines on how fights should be handled most of the time.

##### **Guideline 1:**

**Protect if life and limb are in danger—otherwise expect the children to handle it-** The first guideline is the toughest. When we hear children fighting, we naturally want to intervene. In some cases, if we are teachers, we have a legal responsibility to intervene whether or not it is necessary. However, if possible, it's best to put the problem on the children. When one child tattles on another, it's best to say, "Why are you telling me?" Or, on seeing a fight, sometimes it works to say, dryly, "You two ought to form a committee." Or, "Please settle it somewhere else where I won't see it or hear it."

##### **Guideline 2:**

**Help children to problem solve their fights-** Children need help in identifying their feelings. Were they feeling mad, sad, frustrated or left out? After identifying their feelings, they can then identify different ways to handle them. We can use modeling at this point: "If I hit Mr. Jackson when I feel frustrated, I probably won't be as happy as I am handling it in another way. How do you think you could handle your problem in another way?"

##### **Guideline 3:**

**"Use "I-messages"-** When we are around youngsters who fight, they must understand we are going to take care of ourselves rather than try and take care of them. Then, if we do need to ask the children to leave or quit playing together, they are not resentful. They would be

resentful if they thought we were doing it for their own good. If we do it for our good, they accept it. It's almost magic. Adults giving "I-messages" might say: "Fights make me nervous," or "hey, have you two had your rabies shots?" or "Hey, guys, this stuff hassles my eyeballs." I want to stress here the importance of humor.

##### **Guideline 4:**

**Give consequences only if a difficult child has trouble dealing with a contract for no fights-** A therapist tells the story of Jake who came to the office with his professional foster parent. Jake had been a terror when he arrived in the foster care program three weeks earlier. Now his fighting had almost stopped. When the therapist asked Jake about this, he said, "Well, I hate doing the chores. When I fight, my mom says it drains energy from the family. But when I scrub the walls, it puts energy back into the family." Jake, I might note, said this without any anger toward his foster parents. As he told this, he looked up at his mother, with the dawning of love, and smiled.

These consequences were meted out to take care of the mother, not to take care of Jake. Further, his mother did not have to tell Jake what to do. She didn't have to say, "Stop fighting!" Such orders seldom work on children like Jake. Instead, his wonderful parents could see what was happening, stop Jake, and say in a loving way, "Jake, I feel an energy drain coming." Jake changed quickly!



*Let the Children Solve the Problem - Avoid Being Used As a Judge or Referee*

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## Four Steps to Responsibility

As a grade school principal, educational consultant, Jim Fay, often woke in the mornings scared for those children who never got into trouble. Now that may sound like an odd fear, but Jim knew from experience that well-behaved youngsters would eventually leave school a lot less prepared for the real world than those children who had learned lessons through occasional misbehavior.

Preparing students for the "real world" is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children. It means teaching them responsibility and decision-making at a young age.

### Building Responsible Children

Parents can help children "practice" for the real world by adopting **Four Steps to Responsibility**:

**Step 1: Give your child a responsibility**

**Step 2: Hope your child makes a mistake** - If we don't allow our children to make mistakes, and then live with the consequences, we are really "stealing" valuable learning experiences from them. And today's mistakes - forgetting to finish their homework or leaving their lunch at home - are bargains compared to what mistakes may cost as they grow older.

**Step 3: Allow empathy and consequences to do the teaching** - Learning never takes place from parental anger. Instead, use empathy when you talk with your children, to allow them to look closely at their decisions.

**Step 4: Give the same responsibility again** - This is the most important step. It sends a powerful message to the child that he or she is smart enough to learn from the previous mistake.



## Essential Decision-Making Skills

Problem-solving and decision-making skills are the building blocks of responsibility. Most children don't get much practice at it. They don't have the advantage of actually seeing the process adults use to make decisions.

We can help children learn how to solve their own problems by following these steps:

- 1) **Show understanding.**  
"I bet that really hurts."
- 2) **Ask questions.**  
"How do you think you're going to work that out?"
- 3) **Get permission to share ideas.**  
"Would you like to hear what some other children have tried before?"
- 4) **Help the child explore possible consequences.**  
After every suggestion ask . . . "and how do you think that might work?"
- 5) **Let your child "solve" or "not solve" the problem.**  
Wish the child "good luck" with his or her decision.

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### Friends

There is nothing more saddening to a parent than hearing, "Nobody likes me," or "I don't have any friends." And, most parents feel unsure about what to do when this sort of thing happens.

What does research say about childhood friendships? Studies have shown that children unable to build and maintain friendships often have serious mental health problems as adults.

Do not panic if your child does not have a lot of close friends! Everyone is different. Some of us need and have a lot of friends. Some of us need, and have, just one or two.

**What is important is that a child has at least one same-age friend who gives them the feeling of being important and valued.**

When should a parent be concerned? If a child has no friends, this is a problem. Also, if a child's only friends are much older or much younger than the child, this is a concern.

When children play only with much younger children, it's a sign that the child lacks the skills or maturity to develop relationships with kids his or her own age. When friends are much older, the child may be learning things he or she shouldn't – and may be being harmed by kids who enjoy the control they get from manipulating a younger child.

What can a parent do if their child is having problems making friends his or her own age? The first step is trying to understand why the problem exists. There are two general reasons kids have problems making friends. First, the child may simply lack the skills necessary for building friendships. What are these skills? Children need to know how to smile. They need to know how to introduce themselves in a friendly way. They need to know how to share. They need to know how to compliment others. They need to know how to joke and be silly when it's appropriate. The best way to teach these skills is modeling them and having brief discussions with your children about their importance.

The second general reason children have trouble making and keeping friends has more to do with how the child feels about himself, and the world. When a child feels poorly about self, angry at the world, depressed, anxious, or fearful, it's obviously quite difficult for them to learn and use friendship skills. What's the solution here? Children who hurt in this way need someone who can listen and care. They also need someone with the training and expertise necessary for helping them overcome these emotional obstacles. If your child is too angry, anxious, or depressed to make friends, please take the time to consult with a qualified mental health professional.



*Childhood friendships are essential for a happy, healthy life.*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

Presented by:  
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### Friends, Clothes, Looks, and Music

It may be hard for parents to understand why the sounds blaring from the radio in their teen's bedroom are practically sacred to their son or daughter. But music, along with looks, friends, and clothes, are four things a parent should *never* criticize.

It's devastating to teens, who are seeking their own identities, when we criticize what's important to them. And, because a person's self-esteem is at an all-time low during the teen years, adolescents are even more sensitive to our opinions and the opinions of others.

It's more effective for parents to accept that clothes, looks, friends, and music are at the top of a teen's list of priorities. They're a major part of an adolescent's search for identity and individuality.

#### Friends

Teens often believe that spending too much time with their parents means they are neither independent nor individual. The more we find fault with their friends, the more they hang around them to prove their individuality.

Some teens dream about being wild, knowing deep down they never will be. To live out their fantasies, they sometimes choose friends their parents find objectionable. But that doesn't mean your teen will actually become wild-it just means they have found a "substitute" for their own dreams.

As parents, we should make every attempt to accept our teen's friends. We may even be pleasantly surprised by some of them!

#### Clothes and Looks

Clothes and looks are another way a teenager expresses the need to be different. Both can be healthy and non-destructive. If your teen is basically responsible, wearing an earring or a slightly weird hairstyle makes no difference!

The rule, again, is don't criticize. But if you're worried about what the relatives might think about your daughter's outfit, you might say something to her like this: "I'm a pretty reasonable parent, usually. Would it be OK for me to be just a little unreasonable this time? I mean I know what a great kid you are - but I'm not sure Aunt Betty will understand . . ." This kind of statement lets her daughter know what she wears reflects on her, not the parent.

#### Music

Parents who are overly critical about their teen's taste in music risk damaging the relationship they have built with their son or daughter. It's far more effective to acknowledge that teens and parents have different taste in music. There's certainly nothing wrong with asking your teen to keep the volume down or to use earphones.

You can't force your musical values onto your teen. The best way to get them to enjoy a different kind of music is to listen to it yourself and then talk about why you enjoy it instead of why *they* should.



*Friends, clothes, looks, and music are healthy  
ways a teen expresses individuality!*

# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24*

## *PRESENTS:*

### *PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC*

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

*Presented by:*  
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#### **Gangs and Cults**

The dramatic increase in the number of gangs and cults is a sad reminder of how things have changed in America. Hardly a day goes by in many urban areas without disturbing news of violent events that too often include death.

Unfortunately, gangs and cults are expected to grow in popularity as the role of the family continues to weaken. Where the family once served as a young person's gang, the gang has now become the family for some of our children.

Young people turn to gangs and cults when their needs aren't being met in their own families. A gang or cult is a substitute, with a powerful attraction, offering fulfillment of a child's need for trust, sharing, control, affection, excitement and inclusion.

#### **Strengthen the Family Unit**

How do we stop children from joining gangs and cults? The best way is to provide a strong and supportive family that recognizes and meets a youngster's needs.

A sense of control is experienced by children who are given enough room to grow. Wise parents teach their children, beginning at an early age, to make their own decisions and then live with the consequences of those decisions.

Parents who are threatened by a child's actions, often respond by giving that child fewer choices. This almost always creates an even stronger need for young people to assert themselves. Consequently, the youngster spends more time defending him/ herself than thinking about the consequences of the choices.

Parents who encourage youngsters to develop their talents and interests, also build the child's self-confidence. Self-confident children are rarely interested in gangs or cults. A child with a weak self-image is much more likely to be attracted to a gang or cult to achieve the sense of self-fulfillment he or she lacks.

The same basic attractions of a gang or cult can be found in many non-destructive ways, including sports, clubs, and even school. Wise parents help their youngsters build a strong self-image through heavy involvement in activities such as skating, track, drama, football, art or music, to name a few. Even in inner cities, where opportunities are limited, a child's "gang" may be found on the basketball court.

There is little parents can do to control a young person's behavior outside the home. When a child threatens to join a gang or cult, it's best to express your concern while making sure the child understands you are unwilling and unable to rescue him/ her from dangerous situations.

Youngsters often discount their parents' wishes, but will listen to other adults. The words of someone outside the home, such as a school counselor, are usually taken far more seriously, and may help a young person understand the dangers involved in gangs and cults.

There is no magical way to guarantee that a child will stay clear of a gang or cult. Parents can reduce the possibility of this activity by ensuring their own family can "compete" with the attractions gangs and cults offer.



*Gangs and Cults Serve as a Substitute Family*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Presented by:

LSTA 05-3055

### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### Getting A Head Start On Control

Parents who want to gain control must first give away a little control. This means giving their children choices instead of demands whenever possible.

One of the most-often asked questions about choices is, "At what age can I start giving choices instead of orders?" Foster W. Cline, M.D., psychiatrist and cofounder of the Cline/Fay Institute of Golden, Colorado, tells us we can start choices about the same time our little ones can sit in a high chair and spit beats. Even if you no longer have a baby, Dr. Cline's advice may help you understand the need to offer choices.

A useful tip for parents to remember is that battles over food in the early years are usually fought again-in the subconscious mind-when the person becomes an adult. Therefore, it's unwise to have countless rules and battles about eating-whatever the child's age.

As soon as a baby spits food, the parent says, "Oh goody. Meal's over." The child is put down, and the food is put away. Notice there are few words and no anger.

Some people object, "That's too young. You can't reason with a child at that age." Dr. Cline says this objection assumes that the child is not as smart as

the family dog. Isn't it interesting that we expect the dog, who has no language skills, to understand, but we want to wait until a child can talk before we think he or she can understand our actions?

Parents and teachers often try to reason with children instead of allowing them to learn from consequences. Have you ever seen anyone try to reason with the family German shepherd? "Now, Duke, give me some eye contact so I can tell you what you just learned." We all know that would never work.

A child learns quickly that negative behavior doesn't pay. In the case of violating table rules, it takes only a few times for a child to learn the choices: eat nicely and have all you want, or act out and bring the meal to a halt.

To cap off this learning situation, the parent needs to hold his or her position that the next opportunity to eat will be the next mealtime. This must be done with empathy: "That's too bad, I get hungry too, if I don't eat enough when I have the chance. But don't worry, we'll be eating again soon."



*Let Consequences Not Words Teach a Child*



# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24*

## *PRESENTS:*

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*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

*Presented by:*  
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#### **Getting Ready for School**

"How many times do I have to call you? You get yourself moving! You're going to be late for school!" These are the desperate sounds of a frustrated parent trying to hurry a youngster through the morning ritual called "getting ready for school." Unfortunately, this child is moving at a snail's pace. This drama, played out in many homes every morning, starts the day off with a battle.

Children find creative ways to tell their parents how they feel. They seldom use words. Most often, they use actions to let us know they don't like the way things are being handled. Nothing is more confusing or frustrating to parents.

It would be much easier to be a parent if children would talk to us and say things such as, "I want to be able to think for myself. I'm dragging my feet so you can see that reminders won't work with me." However, they don't do this, their way of getting us to understand is to use actions such as slowing down when we push.

Parents aren't mind readers, so it's natural to misread their child's actions and assume that they are lazy or don't care. The natural reaction is to then push, punish, or remind them to change their behavior. The child then increases the actions to show that the parent is wrong, and the battle is on.

The first hour of the day is the very best time to teach children to be responsible by allowing them to do most of their own thinking. It's also the time when parents can let their children do most of the work, since most jobs at that time of the day *really belong to the children.*

#### **Use Consequences Instead of Threats and Anger**

**Guideline 1: Decide which jobs belong to the parent and which belong to the youngster** -Jobs like setting the alarm the night before, waking up to the alarm, choosing clothes, dressing, washing, watching the clock, remembering lunch money and school supplies, and even deciding how much to eat really belong to the child. That doesn't leave much for the parent.


The only person who should suffer consequences if these jobs are neglected is the youngster. Let the school provide the consequences when the child is late.

**Guideline 2: Stay out of the reminder business** - Reminders rob children of the opportunity to make the mistakes needed to learn the lessons.

**Guideline 3: Don't rescue!** - Rescuing children robs them of the opportunity to learn lessons at emotional times when they will be best remembered. In other words, we don't put them in the car and take them to school and we don't write an excuse to the teacher.

**Guideline 4: Replace anger with sadness when children make mistakes** - A wise parent, seeing their child is going to be late, says, "Oh, Honey, I'm sorry you're going to have a problem with your teacher. I sure hope you can work it out."

Loving parents have difficulty watching children learn from life's natural consequences. It's far easier to yell, threaten and punish than it is to remain quiet and let children learn from experience. It's a strong parent who

 can allow a child to learn from his or her mistakes.

*The first hour of the day is the very best time to teach children to be responsible*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

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### The Gift of Struggle

Are we stealing from our children? Despite our best intentions, we may be robbing them of the opportunity to struggle, leaving them vulnerable to under-achievement and suicide.

Schools today face an epidemic of underachievers, yet these children believe with all their hearts that they are incapable of doing the work asked of them. They say school is boring, irrelevant, or too hard. They may seem confused, under constant stress, or incapable of doing more.

Well-meaning friends may suggest that parents be more understanding, more supportive or more helpful with studies. Sometimes these tips are helpful, but often they are the worst possible advice.

#### Mom and Dad "To-the-Rescue"

These same children may have similar problems when it comes to doing tasks at home. They have learned at an early age that adults will rescue them when the going gets tough. Children quickly become addicted to adult help and begin to believe the adults' unstated message that they can succeed only with assistance.

Underachievers often have parents who had to struggle when they were children. They grew up to say, "I don't want my kids to struggle like I did. They deserve better." Their children live in a home where struggle is an enemy rather than an opportunity.

The problem was less severe years ago. Parents preoccupied with the Depression, World War II, and scratching out a living, gave their kids tasks that forced

them to help the family. Struggling at home prepared children to struggle at school.

Today's underachievers believe failure is too painful. Yet recent studies demonstrate children denied the opportunity to struggle during their early years are at high risk for suicide. They are unable to see themselves solving problems.

#### Solutions

The answer is to give children responsibilities. Children need jobs to do around the house, and they need parents who consider this a top priority. The most effective way to do this is to say to your children, "There's no hurry on the chores. I just want them done before your next meal." Missing a meal is momentarily unpleasant, but avoiding a struggle hurts self-concept in the long run.

I was recently asked if chores should be assigned to a teenager who has a lot of studying, many school responsibilities, and a part-time job. Teenagers become experts at believing they have more important things to do than chores. They even decide that studying is more important. My answer was, "Absolutely! Chores come first. Say to your youngster, "I hope you get your chores done fast enough so the rest of your activities won't suffer."

Sylvia B. Rimm, Ph.D., author of the *Underachievement Syndrome*, says many learning problems at school are cured when children are given chores at home. One of her 12 tips for helping underachievers: "Children feel more tension when they are worrying about their work than when they are doing their work."



*Struggle Produces S-T-R-E-T-C-H-I-N-G AND GROWING*

# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24*

## *PRESENTS:*

### *PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC*

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

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#### **Good Parents Don't Give Warnings**

Think of yourself tooling down the freeway at 70 mph in a 55 mph zone. You see the multi-colored lights in your rear-view mirror, and you think of one thing and one thing only: "I'm going to get a ticket."

The cop saunters up to your car, nice as can be, writes the ticket, bids you adieu, and is on his merry way. He offers no hysterics, no anger, no threats, just courtesy, and a little slip of paper—the consequences of your breaking the law.

As an adult, you would never think of telling him, "I'll be good, officer. Honest, I won't speed anymore," and having him say, "Well, okay. If you'll be good, I won't write you a ticket." That is the stuff of fantasy. But how often do we allow the fantasy world to become reality for our children?

*Jerry comes home late.*

Mom, thinking she's consequential, says, "We'll talk about this in the morning. Off to your room."

Jerry says, "I'm sorry I'm late. Time just got away from us. I promise it won't happen again."

And what does Mom say but, "Oh well, okay. Are you sure you'll be in before curfew next time you go out? Or are you going to keep me worrying until all hours of the morning? I've told you before what's going to happen if you don't remember to get in on time."

"I know, Mom. I won't do it anymore."

"Well, okay," Mom says, thinking her problems are over. "Go to bed."

The real world doesn't operate on the multiple warning system and neither should parents. Parents who give a lot of warnings raise children who don't behave until they've had a lot of warnings.

The real world operates on consequences. If we do a lousy job at work, our boss doesn't take away our VCR. He fires us. By allowing teens to feel the results of naturally occurring consequences, parents then allow teens to learn about their responsibilities and their behavior. Consequences lead to self-examination and thought.

Mom, after seeing Jerry come home late, can handle the situation in the following way, allowing consequences to fall.

After Jerry comes in, Mom says, "I really worried about you. I'm glad you're home. Go on to bed and we'll talk about this when we're calm."

Then Mom doesn't say anything more about it, until the next time Jerry wants to go out and Mom drops the bomb: "Oh, Honey, I think you ought to stay home. I'm not up to worrying about you tonight," says Mom. The consequences fall like a bolt out of the blue.



*The Real World Doesn't Operate on the Multiple Warning System*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### Grades

Our kids are starting school. It won't be long until we get their report cards, right? Wrong! We don't get the report cards—they do! That's the point. In fact, it brings us to the first rule about handling report cards:

#### Keep the monkey on your child's back

It's important that students know report cards are their business. As parents, we care. Our caring might even border on concern. But worrying? That's your child's business.

Foster W. Cline, M.D. often talks about how his wise old dad always kept the report card problem on his back. As a young child, Foster had a severe learning disorder, usually bringing home straight D's on his report card. Looking over the report card, his father would always poise his fat black fountain pen, and inevitably ask, "Son, are you proud of this?" Foster would then reply, "No, Sir." And then Dad would say, "That's good, Son," and sign the report card. Heaven help Foster if he ever said he was proud of the report card.

Wise Mr. Cline knew that when a child performs like a "turkey," he often wishes to become an "eagle." But when a child performs like a "turkey" and feels like an "eagle," he won't fly very far!

**Show more excitement about high grades than low grades** - Children want pizzazz. They crave parental emotion. On an unconscious level, surprisingly, it doesn't matter whether the parental emotion surrounds great things or poor things. Children always shoot for emotion.

A parent handling the situation might say, "Hey! A big 'A' in art! Wow, a 'B' in gym. Well, of course, you always did run like the wind. Hey, a big 'B' in typing. You'll probably be able to turn out papers quickly.

That's important. Humm, a 'D' in math. Well, I suppose that could be better. Wow, a big 'B' in social studies. It's important to know history!" Then non-emotionally ask, "How are you going to handle the math?"

**Poor grades are not the problem - The reason for the poor grades is the problem** - Students receive poor grades because of poor self-images, rebelliousness against parental value systems, anxiety, depression, learning problems, and a host of other reasons.

Sometimes the reason is an attitude problem, and sometimes we need to accept that. One evening, for example, Foster's daughter had an attitude problem. She said, "I hate algebra. I'm not going to look at the problems. I'm not going to even do my homework!" Such a poor attitude, out of character for Robin, surprised him. In his parental wisdom, he replied, "Well, Robin, your attitude surprises me. Would you like some help on your algebra tonight?" She brightened right up, answering, "Oh sure, Dad. Thanks!"

Foster tried an algebra problem, and finally worked out an answer. He was pretty proud of himself until Robin checked his answer with the one in the back of the book. He had forgotten that some of these books actually provide the answers to the problems. His answer was **dead wrong!**

He worked the problem again. The answer was wrong again. A half an hour later he said, "I hate algebra! I never liked it! I've always had problems with it. Shut the darn book! Ask your teacher how to do it tomorrow! At that point he realized how difficult it can be to maintain a positive attitude when taking on a tough assignment.



*We Don't Get Report Cards. Kids Do*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

## PRESENTS:

### PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

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#### Handling a Crisis

Every crisis is different and individual, whether it's drug use, a runaway child, pregnancy, or a death in the family. Think of the Chinese character denoting crisis: it combines the symbols for danger and opportunity. It is important to see the opportunity in a crisis as well as the danger.

The most common mistake made during a crisis is to assume that something must be done right now! This is seldom the case. Here are four common elements that help us deal with a crisis:

1. **Crises are often temporary** - Remembering that this is a temporary problem helps us from becoming so anxious we become paralyzed or over involved. Many times a crisis is simply a long-term problem we haven't known about until now. If we suddenly discover we have cancer or our daughter is sexually involved with someone or our child has been taking drugs, it's a big happening! It certainly may be far from a good happening, but it's not necessarily a crisis.
2. **Few crises need an immediate answer** - Usually, there's time to seek advice from someone we respect, someone who has had similar experiences or who is a competent professional.

It's also helpful to write down all of our options, including what would happen if we did nothing at

all. This may not be the best solution, but at least it should be considered among all of our choices.

3. **It's important to ask ourselves what would be the worst possible outcome** - Once we can *state* the worst possible outcome, we also realize we can actually cope with it. It helps to ask, "Will we live through this?"
4. **Always try to keep the monkey on the back of the person(s) responsible for the problem** - If it's your teenager who has run away from home and is telephoning you for money, he or she may need to know they're welcome to return home. However, it's their responsibility to come up with the means of getting home, just as they figured out the means of running away. Parents may *loan* the teen money, backed up with collateral, in order to return home.

Remember, take a moment, breathe deeply, and relax. Write down all the possible choices, talk them over with a person you respect, and think about your ability to cope with the worst possible outcome.



*Ask Yourself: What Is the Worst Outcome?*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Presented by:

LSTA 05-3055

### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### **Handling Friends**

If you're unhappy about the company your son or daughter keeps, the secret is an open mind. In the long run, if we maintain a strong and loving relationship with our children, they will generally choose friends we approve of and some we even genuinely like!

#### **Preserve Your Relationship**

Our relationship with our teens has a major effect on the friends they choose. Love and open lines of communication are by far the best ways to ensure our children will make wise and reasonable choices.

For a short period of time, it is both normal and natural for a young person in the early teen years to seek friends whose values seem to be the very opposite of our own!

But sadly, some parents overreact by trying - usually without success - to control the friends their teenagers prefer to "hang out" with. Not only does this jeopardize the parent/teen relationship, it's also a waste of time.

#### **No Criticizing**

As parents, we should never criticize or judge people we don't know-and that includes our teen's friends. Our teenagers will eventually just ignore our thoughts and opinions. It's also well worth our time to get to know their friends and accept them as much as we possibly can. Sometimes, we end up pleasantly surprised and wonder why we were so concerned in the first place!

Our children often find good in others that we simply can't see - until it's too late. One mother laments, "To think I wouldn't let my daughter date a boy in high

school that later became a Rhodes scholar. How was I to know he'd turn out so great!"

#### **Nonjudgmental Communication**

Although it's unwise to criticize our teenager's friends, we certainly have the right to express our concerns. But our opinions should only be given in a loving and nonjudgmental manner. Example:

Joan's mother remains accepting and trusting - even when inside, she'd prefer that her daughter stay home rather than go out with friends she disapproves of. "Joan," she says, "I sure hope that some of you manages to rub off on Cindy and Jan. Sometimes I think those kids need you and are lucky to have you around. Maybe you're a good influence on them. Have a good time tonight, honey."

Parents might also say, in a gentle way, that they would probably choose a different type of person for their own friend, but then acknowledge that everyone has to make their own decisions in life.

#### **Last Resort**

We know it is generally useless to try to control who our teens are with when they're away from home. As a last resort, however, it is within reason for a parent to forbid certain friends of their teens to visit their home. But this decision should only be made when less severe options have been tried—since such harsh action can harm the relationship a parent has built with their son or daughter.



*A Loving Parent/Teen Relationship Is  
the Best Insurance That Our Teens  
Will Choose the Right Friends*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

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### Helicopters, Drill Sergeants, and Consultants

Helicopters, Drill Sergeants and Consultants may sound like unlikely titles for parents, but a closer look reveals the kinds of messages these different parents send to their children.

#### Helicopters

Helicopter parents make a lot of noise, a lot of wind, and a lot of racket. They hover over and rescue their children whenever trouble arises. Often viewed as model parents, they sincerely believe they are preparing their children for the real world.

But helicopter parents are actually “stealing” learning experiences from their children in the name of love. The message sent to the child is, “You are fragile and can’t make it without me.”

#### Drill Sergeants

Drill sergeant parents also make a lot of noise, wind, and racket. Their motto is: “When I say jump, you jump!” The children of drill sergeants, like those of helicopters, have never had the chance to make their own decisions and are dependent upon their parents. The message sent by drill sergeants is, “You can’t think for yourself, so I’ll do it for you.”

#### Consultants

Consultant parents are always willing to give advice. Instead of rescuing or controlling, they allow their children to make decisions and experience life’s natural consequences while providing guidance. Consultants are always willing to help children explore solutions to problems. They’re always willing to describe how they would solve a problem themselves. But then they “blow out” and allow their children to make their own decision. Instead of dependency, the consultant sends messages that create self-worth and strength in their children.

**The following example indicates the difference in these three styles:**

When a child complains about being picked on at school, the helicopter says, “Don’t worry, I’ll tell the teacher to straighten that kid out for you.” The drill sergeant commands, “You smack that kid the next time and he’ll stop!” The consultant replies, “That’s really sad. Would you like to hear what some other kids have done to solve that?”



### **Guidance Services**

***Think of a consultant parent as someone who provides guidance services for their children. The following will help you become a consultant parent:***

- ***Take care of yourself***
- ***Provide alternatives***
- ***Allow natural consequences to take place***

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

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LSTA 05-3055

### How to Give Your Kids an Unfair Advantage-Part I

Susie came from Asia as an adopted child. She joined a family with solid values, relating to achievement and personal responsibility. In a few short years, she had moved to the head of her class.

Her classmates at school periodically asked her about why she got high grades. They thought it was because Asians usually excel at academics. Her answer was that she always did her homework before she went out to play.

Susie became the valedictorian and gave the address at the graduation ceremony. This caught the attention of many parents of the other children. "Why is this?" they asked.

One couple actually called Susie's parents to try to discover the answer. Susie's father mentioned that they shared the values of hard work, struggle, and personal responsibility. He said Susie was expected to be responsible and when she was not, natural consequences were applied. He also mentioned that their expectations were that Susie would do her chores, be respectful of her parents and apply herself to her schoolwork.

"Susie knows where we stand," said Dad. "She knows that in America she has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; not the right to

life, liberty, and someone else to provide happiness for her. Susie is busy pursuing her own happiness through achievement and personal responsibility."

"Wait a minute!" replied the other parents. "Doesn't that give her an unfair advantage over the other children? Come on, Mr. Tyler. This is America. Whatever became of equal opportunity?"

"I guess if you look at it that way, there may never be equal opportunity. As long as some people work harder than others and place a high value upon achievement through struggle, they will always have an advantage over the others. I guess that's the America I know."

America's founding fathers dedicated our nation to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Americans knew they had a chance for success through struggle, and as a result, struggle made America great. Over the years, we have gradually moved toward an attitude of protecting our children from struggle. Many parents have said, "I don't want my children to struggle like I did. I want them to have a better life and all the things I never had."

The results of this are being seen in our public schools, as fewer and fewer children appear to be willing to

accept struggle as a necessary part of learning. Teachers are working harder and harder to find new ways to motivate students, who often believe the teachers are being mean by asking them to struggle.

The schools are being criticized because children are not achieving as well as in the past. However, changing the schools will not solve this problem. America will be plagued with underachieving students until our entire society changes its message about the value of struggle. That's the bad news.

The good news is that your child can stand out and have a real advantage over others, by learning to struggle and to be responsible early in life. When teachers challenge kids who have struggled, those kids think, "No big deal. I'm not afraid to struggle. In the end, I'll be successful."

In Part II, we'll explore some very specific techniques which, when put into practice, can give your child the advantage. These tried and true approaches will help you stay out of power struggles with your children and, at the same time, convince them that their success depends upon the quality of the decisions they make.



*Expect your child to be responsible, and when they're not, apply natural and logical consequences*



# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

## PRESENTS:

### PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

#### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### How to Give Your Kids an Unfair Advantage-Part II

In Part I we explored the advantage children gain by being given the opportunity to struggle. In this article we'll explore specific techniques that parents can use to give their children a head start in life.

**Give chores** - Regardless of what your children say about chores being unfair or that none of their friends have to do chores, children need to contribute to the welfare of the family.

To get your children performing their chores, begin by spending a couple of weeks listing all the jobs that have to be done for the family to survive. This list should include all the jobs parents usually do, as well as the things children need their parents to do for them. Have your kids select the jobs they think they would most like to do. In the event they don't like any of the jobs, have them choose the ones they hate the least.

A proven technique for getting children to do their chores is to say, "There is no hurry each day to do the jobs. Just be sure they are done before the end of the day." Do not remind them about the chores. If the jobs are not done by the end of the day, say nothing and let the kids go to bed. Let them sleep for 30 to 45 minutes and then wake them up, reminding them that the end of the day is near and they are to get up and finish their work. Don't take "no" for an answer.

**Provide matching funds** - Kids are bombarded with media advertisements about their need for material things. It is tempting to give them all you can as a show of love. It may also be tempting to say, "You don't need those things." Both of these responses rob the child of a chance to struggle.

Times when children ask you to buy something are opportunities to provide success through struggle. This is the time for the parent to implement "matching funds." Tommy announces, "I really need those basketball shoes. All the other kids have them and they're only \$125."

The wise parent responds, "You ought to have them. I can't wait to see how you look in them. I'll contribute \$35. As soon as you earn the rest, you'll have those shoes."

Child: "But it's not fair. The other kids' parents buy them."

Parent: "I know. It's rough living the way we do. Let me know when you're ready for the \$35."

Tommy will wear those new shoes with greater pride once he has struggled to earn them.

Your value system should dictate the amount you provide each time. Sometimes you contribute 75%, sometimes 10%, and sometimes you might even contribute 90%. There is no firm rule. And remember that a gift once in a while doesn't hurt a thing.

***Children who earn what they get gradually learn self-respect, resourcefulness, the value of money, and most importantly, that problems are solved through struggle.***

**Don't pay for good grades or punish for bad grades** - As long as children have others who will worry about their problems, they don't worry about them. It's as if they say, "My parents have that worry well in hand. No sense in both of us worrying about it." Parents who offer to pay for good grades, or punish for bad ones, are taking over too much of the worry about grades. This also raises the odds the child will see achievement as something that is being coerced rather than offered.

Once a youngster sees grades as part of a power struggle, the issue is no longer the value of a good education, but who is going to win. A child in a power struggle can see only one choice: winning the power struggle. However, as long as a child has two choices, to succeed or not to succeed, there is still a good chance of success.



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## **“I’m Bored” Routine**

It’s three hours after the dawn of Christmas morning and calm has replaced flying paper and frantic squeals of delight. Toys, toys, and more toys litter the floor—enough diversion to keep three daycare centers going for years. Then, from the rubble, a sad little face emerges and a doleful voice is heard. “Mommy, I’m bored.”

Our inevitable response is, “What? Bored? You’ve got more toys than all the kids in the Third World put together, and you’re bored? No, it’s a psychological impossibility.”

Bored children put dread in the first day of summer vacation. Continual cries of, “Daddy, what can I do?” make us long for the day when the big yellow buses resume their daily rounds.

Despite what our children say, they probably aren’t bored. When children say they are bored, it usually means, “I want you to spend more time with me.”

Playing with our children is one of the great joys of parenting. But when we agree to do so, we should make it plain to them that their boredom is their problem.

**“I’m bored”**  
usually means  
**“I want to spend more time  
with you”**

The parent in the following discussion handled the problem well:

**Child:** I’m bored. There’s nothing going on around here.”

**Parent:** “Are you really bored? That’s too bad. What are your plans?”

**Child:** “Well what can I do?”

**Parent:** “That’s a really good question. What kind of things are in your room?”

**Child:** “Aw, there’s nothing in there that I like. I’m tired of it all.”

**Parent:** “Well are there things that you like anywhere else in the house?”

**Child:** “I don’t think so.”

**Parent:** “A lot of people get involved with things that they like so they won’t be bored. You’re saying when you’re bored, there’s nothing you really like?”

**Child:** “Right.”

**Parent:** “So, it looks to me like there may not be any other option than to sit and be bored. Would you say that was a possibility?”

**Child:** “I guess I could play with my video game.”

**Parent:** “Would you like me to play one game with you?”

**Child:** “Yeah!”

**Parent:** “I guess I could play one game. But if I do that, do you think you’ll say, ‘Oh thank you,’ or will you whine and say, ‘Oh, please, play one more?’ How will you handle it if I play one game with you?”

**Child:** “I promise not to ask for another game.”

We want our children to develop the ability to motivate, interest and entertain themselves. Allow them to poke their way out of their self-imposed shell of boredom, rather than providing them with an entertainment service.



# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

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### Is It Normal for a Parent to Feel This Way?

If you're tormented by self-doubt, constantly worried about how you're raising your teen, and often wonder why it's so difficult to be a parent, you're not alone!

Just as teens experience common feelings, so do the parents of teens. You might recognize yourself in the following descriptions:

#### **Parents of Teens Feel Inadequate**

Many of us experience self-doubt and seriously question our ability to parent. We ask, "Am I too critical?" or "Am I strict enough?"

Parents get down on themselves because what worked when their teens were youngsters no longer applies! While a certain amount of self-doubt is normal, we shouldn't go so far as to think we're "bad" parents.

#### **Parents Feel a Loss of Control**

When teenagers do things we can't stop, we feel a loss of control. It helps to ask, "*Were we meant to control our children?*" Teens, in particular, need free will. But many parents clamp down harder on their children as they grow older. The more determined we are to control, the more problems we have.

But the more we act as good advisors, asking questions in place of giving orders, the less resistance we see from teens.

#### **Parents of Teens Feel Guilty**

Guilt is a common feeling when our adolescents don't turn out the way we think they should. We spend a lot of time worrying about what others think of our ability as parents. Instead of worrying about what others think, go with the flow and do what you think is best!

#### **Parents Have a Strong Desire to Enforce Tighter Rules**

When teens start becoming more independent, our natural tendency is to make more rules. But as they grow older, there should be fewer, not more rules.

The last three years a teen is home should be like practice for the real world. And that means fewer rules and more negotiation on what both parents and teens can live with.

#### **Parents Feel a Sense of Failure**

So often we feel like we're failing. Do our kids help us feel this way? You bet they do! They let us know (and never let us forget) our weaknesses as parents. They are quick to remind us that all the other parents are doing a much better job!

But raising teens is a time of "goof and grow." We learn the hard way and make lots of mistakes. We shouldn't be so hard on ourselves - no matter what our teens tell us!



*Parents, Like Teens, Have  
Feelings of Doubt*

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### It's OK to Catch Your Teen Doing Something Right

It may come as a surprise for some parents to learn that most teens are suffering from a strong case of self-doubt. In fact, a person's self-concept is usually lower during the teen years than at any other time in life.

Self-doubt in teens is normal. It usually stems from the enormous social, emotional, physical and hormonal upheaval they are experiencing. Over a period of time, parents can help turn these feelings of self-doubt into healthy feelings of self-worth.

**We Should Not Only See Our Teens But Hear Them**  
Telling teens they are good won't help them build self-confidence. They *will always* discount what we say.

It's better to find your teen doing something right. Then say, "I noticed how good you're getting with the computer," or "I've noticed you've really improved at softball."

Then, listen to your teen. Ask why he or she thinks things are turning out so well. When teens actually say what they did to achieve success, it helps them build a stronger self-image.

Whenever possible, look at your teen's school, chores and other activities. Say, "You're getting good at this! I bet that feels good." The self-concept problem will go away-eventually.

#### **Focus On What's Right, Not What's Wrong**

Many of us are programmed to react instead of think, thus we end up being overly-critical with our teens. This contributes to their self-doubt by focusing on the negative. Ask yourself, "How can I come across in a more positive way?"

One way is to ask questions, in place of giving orders. But that doesn't mean interrogation. Ask a question and then say, "Is this what you mean?" or "Thanks for sharing that."

Long periods of silence between questions and asking incomplete questions that give your teen the chance to fill in the blanks, can also be helpful.

#### **Never Take Away What a Teen Can Do Well**

Maybe your teen is not a great student but is talented in sports. Wise parents encourage their teens to go after what they're best at with all they've got. This recharges their batteries and gives them strength to try things they're not as good at.

#### **Treat Your Teen Like a Good Friend**

It's amazing how we treat our family and loved ones sometimes. We often show our friends much more consideration and respect! When in doubt about how you're responding to your teen, ask, "How would I treat a good friend in this same situation?"

#### **Adopt an Open "Mind-set"**

If we develop the mind-set that teens are tough to work with, we'll probably miss all the joys they offer-their creativity, sense of humor, and the fact that everyday is just a little bit different!



**Raise the Odds in Favor of a Better  
Relationship With Your Teen**

# **MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24**

## **PRESENTS:**

### **PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC**

***Special Thoughts on Raising Kids***

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#### **“Just Say No” Isn’t That Easy**

If your son had the choice of either dinner with the family or a hamburger at the fast-food restaurant with his girlfriend, which would he choose? He’d probably go for the latter. That’s because friends are very important to teens. Friends are a part of most teens’ search for an identity of their own. A teen says to himself, “If I hang around with my parents all the time, do I know who I am? No!”

Wise parents understand the role friends play in their teen’s social development. They say, “I know you need lots of time with your friends. I sure hope you can find a way to do this and still get your homework and chores done.”

#### **The Other Strong Voice**

Problems arise when teens listen to their peers more than to themselves or their parents. Many think that listening to their parents proves they’re not independent. But the only other voice that’s available belongs to their peers.

Some teens have actually been conditioned by their parents to listen to this other voice! This happens when we start telling our children, at an early age, to do things our way-or else.

When teens have been conditioned their entire lives to listen to another voice telling them what to do, they really aren’t prepared to think for themselves! They simply replace their parent’s voice with the voices of their peers.

**Teach Your Kids to Think!**

Children will listen to their own inner voice if they have lots of chances to practice decision-making. This begins early in life with little choices like, “Would you like vanilla or chocolate ice cream?” or “Do you want to wear your red socks or blue socks?” The child then lives with the consequences of the decision. If the youngster is unhappy, the parent says, “Don’t worry, you can choose again tomorrow.” The decisions get bigger as a child gets older.

One thankful parent tells a story about his own son, Will, as an example of a teen who had important decisions to make. Will’s two closest friends were an alcoholic and a drug user. But instead of trying to forbid the friendships, this parent said to Will, “With friends like yours, you get to make more decisions than anyone in school!”

He also said in a loving way, “They are lucky to have a friend like you. My guess is that some of you rubs off on them.” Will confirmed this, saying his friends did not drink or take drugs around him.

It wasn’t easy for this dad, who wondered if he was handling the situation in the best way. But the worst thing parents can do is suggest peers will rub off on their own teens. That becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It’s normal for adolescents to listen to their peers. But we can help them become independent, by allowing them to think and make decisions, beginning at a young age. Only then, will their own strong inner voice come across loud and clear.



***Help Your Child  
Develop a  
Strong Inner  
Voice***

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### Learning Disorders - No Easy Answers

Many children, as many as two out of ten, are diagnosed as having a learning disorder, perceptual motor problem and/or dyslexia. These common terms are used to describe a child who is normally intelligent but has problems in learning, usually academic learning.

Learning disorders rarely exist without behavioral problems and/or attitude problems at school. Many children may also have associated signs of definite neurologic "brain" dysfunction.

When a child has a "learning problem," the specific problem needs to be defined before a specific solution can be offered. Many learning problems can be cured or helped while others need to be "coped with." Too often parents face needless agony, wheel-spinning and financial cost when they try to fix a problem that will disappear with time, cannot be fixed, or is not the basic problem.

There are two ways of diagnosing learning problems. The first and most important is to obtain an accurate history, including birth or pregnancy problems, the age at which the child mastered such milestones as crawling, walking and talking, and family history, such as whether parents or siblings had problems in school. Second, there are a number of tests that help clarify a learning disorder.

What to do about a problem is based on an accurate diagnosis, but there some basics that apply to most learning disorders:

- 1) No matter what the problem, a child must feel good about him/herself while recognizing that he/she does have a problem in learning. Wise parents and educators focus on building a child's strengths, rather than correcting weaknesses. Strengths may be in non-academic or extra-curricular areas.
- 2) If a six to ten-year old, particularly a boy, was "slow" in milestone development, but now walks and talks normally and has a normal vocabulary but messy handwriting, problems in math, drawing and spelling, he or she is likely to out grow most of the problems in the early teen years.
- 3) If a learning disorder is accompanied by Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), a physician may recommend medication. (ADD is a whole different topic.)
- 4) If a child is to remain in the educational system, the size of the class, the behavior of the other children and the ability of the teacher to respond to the child as a unique individual are the three factors most important to the child's success.
- 5) Tutoring, even by the best teacher, only helps when a child buys into the program.



*Focus on Building a Child's Strengths Rather Than Correcting Weaknesses*

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### Learning Life's Lessons

John and Paul are young students in elementary school, and they are neighbors. One night, after each of them misbehaved, their parents sent them to their rooms. For Paul, being sent to his room was a **punishment**. For John, it was a **consequence**. What's the difference? Both sets of parents did exactly the same thing.

The difference between consequences and punishment involves attitudes and feelings. Paul's parents led him to feel punished by sending him to his room with anger. His parents implied "Go up there and learn your lesson!" or, "Go up to your room and feel bad!" And you can bet that when Paul sat in his room, his head was filled with angry thoughts toward his parents. Worse yet, he was developing a poor self-image.

On the other hand, when John's parents said, "go to your room," they spoke without anger. Their implied message was: "We don't want to be around you, but you might enjoy yourself." They might have said, without sarcasm, "Go keep yourself happy company."

There are many examples of consequences. An elementary school child who had neglected his homework recently had to go to school early to get the work done; he had to take the junior high bus, which arrived at 6:30 a.m., instead of his regular 8:15 a.m. bus. Another child recently brought home a note from her teacher, who wrote, "No heavy thinking needed," meaning the child had a good day at school and could watch TV at home.

One child who regularly forgot his trumpet practice came home and discovered that the instrument had been sold. Recently a parent relying on consequences reminded her child that she was causing an "energy drain" that could be replaced when the child did extra chores around the house. The child ruefully stated, "there's one thing I never want to do, and that's cause my mom an energy drain!"

So, we see that consequences are not designed to make a child feel sad, bad, inadequate, or wrong. Consequences are designed to make the parent feel better! In summary, the major differences between consequences and punishment include:

- Consequences make children think about their actions rather than how bad they feel about themselves or others.
- When experiencing consequences, children who get mad almost always get mad at themselves. (That's good!)
- Luckily, consequences often occur naturally. Parents do not always have to artfully impose them. Almost every action brings its own reward (or naturally occurring consequence).

Long-time school principal Jim Fay states it simply: "Punishment hurts the child from the outside in, while consequences help the child realistically hurt from the inside out!"



**CONSEQUENCES (Inside-Out Hurts)  
are more helpful than  
PUNISHMENTS (Outside-In Hurts)**

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### Loss of a Loved One

Parents are often concerned about the proper way to handle death and dying with their children. What should the children be told about an afterlife? Are they too young to go to the funeral? Should they view the body?

Before the modern era, children naturally learned that death was an essential, and important, part of the life cycle. Children saw farm animals die all the time. Birth and death were seen as natural rhythms of life.

It is up to parents to combat the sanitized images of death so often seen on TV. Death naturally causes sorrow. Children should know this.

In coming to terms with Grandpa and Grandma's death, with the death of a beloved pet, or with the death of parents, a growing individual should come to terms with his or her own death. However, in hiding both the sorrow and reality of death, parents can rob their children of the ability to cope and the ability to ask and deal with relevant questions.

Years ago, three children were killed by a lightning strike on a Colorado playground. There was talk about closing the school for a day of mourning. Cooler heads prevailed and this did not happen. Children must be taught that life goes on through the great cycles of both birth and death.

Generally speaking, children handle all of life's difficult issues as well as they are handled by the adults in their environment. This holds true for both divorce and death. Parents set the model for how children cope. If parents cope well and expect that their children will

cope, the children, heeding those expectations, cope well themselves.

No general rules can be given for the viewing of a body during a funeral. Many children, like many adults, would like to see Grandpa one last time. Other children, like some adults, would rather remember Grandpa the way he was, when he was vital and alive. It is an individual decision. If a child is six or older, these issues can be discussed and the children can decide for themselves. If children are under six, it generally does them no good at all to be around parents who are grief stricken and falling apart. It leads the child to feel insecure. If, on the other hand, parents are able to feel their sorrow, accept it and cope with it while remaining loving and reassuring to the child, it may not be detrimental for the child to go to the funeral.

Finally, the manner in which every family handles life after death must be an individual matter. Generally speaking, it is helpful and thoughtful to give children hope. Young children feel reassured when a loving parent gives them a slightly Pollyannaish version of death: "When people are old, their body wears out and they think, 'My joints hurt, things don't work as well, I'll be glad when I get rid of this old body.'" It is correct to tell children, "When people are old, they often go to sleep and are ready to die."

As children get older, they will hear about heart attacks and people dying in pain; they will see it on television, and when they are ready, they will ask questions about it. Then, parents should handle the questions in an open and honest way, dealing with the situation in an age-appropriate manner.



*Children Handle the Difficult Issue of Death Only as Well as it is  
Handled by the Adults in Their Environment*



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#### Lying

Lying in childhood is a phase. However, if the phase is handled incorrectly by adults, the phase could develop into a life stance.

Many parents unconsciously make lying an issue by asking, "Is that the truth?" when there is really no solid reason to doubt the child. Sometimes when a child is dejected or down, parents may say, understandably, "What's wrong?" The child will say, not wanting to talk, "Oh nothing."

At this point, it is not wise for the parent to say, "Is that the truth?" or, "Don't you fib to me," but to say instead, "Well if you want to talk, I'm here."

The most common mistake parents make, is to try and force their child to tell the truth when the parents already know the truth. This almost always ends in a control battle that neither parent nor child feels good about. Often the child continues to lie, getting deeper and deeper into negative feelings with the parent.

Here's how this parent avoids a control battle centered around stolen cookies by assuming the child knows the parent knows the truth of the situation:

**Parent:** "Robert, come here. What did I tell you about these cookies?"

**Robert:** "Not to eat them, but I didn't."

**Parent:** "What did I tell you?"

**Robert:** "Not to eat them."

**Parent:** "Thank you! What did I say I was saving them for?"

**Robert:** "Paul's Party."

**Parent:** "Right. This hacks me off. You hit your room right now and think things over."

**Robert:** "But..."

**Parent:** "Where do you need to go to think things over?"

**Robert:** "My room."

**Parent:** "Thank you!"

If parents know the truth, and try to get their child to admit it, it is a hidden way of saying, "I know you are going to continue to lie to me." When a child has lied, restitution needs to be made. The consequence is handled coolly and as non-emotionally as possible so that when our children do tell the truth about a difficult issue, we can say, "Wow, I bet that was hard to say! Thanks for the truth!"

The emotion we have as parents is best reserved for when the child says or does something right. Children can be "convicted" and consequenced on

strong circumstantial evidence. Parents who find a candy wrapper in a child's room and allow the child to protest that no candy has been eaten, are almost asking for the child to lie. A wise parent says, "I always take empty candy wrappers as evidence a person has eaten one. I think you need to give the whole thing some thought. If you still need to think about it over dinner time, no big deal."

Lastly, it is better to tell a child, "I don't believe you," than to say, "You're lying." It is easy for a child to argue he is telling the truth, but he can't argue with the fact that you don't believe him!

#### **There are four basic rules for handling lying by children:**

- Don't try to force your child to tell the truth when you already know it! Generally speaking, trying to force the child -ever- to tell the truth is a control battle the adult will lose.
- Give your child more positive emotion for being honest than negative emotion for lying.
- Consequence lying without anger.
- Children may be consequenced for circumstantial evidence.



*It's better to tell children we don't believe them than tell them they are lying*

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## My Child, The Winner

The greatest gift we can give children is the knowledge that they can first rely on themselves for the answers to their problems. A child who develops an attitude that says, "I can probably find my own solutions, and if not, adults will be willing to give me some advice," becomes a survivor. This child usually has the edge in learning, relating to others, and making his or her way in the world.

People often ask how they can support their children to ensure they excel. This often means, "*What can I do to make sure my child gets ahead or is a winner?*"

Sometimes it means, "*What can I do to help my child be successful, feel secure, and lead a happy life?*" It doesn't matter which question is asked. The answer is the same.

The foundation for success lies in the belief that the best solution to any problem comes from within. Then if you don't find the answers, ask for advice from others.

Parents and teachers can help children develop this attitude by being understanding and sympathetic each time a child has a problem. This can be expressed in a variety of ways such as, "*I bet that really bothers you,*" or "*Wow! I bet that makes you feel mad,*" or "*If that happened to me, I would really feel ...*"

These types of statements usually bring about some kind of response that conveys that the child is relieved that we understand. As soon as we see that response, it is time to ask one of the most important questions children ever hear, "*What do you think you are going to do about it?*" This is a powerful statement because it implies that we know the child is capable of doing his or her own thinking.

This question is often answered by, "*I don't know.*" This is a good time to offer some different kinds of solutions. We discuss the possible consequences with the youngster and then allow the child to choose the solution he/she likes best, even if it means that the child decides not to solve his/her problem.

Children have too few opportunities to learn about and practice for the real world. These opportunities present themselves most often as problems to solve or decisions to make. Each time I move into the situation, solve the problem, or rescue the child, **I have stolen one of the child's growth experiences.** He or she is now less prepared to face the real world than if I had been there with understanding and the question, "*What are you going to do about it?*"



## STEPS

1. *Show understanding.*
2. *Ask, "How are you going to solve the problem?"*
3. *Share some choices.*
4. *Help him/her look at the consequences.*
5. *Give the child permission to solve it or not solve it.*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

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## “No” Is Not a Four-Letter Word

Young people need to know their parents are able to say “no” and mean it. However, our children rarely thank us for having the strength to set limits. Instead, they may pout, stomp around, run to their rooms, whine or talk back. This often leaves the adult angry and confused.

Why are children so testy when we do what’s best for them? Children who have no external controls often misbehave as a way of getting us to provide enough control for them to feel confident about their place in the world. Children need to test limits to make sure they are firm. Some children use anger, some use guilt, some are sneaky, while others prefer to use forgetting to test our resolve when we say “no.”

It helps to remember young people hear the word “no” far too often. “No” is a fighting word. Youngsters may wage war against “no” in subtle ways. They may try to get their parents to do all the thinking while they stand back in judgment. Their opening ploy is often, “Why,?” or “Why can’t I?” or “Why do I have to?”

Parents who are busy reasoning with their children have neither the time nor energy to win battles. Caring parents who feel guilty about saying “no” so often are soon hooked into doing lots of thinking and explaining. All the youngster

had to do now is interrupt the parent’s explanations from time to time with, “But Dad, it’s just not fair. You just don’t understand.” Soon the parent is worn down and gives in. “All right! Take it! But this is the last time.”

You can turn the tables on children, forcing them to do most of the thinking. State your decision without saying “no.” Then, whatever the youngster says, simply agree *that* is probably true *and* repeat your original decision. This is called Negative Assertion.

### Here’s how it can work in practice:

- Teen: “I need some money to go to the movies.”  
Dad: “Feel free to use your allowance.”  
Teen: “I need more money.”  
Dad: “That’s sad. But there will be more coming on Saturday.”  
Teen: “I promised the guys.”  
Dad: “I’m sure that’s true...and...you’ll be getting more money on Saturday.”  
Teen: “But I won’t have enough money for gas for the car.”  
Dad: “I’m sure that’s true, too...and...there will be more on Saturday.”  
Teen: “Gee! Money is such a big deal to you.”  
Dad: “That could be true, too...and...”  
Teen: “I know, I know, you don’t have to say it again.”



*State your decisions without saying “no”*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

## One Parent Playing the Role of Two

Raising children is a challenge to most parents, but it can be overwhelming to those who try to play the role of both Mom and Dad.

Although single parents are in sharp contrast to the traditional families of our parent's generation, today's single parents are no longer unique. However, they do face special difficulties.

### Finding Enough Time

Juggling a household, a job (sometimes two jobs), and the needs of their children is the hardest challenge for single parents. Most are frustrated by their lack of time and feelings of guilt. They feel bad about not spending enough time with their children, not making time for themselves, and the impact of their divorce on their family.

An open and honest attitude about their situation can foster a healthy parent-child relationship. A single parent says to Erica, "I'm in a real tough spot. I'd love to spend more time with you, but it's just not possible right now. How do you think we can make the best of our time together?"

When parents silently bury their feelings, their guilt rubs off onto their children. If parents come through with the attitude, "Oh, you poor kids-it's sad how much I have to work to support us," children will become resentful and play on their parents' guilt. It's much

healthier to say, "Aren't we lucky that I have a good job so we can have enough clothes and food? Although it's sometimes hard on us, we have lots to be thankful for." By turning the situation into a positive, children often rise to the occasion with their support.

### Respect

Respect is sometimes more difficult for single parents who, tired and overburdened with responsibilities, might find it easier to yell at their children at the end of a hard day. We earn respect by making sure we communicate with our children in a respectful manner, and vice versa.

In the following example, Mom earns Ritchie's respect by expressing her feelings in a calm manner: "I don't feel like being around you today if you're going to talk rudely. Why don't you go some place for a while - on a walk or to your room. You're welcome back when you decide to talk nicely." In this case Mom made it clear that she wouldn't tolerate disrespectful behavior. She also modeled to Ritchie how to take good care of herself as opposed to criticizing his behavior. In so doing, she reduced a lot of personal stress, time and effort. This mother is a very effective single parent.



*A single parent can be very effective*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

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## The One Year Plan

### A parent's guide to helping children succeed in school

1. Remember that parents can't teach for teachers and teachers can't parent for parents. Remember that teachers can't learn for kids and kids can't teach for teachers.
2. Show the same amount of love for your children regardless of their success in school. Show sadness rather than anger when they have trouble at school.
3. Expect your children to do their share of chores at home.
4. Spend some time each day talking with excitement about your work and your day. Your children will want to imitate you and will soon begin to talk about school and their day.
5. Take turns reading to each other every day.
6. Have your children teach you something they have learned at school. Do this once per week.
7. Encourage your children to do things that "recharge their batteries." Encourage them to try many different activities as a way of discovering interests and talents. Remind them that they will build their careers around their talents, not around their weaknesses.
8. Provide a time and place for homework. Expect that your children will study. Allow them to either study by writing the assignments or thinking hard about them for a reasonable amount of time. If they decide to study by thinking instead of writing or reading, have them think of a plan for explaining it to the teacher.
  - Support the teacher to handle this
  - Don't fight with children over homework
- Don't fight with the teachers over grades or the consequence for poor grades
- Tell your children you will love them regardless of their grades or the number of years it takes them to complete each grade
9. Don't pay your children for good grades and don't punish for bad grades. Be excited about the good grades and sad for your children about their bad grades.
10. Have your children bring home school papers.
  - Look at the right answers instead of the wrong ones.
  - Don't correct the wrong answers-leave this for the teacher
  - Have your children explain the reasons for the right answers
  - If they don't know, give them three choices:
    1. You cheated?
    2. You tried hard?
    3. You are getting smarter in that subject?
11. Expect this program to take about one year before you see good results.
  - Remember that children who have a hard time at school need to get away from it for a while each day. More homework and problems at home about school won't help.
  - Don't complain to teachers that they should give this child more homework. Use this program instead and you will see amazing results in one year. Fight with your children and their teachers about homework and the problem will still be there in years to come.



*Show the same amount of love for your child regardless of their success  
in school*

# **MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:**

## **PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC**

***Special Thoughts on Raising Kids***

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### **Open Talk About Sex**

It is a rare parent who doesn't worry about the sexual activities of their teenager. Their concerns are understandable in light of the fact that nearly all boys and the majority of girls have been sexually active before graduation from high school. Many, unfortunately, are sexually active in junior high.

The following points are provided to give parents insight into the often-sensitive subject of teenage sex:

1. Prohibitions will not stop a teen from having sex. Sex is addictive.
2. Parents often display hypocrisy. While worrying about their children, they may not be handling their own sexual lives in an open or conventional manner.
3. Prohibiting adolescent sexuality is not the issue. The challenge is to keep lines of communication open between parents and teens.

A father's worry about his daughter's sexual activities illustrates these points. In his desperation, he insisted on dropping her off at school every morning and picking her up every evening. Naturally, she became pregnant during the noon hour!

### **Finding the Right Words**

Parents who enjoy good relationships with their teens and who are open about sex may find themselves faced with awkward questions like, "When did you first have sex?" The following rule applies when parents are asked personal questions about their own sexual lives:

**Parents reserve the right to their own privacy. Therefore, they answer their teens in general terms and keep specifics to themselves.**

When teens ask why they should not have sex, parents are often at a loss for words, except to say, "Don't." A better response is the one this mother provides in a loving and non-accusatory manner:

"Honey, I want you to enjoy and love sex your whole life. If you have early experiences you feel bad about, they might affect the relationship you have later with your husband. That's why I hope you wait - until you are certain you want to be intimate, have seen a doctor about contraceptives and feel really right about it."

### **Discussion Is Not Approval**

Parents often worry that talking to their children about contraceptives is perceived as giving them approval to have sex. But providing teens with information or our thoughts on sex does not mean we approve of premarital or promiscuous behavior.

Today's teens need facts - on venereal disease, AIDS, pregnancy and contraceptives. And parents can provide this information in a loving and matter-of-fact manner. For parents unsure of the facts, a wide range of books and articles are available concerning the risks of casual sex.

By being loving, accepting, and nonjudgmental, we can ensure our children have all the facts they need regarding the joys and dangers of sexual behavior.



***Discussing Sex with Your Teen Is Not An Endorsement for Promiscuity***

# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24*

## *PRESENTS:*

### *PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC*

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#### **Parent/Student Stresses**

We live in enormously complex times. Few of us are immune to the stresses and pressures that are a part of the landscape of our fast-paced society.

A recent study showed that Americans, on the average, have 30 percent less free time than they enjoyed just a decade ago. Stress is no stranger to families who find themselves bound by limits on both their time and energy.

When our children become teenagers, family stress may increase even more. Parents find themselves with more to worry about - including issues like drugs, teen pregnancy, grades and even guns in the school. It is a time when some begin to doubt their ability to parent.

Teens today are also under a lot of pressure. They are in the midst of major social, emotional and physical changes that are a part of growing up. They are also faced with important decisions to make about almost every aspect of their lives.

Although we can't eliminate all pressures that are a part of our society, we can do our best to control the stress levels within our own families. This becomes possible when we realize that communication problems between parents and teens can create additional stress.

**The following guidelines are designed to help parents manage and reduce stress within the family:**

**Respect each other's needs** - The way our own parents raised us may no longer apply to today's generation of young people. Today's teenagers are

encouraged to both establish their independence and stand up for their rights as individuals. Some parents, threatened by this behavior, clamp down harder, creating an even stronger need for teens to assert themselves.

Respect is a two-way street. Teens must also learn to respect their parent's needs. However, if the parent is respectful of the teen, the child can see what respect looks like.

**Encourage an open relationship** - Both teens and parents have limited time. However, it's a good idea to set aside time each week to talk with each other.

Communication means listening to information from teens we would rather not hear. Instead of being critical, a parent can keep lines of communication open with words like, "Even though I don't agree with you, thanks for sharing your point of view."

Parents can also use "I" messages to express their feelings. "I" messages tell teens where you stand rather than where they need to go. Mom uses an "I" message when talking to Kent: "It really bothers me when you take my car without asking. I will be happy to let you use it when I don't need it, as long as I don't have to worry about it being taken without permission."

**Give up some control** - Many parents make more rules for their teens at a time when there should be fewer rules. Only give your teen rules you can enforce—rules for situations that directly affect you.



#### ***Guidelines to Reduce Family Stress***

- ***Respect each other's needs***
- ***Encourage an open relationship***
- ***Give up some control***
- ***Set rules only for situations that directly affect you***

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

## PRESENTS:

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#### Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences can be an emotional time for both parties. It's not unusual for either parents or teachers to forget they are really on the same team—the child's team!

When both parties put forth their best communication and listening skills, these emotional battles can be replaced by the opportunity to share ideas that are in the student's best interest.

#### Conferences that are Guaranteed to Fail

When teachers and parents come to a meeting with a set notion of the child's problem and how to deal with it, the result is often a contest of words. Both parent and teacher waste a lot of time trying to persuade the other to understand and adopt their point of view.

**The following are proven techniques that can end any progress during a conference:**

**Non-negotiable demands** - A parent who demands, "I want Rachel transferred to a different reading group by Monday!" has effectively put an end to communication.

**Threats** - A teacher who threatens, "If Danny disrupts my class one more time, I'll send him to the principal's office every day for the rest of the month!" has not learned the art of either negotiation or communication.

**Accusations** - The statement, "If you would give Johnny more personal attention at home, his reading skills would be up to speed," is guaranteed to put a parent on the defensive.

Parents and teachers alike must remember the reason for meeting is to share ideas that will help the child overcome his or her school problems. People who get the best results during these conferences remember the magic words of good communication.

**Describe the problem** - When we use the word "describe," we open lines of communication by eliminating any judgmental statements. A wise parent says, "I'd like to describe how I see the problems Susie has been having in your class." A smart teacher says, "I'd like to describe how Lee acts around his classmates during recess."

**Ask for the other person's thoughts** - "I'd like to get your thoughts on that," are also magic words. They show we are more interested in learning all we can about the child's problem rather than trying to persuade the other party to see our side. The words also imply that we respect the other person's opinions.

**Listen to the other person** - Effective communication takes place only when people are convinced the other person is truly listening to them. Neither parent nor teacher should interrupt the other. Both need to be confident that their perceptions are being heard.

**Develop several solutions** - Coming up with more than one alternative to a problem—together—eliminates the temptation of trying to convince the other person to see the problem your way. It shows sincerity and openness about helping the child.



**Words that Work Wonders**

***Remember! Parents and Teachers are on the  
Same Team—the Child's Team!***



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## The "Quick-Fix" Attitude

Children are bombarded, at an early age, by television ads and sitcoms that imply there are magic solutions to all of life's problems. Unfortunately this is not the case. However, this "quick-fix" attitude has prompted children to believe there's always an easier way. Such an attitude can influence the way we see our "self-movies."

### Self-Movies

Our subconscious mind functions much like a video player. When a friend calls and says, "Let's go skiing," a little movie flashes through our head. This is called a self-movie. We either see a positive self-movie - we picture ourselves being successful and having a good time. Or we see a negative self-movie - we picture ourselves making constant mistakes and falling on the ski slopes. The movie we see actually determines whether or not we go skiing.

The same thing happens when children are asked to do a school assignment. A movie plays about their possible success or failure. Children who see themselves doing well and feeling good about the assignment are willing to try. Those who see a negative self-movie appear as if they don't care about success. This is their protective shield, but it looks like an attitude problem.

Children who frequently see negative self-movies are easily discouraged. They begin to see more negative self-movies as opposed to positive self-movies showing success and good feelings. These children become less willing to risk. They are often the ones who live lives in which they aren't required to earn things they want, don't have to make frequent struggles to accomplish chores. They watch lots of examples of magic solutions on television. These are the kids who are victims of the "Quick-Fix Attitude."

### Changing the Movie

This self-movie can gradually change from negative to positive. Here's how:

**Limit criticism** - Children who live with critical parents soon take over the criticism for themselves. Many adults in therapy talk about how their parents were always correcting them when they were children. Most say at one point in their lives they started to hear their own voice doing the same thing, "I never do anything right." "I'm so slow." "I know I can't do it." "I'm so dumb." People like this are constantly seeing negative self-movies and are afraid to try anything new.

**Make it safe to take a risk** - Children who feel safer about taking risks have overheard their parents talking with each other saying, "I'm so glad I tried that. I felt foolish at first but I had a great time. I'm so glad I don't have to be perfect the first time to have a good time." This parent is a good model who knows their children learn from what they see, not what they are told.

**Support new activities** - Do all you can, without being pushy, to encourage children to experiment with new activities. Many people never discover their hidden talents because they are afraid to try.

It's also important that children hear enthusiastic statements from their parents when they put out the effort to try something new, even in the face of a negative self-movie. Children need to hear, "I bet you feel proud that you tried it anyway!"



*Self-Movies Can Gradually Change  
From Negative to Positive*

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## Reasonable Expectations for Adolescents

Parents often wonder what they should expect from their adolescents. When parental expectations are too high, and limits are too tight, the adolescent becomes disrespectful and family communication and relationships can break down.

As adolescents grow older, parents must prepare their children for the *real* world; therefore, *real* expectations. Out in the real world, we are expected to get our job done, be respectful to others and, in general, be pleasant to be around. Thus, when children reach adolescence, wise parents have those same three rules, "I expect you to be respectful, responsible and fun to be around."

**In line with these expectations, parents may expect their adolescents to follow three simple rules:**

1. Chores are to be done without being reminded.
2. The teen obtains average grades in school if they are of average intelligence.
3. When the teen is with the family, he/she is basically pleasant.

It is essential that real world expectations flow back and forth between both parent and child. The child need not remind the parents to pay the utility bill and the telephone bill. Likewise, the parent should not be expected to remind the teen to do his or her chores. The teen is not expected to keep track of how the parent does their job at work. Likewise, it is fair for the parent to expect that the teen keep on top of the schoolwork and maintain average grades. The teen does not keep track of the parent or choose the parent's friends. Likewise, if the teen is pleasant, responsible for his/her chores, and gets average grades in school, the parent should not be overly involved in the teen's life.

When children reach high school age, they basically use their home as a refueling pit, or base camp, for going off and exploring the world with friends. They often enjoy being with their friends more than they enjoy being with parents. Parents should not feel rejected. This is a stage of life. When parents rejoice in their teen's independence and refuse to get involved in rescuing when they make mistakes, most adolescents will respond by being thoughtful about their actions and appreciative of the independence offered.



***Real world expectations should be the same as parent expectations for teens:***

- ❖ *Have chores done*
- ❖ *Maintain average grades*
- ❖ *Respect others and be pleasant to be around*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

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### Reasoning with Children

"I don't know what's wrong with those kids. They never listen to a thing I tell them. I might as well be talking to the wall for all they care!"

Does this sound familiar? How do we get kids to listen and benefit from our experience and knowledge? Maybe it's just asking too much. Or is it?

We could blame this problem on the belief that youngsters are just headstrong and determined to learn the hard way. It's also possible that many parents try to reason with their children at the wrong time. This greatly reduces their chances for success.

We've all watched parents give their children a "good talking to" with little or no positive results. This is unfortunate because the adult not only had good intentions but good advice to share. The only trouble was that the child was not in an emotional state that would allow listening and use of the adult's wisdom.

**The words we use with our kids during emotional times are wasted** – They are either never heard or are turned against us. We all have difficulty listening during emotional times. It's natural, at times like these, to focus most of our thoughts upon the emotions rather than the words being spoken. As a result, we remember the other person's anger better than we remember the words.

A child at the dinner table who is not eating and who is complaining about the food provides a good example. Reminders in this case seem to do little good.

One parent might handle it by using angry-sounding words like, "What's wrong with you? Don't you come to the table with that attitude. You quit that complaining", or "I'll really give you something to complain about!" My guess here is that the child is thinking a lot about the adult's anger and little about the wisdom of eating a good meal.

**Use soft words with actions** - Another parent might replace these angry words with soft words and action: "I'll be picking up the food and dishes in five minutes. I hope by then you will have eaten all you need to hold you until breakfast." Nothing is said if the youngster does not eat. The words are saved for a time when the child will be better able to listen.

It is obvious that the child will be hungry later and say, "I'm hungry. What can I have?"

This wise parent knows that the youngster will learn more when few words are used: "I bet you are. That's what happens to me when I miss my dinner. I bet you'll be anxious for breakfast. Don't worry. We'll cook a good one."

This parent chose to save the words for a time when the child was in the **thinking state** rather than in the **emotional state**. The best time for reason is when both the child and the adult are happy. This is the time when the best thinking and learning can take place.



*Save the Words for Happy Times*

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## Reducing Family Stress

Stress in families tends to come from two sources: communication problems or outright personality problems.

Fortunately, communication problems lie at the root of a great deal of family stress. These problems are easier to handle than personality problems, since communication is usually enhanced by learning a few basic tools. Most of us are "easy to educate," if willing.

Here are two questions to determine whether there is a personality or a communication problem. First, ask yourself if the stressed-out person would be hard to live with no matter what stress he or she encountered. Second, ask if he or she would be stressed-out no matter who he or she lived with.

If the answers are, "yes," then the individual needs help. If the stressed individual says "yes" to therapy or outside counseling, personality problems can often be addressed. However, if the individual says "no" it becomes **our** problem and we need help. The self-help groups such as twelve-step programs like Al-Anon, emphasize how to take care of ourselves when living with negative and difficult partners.

**Tips to try:** When the problem is communication, the use of "I messages" often helps. "I, messages" tell the other person where I stand rather than where they need to go! "I, messages" tend to be assertive rather than aggressive.

Instead of telling children, "Be quiet," a wise parent might say, "I would appreciate less noise,

please, . . . Thank you," in a tone of voice that imparts love and assumes compliance. Using an "I, message," a spouse might say, "Dear, it would help me if you left your problems at work. I know that's hard, but when you bring problems home, I feel lots of stress." Such a statement is less likely to result in friction than if we shout, "Hey, don't take your work problems out on me!"

**Sense of humor:** Studies at the Cline/Fay Institute in Colorado show that a sense of humor, by itself, tends to help many individuals cope with stressful situations.

**My problem or theirs?:** Individuals who communicate well tend to separate problems into "mine" and "the other guy's." We can always **care** about other people's problems, but we need to **work** on our own.

When we help another person without their permission, they usually end up resentful rather than grateful. It is best to react to our children's problems with, "Gee honey, I hope you figure it out." However, if we face our children's problems with the attitude, "Now what can I do?" their response is likely to be, "I don't know, but I hope you figure it out, Mom and Dad!"

Life throws us waves of stressful situations along with troughs of peaceful periods. To cope with the stress, we need to thoughtfully look at our own family patterns and communication issues in a preventive way. This analysis is best done when we're in one of those peaceful times.



*Separating "your problems" from  
"my problems" helps us both*

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### R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Parents are often concerned by the lack of respect shown them by their teenagers. This is a very important issue, for if parents allow their children to treat them with disrespect, it lowers the child's self-concept. Many parents, and even professionals, have this concept backwards. That is, professionals may tell parents that the child has a poor self-image and therefore the child treats them with disrespect. It is truly the other way around.

Sometimes parents have difficulty differentiating between a teen's assertiveness and disrespect or aggressiveness. Assertive behavior involves telling other people where we stand. Indeed, adolescents are very good at telling other people where they stand. That does not necessarily mean the adolescents are disrespectful. Aggressiveness, on the other hand, involves telling other people where to go. Adolescents should not be allowed to be aggressive with their parents. Disrespect also includes name calling, foul language, music played obnoxiously loud, and ignoring a parent who is trying honestly to relate.

It is essential for parents to understand their child's reasons for disrespect. Many adolescents are disrespectful because they are frustrated by unnecessary parental rules, regulations and harangues. When teens feel their lives are unnecessarily controlled by adults, their only response is angry, impolite, and disrespectful comments.

In summary, parents must ask themselves, "Do I or have I treated my teen with disrespect? Am I confusing disrespect with protest or assertiveness? Am I consistently loving and giving my teen freedom to make his/her own mistakes?" If parents are able to answer these questions to their own satisfaction, and their child continues to be disrespectful, then it is

important to discuss the situation. A heart-to-heart talk must be carried out when the teen is in a good mood, and not immediately following an incident of disrespect. It does not help to try and solve a chronic problem when a chronic problem is occurring. The following conversation might take place:

Parent: "Jack, how happy have you been at home recently?"

Jack: "I'm happy enough."

Parent: "Well, I'm glad to hear that. I thought, considering the way you have been talking recently, you weren't too happy at home. I wonder if you might be happier living somewhere else?"

Jack: "Where would I go?"

Parent: "Well, to tell the truth, I'm not sure. Do you know anyone who would find it fun to be around you right now?"

Jack: "Yeah, I've got plenty of friends."

Parent: "I'm glad to hear that. That's one of our options, to see if some of those friends want to put you up for a while. Or, we can figure out how to talk and listen to each other. Let's each make a list of the ways we can make this situation better. Let's both give it some thought and share our lists after dinner."

Ultimately, if the parent is respectful to the teen, not infringing on his/her freedom, and not confusing assertiveness with disrespect, the child will, in turn, be respectful. If the child continues to be disrespectful, it may be time to consider the tough love routine, with the emphasis on love. Out in the real world, no one puts up with chronic disrespect.



*Allowing a Child to Treat Adults With Disrespect Lowers the Child's Self-Concept*

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## Responsibility

I watched a man and his children in the drug store the other day. One of his girls had a sad face while he yelled, "What's wrong with you? How many times have I told you to be responsible?"

Have you ever noticed that the parents who yell the loudest about responsibility seem to have the most irresponsible children? It is also true that many very responsible parents raise children who are not at all responsible.

The most responsible children usually come from families in which the word "responsibility" is rarely used. The mystery behind this has a lot to do with a concept in psychology that education consultant Jim Fay calls, the "No Sense in Both of Us Worrying About It" syndrome. He reminds us that most of us worry very little about something if someone else will do the worrying for us.

Jim writes that at one time he never worried about how money was spent because his wife, Shirley, was very responsible about saving. He used to say, "There's no sense in both of us worrying about that. Shirley has that well in hand. However, one day Shirley discovered that she enjoyed buying things. And wouldn't you guess, Jim started saying to himself, "Oh, oh! If she's not going to worry about that, somebody better!" He became a lot more concerned about money when she stopped being careful. Shirley trained him to be more concerned simply by being a lot less concerned.

So, there you have it. Parents who raise responsible kids do it through their actions, not their words. These parents go through life being responsible about their own jobs, demonstrating how it is done. At the same

time, they spend very little time and energy worrying about their children's responsibilities. They worry more about how to allow their children to experience the consequences of irresponsibility.

**No Reminders** -These parents are involved with their children, but do not spend their time reminding them or worrying for them. It is almost as if their attitudes are saying, "I'm sure you'll remember on your own, but if you don't, you'll surely learn something from the experience. "

Reminders tell children we are afraid that they are not capable. Sad, but true, these implied messages have a lasting effect since children believe them without even realizing it.

Have you ever noticed that young people often live out their parents' deepest fears? Parents who constantly say, "Don't forget, " raise children who forget. Those who say, "You show some respect, " raise disrespectful children. Those who demand responsibility, raise kids who are irresponsible.

**Consequences with Empathy** - Responsible children are usually raised by parents who allow them to experience the consequences of irresponsible acts.

These parents also help their children understand who owns the problem by being very sympathetic. "I'm sorry that worked out the way it did, I'm sure it's no fun having to do the job over again."

Most parents are pleasantly surprised to learn how effectively "consequences with understanding" develop responsibility.



*Replace Words with Meaningful Actions*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

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### Room to Grow

One of the more glaring problems faced by teenagers in today's world occurs when their parents become determined to control every aspect of their lives.

This control can be seen as a symptom of a larger problem that actually belongs to the parent. It is a problem that many of us face. We feel insecure when we have little control over others, especially our children.

Since we never like to admit to ourselves that we are insecure, we build a case for being concerned about the youngster's well-being at an unconscious level. This is a very natural thing to do.

As we state our case, it comes out as, "I need to control my youngster's actions, or he will do something that will be bad for him, and my love for him just won't allow me to do otherwise."

The way we identify insecurity is by watching the amount of control a person needs to have over others. This is seen daily as parents attempt to control sleeping and eating habits, the amount of learning that takes place, the language used by the child, how he or she is treated by others, the kind of clothes he or she wears, and who his or her friends are.

We don't hear a person say, "Well, actually, I'm a very controlling person because I feel like an inadequate parent when my child makes decisions for himself and chooses to be something different than what I have designed for him. " Our minds work for us as a protection from these kinds of thoughts.

Instead we hear, "I care about my children. I can't let them hurt themselves by making bad choices." Or, "I just don't want my children to close any doors for themselves that will limit their opportunities later in life."

In other words, controlling people unconsciously disguise their attempts to feel more adequate by saying that they are caring, concerned, involved, and so on.

The question is, "Do I feel secure enough to allow my child to become what he or she wants to be?"



#### **CONTROL**

*Helps parents satisfy  
unconscious needs to  
feel  
more adequate as  
adults.*

#### **DEMANDS TO GET YOUR WAY**

*Help youngsters learn to  
be stubborn and demand  
to get their way.*

#### **CHOICES**

*Help children learn to  
become decision makers  
and learn to become  
adults  
in the real world.*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### Schoolwork

You're on your way home from work. You're anxious for some encouraging talk and a little relaxation after a hard day. You need all the support you can get to recharge your batteries and feel strong enough to go back tomorrow and face another working day.

You are greeted with, "Hi, Honey. How was it today? Where are your papers? I want to see how you did today."

"It was OK," you reply. "I really don't want to talk about it. I'm really beat."

"Well, no wonder you don't want to talk about it. Look at these papers. You can do a lot better than this. Where was your mind today? You sit down right now and we'll go over these proposals you wrote and get the spelling straightened out. And look at these paragraphs. You'll never get promoted at this rate. I don't understand this. You have so much more potential than this."

How long would it be before you find a more comfortable place to go after work? "Who needs this?" you'll say. "I can find someone who can show me a little more appreciation for my hard work!"

Many school-age children face this same situation daily. They are greeted after school with, "What did you learn today?" and "Where is your homework? You get on it right now!"

Children are also requested to bring home their papers so that the mistakes can be corrected. Even though this is done with love and caring, it trains them to focus on their weaknesses.

The problem faced by students is that they can't choose to go somewhere else after school. They can't avoid facing a replay of their daily failures. They must return home and listen to whatever their parents have to say. It is very difficult for a child to say, "Mother! Do you realize you are training me to keep my school progress a secret from you?" Soon they quit bringing home papers. They make excuses and blame it on their teachers. "She never gives me my papers to bring home."

The next step is for the parent to go to school demanding that the teacher develop some sort of foolproof reporting method. Teachers are actually faced with writing daily and weekly reports for parents. This never provides a long-term solution because it addresses the wrong problem. It also robs teachers of valuable teaching and preparation time.

The real problem is that the child has learned that it is unsafe to discuss school with his or her parents. Rather than developing a reporting plan, it is much wiser to work on the real problem—helping children and parents learn to talk to each other in safe and supportive ways. This solution works, and it lasts a lifetime.


You can teach your child to discuss school with you. While you are doing this, you can also lay the foundation blocks that will build a true winner out of your youngster.

**Winners always think about how they are going to succeed. Losers always think about their possible failures.**

**STEP ONE:** Sit down with your children two to three times per week. Have them point out the best things they did on their papers.

**STEP TWO:** Make sure your child describes to you the reasons for his or her success. As they put these into words, the reasons for the success will be imprinted on their brain, never to be erased. They will start to believe they are in control of their success.

**STEP THREE:** Work with your children on their mistakes only when they ask for your help. Let the school work on deficiencies. Teachers have training to help with the deficiencies in effective ways.

**STEP FOUR:** Be patient. This is a real change in operation. It will take the child a period of time to believe that this is not just a new phase his parents are going through. Look for the real benefits to show up in several months or maybe during the next few years, depending upon the child's past history. 

*Winners focus upon their strengths  
Losers focus upon their weaknesses*



# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

*Presented by:*  
**LSTA 05-3055**

### Self-Concept

I'm not held back because of what I can't do. I'm held back because of what I'm afraid I can't do. More often, I am held back because of my fear that I might fail, and as a result, I might not like myself. That's called lack of self-esteem.

Our self-concept rules our lives. It sometimes works as a wonderful encourager and sometimes as a tyrannical dictator, controlling almost every move we make, it talks to us constantly, "You can do it. Go for it!" Or, "Not me. I could never do that."

Our self-concept lives at the subconscious level of thinking, over which we have little control. It grew there when we were little children and continues to grow and change with every new experience. The subconscious mind stores every experience just like a computer.

However, computers have no ability to decide right from wrong, fact from fiction. Everything stored in the computer later comes out as fact. In computerland this is known as "garbage in, garbage out."

Our subconscious mind does the same thing. It cannot tell the difference between things we vividly imagine and things that really happen. As a result, everything that is stored comes out as fact, even when the original source is imagination or misunderstanding.

A youngster's mind is especially receptive to what is going on in his or her world. The self-concept computer is not firmly set. Therefore, children are easily influenced by the messages they think they hear from their parents and teachers. We can help children store positive or negative messages. We do the best job of this, not through our words, but through our actions.

Parents and teachers who constantly encourage children to decide between two alternatives teach children to think for themselves. They send powerful messages that imply, "You are so smart that I can allow you to think for yourself." This action also implies, "I can trust you to know what is good for you."

Wise parents usually suggest two choices in a manner that allow them to be happy with either choice. An example of this is: "Our car will be leaving for town in 20 minutes. Are you going to wear your coat or carry it? It's your choice."

Some parents give order, such as "You wear your coat or else!" This sends a "you're dumb" message. After a period of time these parents discover using too many orders has caused their child's low self-concept.

A child's self-concept is the sum total of all the "you're smart" messages he or she hears minus all the "you're dumb" messages. Hopefully, our actions send more positive messages than negative ones.



*Kids Look at Our Actions to Learn Who They Are*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

Presented by:  
*LSTA 05-3055*

## Setting Limits

Children need firm limits. Limits are the foundation of security. Children lucky enough to have limits placed on them in loving ways are then secure enough to develop self-confidence. These children are easier to teach, spend less time acting out, and usually get along well with other children and adults.

I have seen many children misbehave in a variety of ways, in desperate attempts to get their parents to set limits. It is almost as if they were trying to say, "Don't you love me? How bad do I have to act before you will set some limits for me?"

Setting firm limits is a gift of love. The problem is that we often find setting limits difficult. Children fight the limits to see if they are firm enough to provide security. They test us by saying that we are mean, or that we don't love them. It is easy to become confused at this point and change the limits. That is the last thing children really need.

Avoid giving orders. Orders do not set limits; they encourage battles. Consider the following order: "I've called you to dinner three times already! You get in here and eat your dinner!" It encourages the child to be late just to test the limits.

Try instead, "I'm serving dinner in five minutes. Hope you join us. If not, breakfast will be at the regular time." This leaves the youngster with much more to think about, such as, "It doesn't sound as if Mom is going to be serving a special

meal for me if I'm late." Most parents are pleasantly surprised at the results when they describe what they plan to do, instead of telling the child what he/she has to do.

### **Avoid Orders -**

"You're not going to talk to me like that in my own house!" (fighting words)

### **Try stating what you are willing to do -**

"I'd be willing to listen to you about that when your voice is as soft as mine." (thinking words)

### **Avoid telling what you won't do -**

"I'm not giving you any more allowance just because you wasted yours already!" (fighting words)

### **Try stating what you will do -**

"Don't worry sweetie. You'll have some money when your usual allowance comes on Saturday." (thinking words)

Limits are often set by offering choices. A mother getting ready to go shopping, sets limits through choices. "Would you rather go shopping with me and keep your hands to yourself, or would you rather take some of your allowance money and hire a sitter to stay with you at home?" I have an idea that if the children don't behave in the store this week, they will be hiring their own sitter next time, and Mom will enjoy her shopping.



*Set limits using "thinking words" instead of "fighting words"*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

*Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055*

## The Shy Child

There are three major reasons that children appear shy and withdrawn. First, many children are simply built that way. They are good and responsive children who simply have never liked the attention of strangers. Such children may be shy because of their genetic make-up. Badgering can only make this situation worse.

Children may be shy because they have suffered from strangers or families. They have learned not to trust others.

Finally, children may be shy and retiring because this is a "hook" that they unconsciously use to upset their parents. Children want emotion from their parents. They'll do almost anything to get it. If a child learns that being shy and withdrawn gets the parents goat and leads to parental frustration, the child will naturally become even more shy and withdrawn as time passes.

No matter what the cause, parents best handle the situation by accepting the child for who he or she is. The parent might say something like:

"Well, Jane, the thing I like about you is that you think things over before you say anything. More than that, you are careful about who you make

friends with. You don't just rush in there like some children and make friends willingly. You like to think about it. Of course, sometimes you think about it so hard that you may have fewer friends. But, then again, Jane, everybody is different!"

Some children do give the appearance of being pathologically shy and withdrawn. They simply won't talk to anybody about anything. In this situation, professional help may be needed. A thoughtful and wise therapist may be able to form a trusting relationship with a child in play therapy and help the child express him or herself verbally and have, consequently, less need to withdraw. If a child is shy and withdrawn secondary to trauma, professional help may be necessary.

Finally, it may be helpful to *encourage*, but not *badger*, shy children. Parents might say, "boy, I bet John would really be happy if you talked to him. I'll bet that boy would like to have your friendship! I think maybe you'll decide that you'll want to talk to him."

Such conversation has a much better chance of succeeding than saying, "Why don't you talk to John. You're just too shy."



*It's Helpful to Encourage Shy Children, Not Badger Them*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

*Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055*

## **Stealing**

"Oh no, does this stealing incident mean my child is headed for a life of crime?" Few behaviors are more upsetting to parents than stealing. Even occasional stealing by a child causes parents considerable concern.

Like lying, stealing is almost always a childhood phase. Children aren't necessarily practicing for a career in crime! Most outgrow the behavior if their parents handle the situation calmly, by praising a child for returning stolen objects instead of becoming enraged at the actual act of stealing.

### **Let Consequences Teach**

Most children will change only when they realize the satisfaction they get from stealing isn't worth the consequences they must pay for their behavior. Consequences, provided with empathy and sadness in place of anger, go a long way in helping children think about their actions.

When Travis is caught stealing art supplies at school, Dad provides plenty of empathy, while making sure Travis feels the consequences.

Dad: "I'm sorry to hear you're in trouble at school. I'll bet that makes you feel real bad."

Travis: "Yeah, my teacher says I can't use the art room for a whole month!"

Dad: "I'm sorry for you son, and even though I love you, your teacher is doing the right thing. It's not fair to others when you take things from the classroom. Maybe you'll be able to finish your projects next month. I think that's up to you."

## **Chronic Stealing**

When stealing becomes chronic behavior, parents must try to understand the reasons behind this undesirable activity.

Children who steal often feel empty and unloved. Unlike adults, who have several positive or negative ways to fill emotional voids, children have few avenues to remedy the pain and emptiness they feel. Stealing by a child can be translated into the words, "I'm not getting my fair share." It provides temporary relief from the empty feeling, therefore the behavior may become a habit.

Chronic stealing is a symptom of underlying problems. The solution usually is found in helping the child feel more loved, accepted and recognized.

### **Spend Extra Time with Your Child**

Plan a special time each week to give your child your undivided attention. Whether you take a walk, play one of your child's favorite games, or just nuzzle and watch TV together, you will be helping to fill the void your child might be feeling.

Teachers can be enlisted to help by increasing the amount of daily eye contact and recognition provided to your child. You can also request that the teacher avoid unnecessary humiliation of your child, by keeping the consequences for stealing a private matter between the teacher and student.

### **When Stealing Continues**

If, after three or four months, you see no change in your child's behavior, professional help may be needed to help identify the underlying reasons for the stealing.



*Most children will change only when they realize the satisfaction they get from stealing isn't worth the consequences*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

## PRESENTS:

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#### Success with an ADHD Child

"I can't get my son to be responsible for anything, especially his schoolwork. He can't remember a thing. He's driving me insane!" I bet you recognize the person saying this as the parent of a child who's been diagnosed as having attention deficit hyperactive disorder, or ADHD for short.

Parents of ADHD children are among the most frustrated parents I have ever known. It doesn't help that a common belief about children who suffer from ADHD says that they can't remember and can't concentrate for any prolonged period of time. Fortunately, many of the recent discoveries about ADHD show that these children can be motivated to remember, concentrate, and learn from the consequences of their mistakes. They often just have more difficulty in these areas than other children.

Since drug therapy alone is usually not successful with these children, the solution to this problem often involves a combination of drug therapy and changes in the way parents work with their children. These changes include a willingness and determination on the part of parents to work on changing only one behavior at a time. This shows the child that the parents can and will be successful in expecting responsible behavior. When this approach is used, a ripple effect takes place. Parents who are willing to focus most of their energy on helping the child change only one behavior at a time find success quicker with each new behavior that they tackle.

Parents who master the four steps explained below will see dramatic changes. Each step will be easier than the last. It is essential, however, that parents move to the next step only after total mastery of the previous step. This is the secret to success in this process.

#### Step One - The child learns to complete chores without reminders

Roger must believe that his parents think successful completion of chores is the only important thing in the world. To accomplish this the parents say, "Your chores are important. We expect you to do them without reminders before your next meal. Your next meal may come today, tomorrow, or Saturday. You decide."

It works best to start this step with Roger at a time close to the dinner hour so that the consequence for not remembering the chores is

available in a timely fashion. Most children will argue, bargain, and manipulate at this point. It is crucial that the parent not give in. Be prepared to say over and over, "I'm sure this doesn't feel fair, and you will eat when the chores are done." Remember there are to be no reminders, reasoning or arguing with the child about the fairness of the situation.

#### Step Two - The child learns to go to timeout

"Off to your room, dear. Please return when you can be sweet. Thank you." In this second step, Roger learns that his parents mean business when sending him to time out. Once more, work on only this problem until there is success. Some parents have seen success hiring an older neighborhood child to keep their youngster in his room. It is even better when the child pays for this service with either his allowance or a toy.

#### Step Three - The child learns to have only "good minutes" in the classroom

In this step Rogers parents tell him that school and learning are privileges. The parents and Roger meet with his teacher and agree that Roger is to learn to sit in class without bothering other students or the teacher. The parents back the teacher by saying, "If Roger cannot go to timeout in a pleasant way, call this phone number and someone will pick him up and take him home. We will not complain or lecture him. However, he will do some chores to make up for the inconvenience."

#### Step Four - The child completes classroom assignments

This step requires a foolproof communication system between teacher and parent. At this point the parents say to Roger, "Now you are ready to start doing your school assignments. We expect them to be done at school. Any assignments not completed at school will be supervised at home. Each supervised assignment will require a payment on your part of one chore."

Many parents have been successful treating attention deficit hyperactive disorder with this method. It is also helpful to obtain the advice of a pediatrician regarding how drug therapy may make this process more workable.



*ADHD children can be motivated to remember, concentrate, and learn from the consequences of their mistakes*

# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24*

## *PRESENTS:*

### *PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC*

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

*Presented by:*  
*LSTA 05-3055*

#### **Survival Skills for the Real World**

Are kids facing more life and death decisions than ever? Are they being challenged, at earlier ages than before, with scarier choices about drugs, alcohol, sex, and violence? Clearly, most children are growing up in a much more challenging world than we ever imagined. And, the consequences of mistakes are more serious than ever!

Of great concern is the fact that many children are not being equipped with the survival skills necessary for making wise decisions about these pressures. More and more seem to believe that bad things can't really happen until after their second or third poor decision. What do I mean? Perhaps an example will better illustrate this point.

Not long ago, I took my son to the movies. As we sat through the multitude of previews and adds for giant sized butter-flavored popcorn, I noticed two boys sitting near the front, throwing ice. Their parents were seated about three rows behind them. Mom walked up to them and said something like, "You stop that. I mean it. That's one."

A minute or two later, the ice once again began to sail. This time dad approached them and said very loudly, "Mom told you to stop that. Now that's two."

Soon, the popcorn began to fly. Dad rushed back down to them and said, "Stop that. If you keep doing that were going to have to leave!" Finally, after three or four warnings, these parents put some action behind their threats and took the kids home. What happens when we give children two or three warnings before we

deliver a consequence? We condition them to believe that they can always make at least two poor decisions before anything unfortunate happens. Does this give kids a strong defense against peer pressure? Absolutely not! Why? Because down deep they start to develop "tapes" inside of their heads that say things like, "I can smoke crack (or have sex, drink and drive, carry a gun, etc.) at least two times before anything bad happens."

I had a friend in high school with this view. His parents had always warned him at least three times before they actually followed-through. He lived for a short while believing that nothing bad could happen unless he'd been warned at least twice. Then he died—the first time he went to a party, got drunk, and tried to drive home in a mountain snowstorm.

Love and Logic parents know that kids need to understand that bad things can happen after the first poor decision—without repeated warnings. How do they teach this? They set limits once and follow-through with meaningful consequences rather than more warnings.

What's this look like in the movie theatre? Mom or dad walks over and whispers, "Are you guys going to be able to behave or do we need to go?" If the boys act-up again, mom and dad don't lecture or warn. Instead, they say something like, "How sad. We're going home now. And by the way, how are you guys going to pay us for the money we spent on tickets, soda, and popcorn? You can tell us later. Try not to worry about it."



**Set Limits Once, Then Follow-through  
With Meaningful Consequences**

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

### Swearing and Bad Language

It hits us like a ton of bricks. That sweet and innocent child we're raising walks through the door one day spewing forth a string of expletives that knocks our socks off.

Sometimes kids use bad language because they want to be like their schoolmates. Sometimes they use it merely to test, or enjoy, our reaction.

In many cases, it is a mere rite of passage, a phase children go through. They hear older kids swearing and, wanting to be big like them, they develop a new vocabulary.

We could respond with demands, "You're not going to talk like that in this household! How many times have we told you to clean up that mouth?" Or, we could wash their mouths out with soap. But then they'd only resolve all the more to exert their independence, and that is seldom fun for us.

Solving this problem is a matter of taking small steps. The first step is to discuss where such language is acceptable, and second is to establish whether it is really necessary at all.

#### Step One

"You kind of like that word, don't you? You know, some kids like those words because when they use them their parents' mouths drop open. But the people who really know how to use those words are the kind of people who know where and when to use them. I'm curious about how much you know about that? What would you guess—when grandma's here for Sunday dinner? Would that be a good time to use those words?"

Or in your classroom? I'll be able to know how grown up you are by how well you can figure that out."

One place where they cannot use these words is around us. When the bad language comes out, we say, "Is this the right place for that language?" We repeat that question until we get results.

#### Step Two

The time to discuss this problem is when both the child and the parents are happy. One approach is to address the child's sense of worth: "You know, Leon, a lot of people who use that sort of language are people who don't feel that good about themselves."

Or we may want to take an intellectual tack: "People who use that sort of language are people with a very limited vocabulary, Leon. They don't know many words, so they pull out those boring old swear words and use them. Nobody will ever have to look them up in the dictionary. They're really easy words. You know, I can sort of understand people using them, Leon. So, if there's ever a day when you feel especially dim-witted and you come out with a couple of corks, I'll try to understand that it's a time when you're feeling really crummy about your ability to use the English language."

Then we should drop the issue, the language our children use will, in the long run, be the language they want to use. White-hot anger on our part will only delay their realization that swearing is usually inappropriate.



*Discuss where swearing is acceptable and whether it is really necessary*

# **MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24**

## **PRESENTS:**

### **PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC**

***Special Thoughts on Raising Kids***

*Presented by:*  
**LSTA 05-3055**

#### **Taking Charge of Chronic Problems The Strategic Training Session**

Young people seem to have an uncanny knack for knowing when their parents are vulnerable to "kid attack." They turn on their little radar sets and find ways to get the upper hand, just when we have the least amount of tactical support.

One dad said, "Little Erin behaves just great when we go somewhere she wants to go, but just let it be a grocery store trip for me and she goes wild. It always happens in public. Everybody stares, and I'm so embarrassed!"

This is something that happens to all of us. But once our children have played their hand a few times, waging war in public, we can counter with the Strategic Training Session.

The dad who told us about little Erin, recently employed the Strategic Training Session. He called his best friend saying, "I've been having trouble with Erin at the store and I need your help. Would you station yourself at the pay phone outside the mall tomorrow at 10:30?" They visited on the phone and set up the Strategic Training Session.

Dad and Erin shopped for groceries the next day,

and Erin was her usual obnoxious self. Dad, in a quiet voice, asked, "Would you rather behave or go sit in your room?" Erin called Dad's bluff and continued to act out. The next thing Erin knew, she was being escorted to a phone in the store where Dad called his friend and said, "Shopping is not fun today. Please come!"

Erin, still figuring this to be a ploy, continued whining and begging. A minute later her eyes grew large when she saw Dad's best friend walk up to her and say in a calm way, "Let's go to your room. You can wait for your father there."

Erin was sent to her room while Dad had a quiet shopping trip and Dad's best friend watched TV. Erin was allowed to come out of her room as soon as Dad came home and she appeared happy to see him again. Dad was pleasant because he had had a great time all by himself.

Dad and his best friend set up another Strategic Training Session two days later. Erin started her usual store behavior with teary eyes and a whining mouth. However, when Dad asked if she would rather shape up or go to her room, her eyes opened wide and her mouth shut tight.



#### ***Elements of a Strategic Training Session***

- ***Find someone who will help***
- ***Schedule the session on a day when you have both the energy and your support team available***
- ***Play it cool; take good care of yourself***
- ***Show no anger***
- ***Schedule an additional practice session within a short time as a reinforcement***



# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

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### Teen Telephone Use

The telephone is a wonderful parenting instrument! Like all instruments, it can be used appropriately by parents to help children learn responsibility, or it may be used inappropriately by parents and lead to numerous family hassles.

#### Discuss the situation with your teen

If your teen is spending more time on the telephone than you would like, you might try discussing the situation.

"I know time on the phone with your friends is very important. Do you have any thoughts about how you can get that time and still balance out the rest of your life? I hope you can find a way to get your work done and still have time with your friends and some time with the family. What seems to make sense to you?" If your teen is looking for some options, be prepared with a menu of possible solutions:

- Some teens buy their own telephone line
- Some youngsters tell their friends to call during certain hours
- Some teens reserve dinner time for family and don't talk on the phone during that time
- Some teens go live with their friends so they don't have this hassle
- Some teens exchange minutes on the phone for minutes of doing extra chores

Wise parents might discuss message taking with their teen:

"Robert, you can use the phone as much as you want. Whenever any of us are on the line, we will answer the other line when it clicks and take a telephone number for the other family member to call back. If you are on the phone and a telephone call comes in for an adult who is present in the home, you will tell the caller you are on the phone right now, that you will get off the phone, and that you will immediately call the adult to the phone."

"Then, within two sentences, you will tell your friend good-bye, tell him you'll call back, and immediately call the adult to take the phone call. Is the picture clear?"

"Yeah," responds the teen, "It's clear, but that's unfair! How come you get to talk to people immediately and I have to wait?"

"That's because I pay the bills. Whoever pays the telephone bill gets to use the phone immediately. It's their phone. If the rule seems unfair to you, you can pay for another line, pay the monthly bill, and have your own phone in your room. (This is based on the supposition that any teen responsible enough to earn his/ her own money and pay for a separate line and monthly bill is responsible enough to have his/her own phone in his/her own room. This is almost always true.)

Most children, considering the options, will agree they should immediately call their parents to the phone. In return, they get to use the phone, which is a real privilege.

Some adolescents, unfortunately, need to have the following additional conversation with their parents:

"Troy, if I have business associates or friends call, and they either get a busy signal or the phone rings, and there is no answer, and I find out that it is a time when we were home and you were on the phone, how will the rules have to change to ensure that I always get my calls?"

"Well, I suppose you could ban me from the telephone so it would always ring through."

"What a good idea! Maybe we should all give that some thought. Do you think we will need that rule?"

"No, I guess not!"

"Thanks, Troy, you're a jewel!"

In a loving parent/child relationship, firmness and high expectations almost always ensure your adolescent will be pleasant, courteous, effective and an always-present answering machine.



*A teen in the house means a free  
answering machine*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

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### Teen Underachievement

Most parents want their teens to make it to the head of the class. Unfortunately, some teens lack the motivation to achieve good grades or even stay in school.

The reasons for underachievement can include low self-esteem, boredom, family issues, rebellion, and drug abuse. And, it is a rare teen who does not tire of the intense competition of high school at some point before graduation.

#### Self-Image - The Best Guarantee

A healthy self-image is by far the best guarantee for graduation. Our goal should be to help our children feel good about themselves, not force them to complete high school. Trying to motivate an underachieving teen through pressure doesn't work. Even if we were successful in keeping our teens in school, many would most likely fail their first semester of college or at their job.

We can help build self-esteem by keeping communication open, showing concern in place of anger and being available without rescuing.

#### Place Responsibility with Your Teen

When you try to force your teen to stay in school, the result is like forcing a child to eat chocolate, the child rebels in spite of himself!

It is essential that teens view their success or failure in school as their own responsibility.

The parent in the following discussion sends this message:

Dad: "Larry, there are two ways we live our lives. One is preparing for life and the other is being in life. As long as you are preparing for life, I'm happy to pay room and board and tuition."

Larry: "So?"

Dad: "So, your grades seem to indicate that you've quit preparing for life. Maybe it's time for you to pay your own way."

Larry: "No, way! I'm going to graduate."

Dad: "If your grades are at least average next grading period, I'll know you are still preparing. If not, I'll know that you're in life and ready to pay your own way. I'll be interested to see what happens."

The responsibility for academic performance now is where it belongs - with Larry.

#### The Wrong Crowd

When teens run with a crowd that doesn't care about school, their grades often suffer. But forbidding teens from seeing their friends rarely works! It's better to maintain a good relationship with your teen, show concern without anger, and allow consequences to fall naturally.

#### What's Wrong with Being Average

Some parents are concerned when their teens bring home C's. No one likes to admit their children are average! But, in reality, many of us get C's in some areas of our lives. A little understanding goes a long way toward building self-esteem - the real issue behind underachievement.



*Low Self-Esteem and Low Self-Achievement go hand in hand*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

## Teens and Television

Parents often believe they help their teenagers by controlling *what* they watch on television. Good parenting, they believe, is monitoring the massive amounts of television trash their teens may pour into their heads. However, it may be more appropriate for parents to set limits on *quantity*, rather than *quality*.

In analyzing his practice over the past 20 years, adult and child psychiatrist, Foster W. Cline, M.D., says he has come to the conclusion that it's *not what* teens watch, but that they even *watch* television. Dr. Cline says he has never seen a child hurt nor helped from the content of television. He explains he has never run into a person who grew up in a dysfunctional family who felt his/her life had been improved by watching television. For instance, Dr. Cline says he hasn't had a patient state, "Well, actually, Dr. Cline, I grew up in an unhappy and strange family, but I watched a lot of Beaver Cleaver and Cosby shows, and so I didn't turn out so bad." Likewise, he's never seen a normal child growing up in a loving and healthy family whose personality or behavior was made significantly worse by watching shows of violence.

No, it's not what they watch that is affecting America's youth. It's that they watch so much. Not everything about television is negative. Television encourages the passive reception of

concepts—which, to a point, is good. However, many teens watch hundreds of hours of television. They watch more hours than they spend in school. They watch more hours than they spend with their parents! Sometimes they spend more hours with the television than they spend doing anything active with friends.

Teachers across the nation, report teenagers respond in the classroom as if they were watching television. Teens sit and look intelligent, they soak up the knowledge, they absorb; they just don't do much—no classroom participation, no homework, nothing!

The greatest sorrow, however, is that responsibility for this situation doesn't rest primarily with teens. It rests with the parents. Early on, television and videos can become very convenient babysitters. When a young child gets fussy, it's often easier to pop in a Disney video than to help the child occupy him or herself. A child who has not learned to occupy his or her time with creative activities, may become a teen who chooses television over friends, family, or activities.

It's time for parents to have fun with their teens again and encourage them to get involved in activities away from the television. Instead of monitoring what teens watch, parents must monitor how much they watch.



*It's more appropriate for parents to set limits on quantity rather than quality*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

Presented by:  
*LSTA 05-3055*

### **“That’s An Option!”**

“Well, if you guys don’t love me enough to give me more allowance, I’ll just have to start selling drugs!”

“I guess that’s an option,” said Mom.

“That’s an option? What do you mean that’s an option?”

Mom shrugged and said, “That’s one way to solve your problem.”

“You’ve got to be crazy! What are you on?” questioned Mark.

“Nothing,” replied Mom. “Even though I love you more than anything in the world, the time has come when you have to decide for yourself how you are going to live your life.”

“No way! You’re on something. Otherwise you’d be giving me a lot of grief about this! Do you know that I could get caught for dealing? I could go to jail!”

“Don’t worry. Maybe you’ll make enough money dealing that you can hire some good lawyers to get you some light time. I’m sure you’ve thought it all out. Anyway, just think, if you get caught, the state will take care of you. You don’t have to worry about allowance, room and board or anything.”

“Wait a minute! How am I supposed to go to college?”

Mom laid back on the couch and said, “Oh, you won’t be in the slammer forever. With good behavior you’ll get out and go to college later. You might even be better prepared because you’ll have more life experiences.”

“This is weird, man! Are you just going to sit there and let me ruin my life? Don’t you even care about what happens to me? I can’t listen to this! This is blowing my mind!”

And he stomped out of the room.

As farfetched as this sounds, it is an actual conversation between a child and a parent who had learned to keep the monkey on the back of the child who owned the problem. She had learned that teens love to “hit” us, like Mark did in this situation.

The whole idea is to get the parent defending, advising, and demanding. Then the child goes into his/her judge role with statements such as, “That’s not fair,” or, “I can’t do that.” Before long the parent totally owns a problem the child actually needs to learn to solve.

Analyzing this situation, we see that the mother did not criticize Mark’s thinking by saying, “That’s stupid. Don’t you dare do that!” She did not tell him what to do: “If you want to go to that concert badly enough, you’ll get out and get yourself an honest job.” And Mom did not use anger, guilt, intimidation or orders such as, “As long as you live in my house you’re not going to talk like that!”

This mother remembered the response, “That’s an option,” will apply regardless of the stupidity of a teen’s suggestion. A teen’s inappropriate suggestion usually has parents doing all the thinking and ultimately taking over ownership of the problem.

The second skill Mom used was to think of all the advantages to Mark’s solution of selling drugs. However, she stated them in rather negative, yet enthusiastic, terms. As you can tell from the dialog, it blew Mark’s mind, and he switched into the role of telling her what was wrong with dealing drugs.

The third thing Mom knew, was that Mark could learn from this type of dialog because she had a reasonably good relationship with him and things had gone well during his childhood.



***“That’s an option,” forces your teen to really think about what he/she has said***

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055

## “They’re Calling Me Names”

Parents are understandably concerned when their children are called names or teased for being different. Oftentimes, parents wonder, “why does this happen? Why are children so mean to each other?”

Children call each other names, not to necessarily make others feel bad, but to make themselves feel good. As nationally known educational consultant Jim Fay explains, “children who are hurting inside want to make others hurt on the outside so that they can feel better about themselves.”

### Two ways of dealing with name-calling

When children are teased about being different, parents may handle it in two ways. First, some parents protect their child and talk to the children doing the teasing. This may be helpful in the long run, but it may covertly say to the child being teased, “You can’t handle the situation and you need help.”

It’s often better to strengthen the child, rather than try to lighten the load. Listening with empathy, as your child explains the situation, is a good way to start. Then teach the child “I messages” or ways to express how he/she feels, rather than telling what the other person needs to do.

A conversation with your child might go something like this:

**Parent:** What would happen if you told these children who pick on you to “Cut it out!” Are they going to like you or get mad at you?

**Child:** Get mad at me.

**Parent:** Right. The trick is to tell them how you feel inside, not to tell them what’s wrong with them. You might say, “that makes me feel pretty bad.” Does that say there is something wrong with them or just tell them how you feel?

**Child:** How I feel.

**Parent:** Right. that’s called an “I” message. “You know how “I” feel.

**Child:** OK

**Parent:** There’s also a “You” message. And “You” messages make people feel madder. If I say to you, “Hey I don’t like what you’re doing,” is that a “You” message or an “I” message?

**Child:** “You” message.

**Parent:** Right. Tell them how you feel inside. Be nice about it. But tell them exactly how you feel. So you are going to send what messages?

**Child:** “I” messages.

**Parent:** And you’re not going to send...?

**Child:** “You” messages.

Nothing we say to our children can take away the hurt of their being teased. However, we can help them cope, with and handle, the hurt appropriately. We let them know that there will be many other hurts in their lives and we are certain that they will be able to cope with those too.



*When your children are being picked on:  
Listen with empathy - Teach the use of “I” messages*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

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#### Turning Bad Decisions into Wisdom

There are many different ways to cause children to carry the lion's share of the thinking. There are many different ways to force decision-making, and there are many unique and creative ways to express genuine sadness for children who make mistakes.

A father recently reminded me of the beauty of considering childhood mistakes as opportunities to gain wisdom and experience. He related the following opportunity his 12-year-old provided for himself.

Dad received a call from the police station notifying him his son had been picked up for shoplifting. A million things ran through his mind as he drove to pickup his son.

He thought about ranting, raving, and rescuing. But he also thought about using empathy instead, to drive the pain of this lesson home. He remembered that a consequence needs to become the bad guy, while the parent becomes the good guy.

Dad met a very sheepish child at the detention center. "Don't be mad, Dad. I'm sorry. I'll never do anything this stupid again!"

"I'm not mad, son, but I really feel sorry for what you're going to have to go through. I guess you know you'll have to appear in court. Who knows what the judge will do. I'd suggest you call around to some law offices and find out how much you're going to

have to pay to be represented in court."

The boy got his courage up and made some calls. Later he came to his dad in a state of depression. "Dad, do you know that the cheapest lawyer I could find wants to charge me \$600? That's a rip-off!"

"It's always expensive to hire professional help. Maybe I can help you. In this state parents can represent their children in court. If you want, I'll do it for half price. But maybe you want to think about that for a while. Let me know what you decide."

The child thought for a moment and said, "I guess I better have you represent me. But I don't even have \$300. If you do it, will you loan me the money?"

Dad said he'd loan him the money. However, the boy was in for some more big surprises. This father took his son to the office supply store and purchased a legal promissory note form. The two of them sat down together, filled out the form, and the son signed the document.

Father and son finally appeared before the judge of the juvenile court. "Young man, are you represented by counsel?," asked the judge.

"Yes sir. My Dad's not a lawyer, but he agreed to do it for me for

half price. He even loaned me the money and made me put up collateral and sign a promissory note.

"How do you plead in this matter?," asked the judge.

Dad said, "My client is pleading guilty, Your Honor."

"Fine," answered the judge. "Do you have anything to say before I rule?"

"Yes, Your Honor," offered Dad. "This is a good boy. He's never been in trouble before. He admits that he made a big mistake and does not plan to repeat this behavior. He is requesting that you consider a deferred judgement. He is even suggesting that the period of time be 12 months instead of the regular 6 month deferred judgement so he can prove to the court he can stay out of trouble for that period of time."

The judge struck his gavel and said, "So ordered. Stay out of trouble, young man. Now stand down!"

Father and son left the courtroom together, walking to their car. As they settled into their seats for the trip home, the boy looked over at his dad and said, "You know what, Dad? You were awesome in there!"

I think we would all agree, this was a time when something that could have become a tragedy, was turned into a great learning opportunity. And I bet we would all agree, this young boy has a lot more respect and love for his dad.



*Express genuine sadness when your child makes a mistake*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

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Presented by:  
LTSA 05-3055

#### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### TV and "Mush Brain"

Every new media study seems to bring on increased parental anxiety. The headlines are alarming: "Average child watches five hours of TV a day." "Experts claim television is the dominant influence on American kids."

We read the reports, cast a wary eye toward the family room where our kids are imitating potted plants in front of the tube, and we shake our heads in dismay. "Those kids," we say, "watch too much TV. They are going to suffer from Mush Brain."

We are forever devising strategies to curtail our kids' TV habits. But with television watching, as with many other issues, our modeling is the key. It's pretty hard for a major league couch potato to come down hard on his or her child's TV habits.

To influence our kids' TV habits, we must emphasize the alternatives - playing up the good things about friends, family, hobbies, sports, etc. Consider the following discussion between a dad and his TV-watching son.

Dad: "I've noticed you're watching a lot of TV lately. You like it don't you?"

Bill: "Yeah. I like it a lot."

Dad: "The good thing about TV is that you can learn a lot. You can find out what's happening in the world. It helps your vocabulary and you can learn about grown-ups. But one thing I'm wondering about is how much you think you learn about being a good friend. Are you a good friend to your TV set?"

Bill: "I don't know what you mean."

Dad: "The TV doesn't listen much to you, does it?"

It just talks at you. It doesn't care about what you say, right?"

Bill: "Uh . . .right."

Dad: "So, one thing about a TV set is it doesn't help you be a good friend to anyone. Does it ever pay attention to what you say? Does it ever listen to you?"

Bill: "No."

Dad: "What I think about TV is, it doesn't give a darn about you. That's the problem with the TV. However, your friends and I listen to you. But the TV doesn't really care what you think. I think if you watch a lot of TV you can be really smart about many things. But I don't know if you'll ever be able to prove it because you don't learn how to talk by watching TV. You might be happier, in the long run, if you watch less. But whose decision is it?"

Bill: "Mine."

Dad: "Yes, it really is. Hey, let me feel your brain. It doesn't feel too soft. I guess Mush Brain hasn't set in-yet!"

It's best not to set ourselves up for a control battle over TV watching with commands and threats. Harping at our kids constantly, or imposing severe cuts in their viewing habits, often leads to rebellion.

What we can do, however, is influence our kids. And a generous dose of humor does wonders. It is also helpful to remember that very few youngsters would rather watch TV than do something fun with their parents. Many experts advise us to either watch TV with our children so we can have some control, interpret for children what they see, or invite our children to do something with us instead.



*Few youngsters would rather watch TV than do something fun with their parents*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

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## Values: Passing Them On to Our Children

Every day it seems there's another story of the decline in values of our youth in the United States. Drugs are a scourge on the land, available even in remote rural schools. Teenage pregnancy is skyrocketing. In many schools, teachers are more like police officers than instructors. In our society, proper moral values seem to be taking a pretty good licking.

As parents, this has become a disturbing trend. "I want my children to have responsible moral values," we say. "But how do I teach them those values?"

A great wave of change has swept over our society in the past forty years. The "human rights" revolution has spread even to our children. Parents cannot make their children think like they do simply by telling them, "You'll do it or else." Demands and threats may yield short-term results, but they don't mold our children's minds. Such tactics don't persuade children that we're right.

Values are passed on to children in two ways: by what children see, and by what they experience in relating to us. When children see us being honest, they learn about honesty. When we talk to our children with love and respect, they learn to talk that way to others.

We can accelerate our modeling of effectiveness by engaging in "eavesdrop value setting." That means that Mom and Dad talk to each other about their values, but within earshot of the children. If we want our children to learn about honesty, for example, we allow them to overhear us reporting on our genuine acts of honesty. "You know, sweetie," we might say to our spouse. "something interesting happened to me today. At the store I gave the clerk a \$5.00 bill for a can of pop and she gave me \$14.50

in change. So, I gave her back the ten. I could have said nothing and been \$10.00 richer, but I feel so much better being honest - doing what's right."

Children soak up what they hear when we speak to others. It's great when what they soak up is good. Be advised, however, they're sponges for the bad, too.

Our improper words and actions hit them with the same force. If we have nothing but ridicule for our bosses and co-workers, our children learn that ridicule and sarcasm are an acceptable way to talk. If we cheat at board games or when we play sports with our young children, then we shouldn't wring our hands and cry, "Why?" when they get nailed for cheating in school.

The other way we influence our children's values is in the way we treat them. A corollary to the Golden Rule applies here: Children will do to others as their parents do to them. Treating our children with respect teaches them to go and do likewise. Being fair with our children makes them want to be fair to their friends and teachers.

Children have minds of their own. They want to exert their independence and do their own thinking. They shuck off the things that are forced onto them and embrace the things they want to believe. If we want to pass our values onto them, we must present those values in a way that our children can accept: in our actions and words. A child's values come from what he/she sees and hears - and also overhears. Children don't accept what we try to drive into their heads with lecturing.



*Values are passed on by what our children see and what they experience in relating to us*



# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

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## What's a Parent For?

"But, how can I be a good parent if I can't make my kid do, what I want him to do, when I want him to do it?"

Award-winning educator, Jim Fay, found himself discussing this question with the parent of a rebellious 12-year-old. The discussion didn't start with this question. It started with, "Your speech was very interesting, but what do you do with a child who never hears anything you say?"

Jim asked for more information and the mother said, "It's just like calling a cat. I call him to dinner and he doesn't even flinch. It's like my words go in one ear and out the other. Let me give you an example. I walk up to him when he is playing with his computer and tell him to come to dinner, and he just ignores me."

"What do you do then?" Jim asked.

"Well," she said, "I raise my voice, but he still doesn't pay attention. It seems like I have to get really mad and stern before he knows that I mean business!"

Jim asked, "How does that work?"

"Well, he doesn't show any respect. He just starts in on me with complaints about our being on his back all the time, and it ends up ruining the dinner every night! What do you do?"

Jim suggested a technique some parents use. These parents go to the child and calmly say, "We will be serving dinner for the next 30 minutes. Sure hope you can make it, but if not, we'll be serving breakfast at the regular time."

"I could never do that," she said. "It's not good for him to miss a meal. He needs his nourishment!" This gave

Jim some interesting thoughts about the quality of the nourishment her son gets when he is doing battle with his folks.

Jim asked, "Are you saying that technique won't work, or are you saying you just can't stand to think of him getting hungry during the night?"

With this she went on to explain seven different reasons why she could not use the technique suggested. She was becoming more anxious with each new reason.

Then with great exasperation she blurted out, "But how can I be a good parent if I can't make him do what I want him to do, when I want him to do it? Just tell me how to make him come to the table, eat his dinner, and show a little appreciation for a nice meal by not arguing with us all the time!"

Sad but true, it may be impossible to find someone to tell her how to do that. She is asking for control over something she can never control. It is impossible to control the thoughts and actions of another person. The very best we can do is to set up situations in which the other person decides it is best to do as asked. It makes us wonder which is most important, to control how our children act and think, or to give our kids 18 years worth of experiences that show them how the real world works. If we believe it is our job to control children, we will be inclined to operate like the mother in this story, who demanded that her child come to dinner *right now*.

If we believe our job is to help children discover how the real world operates and how to think for themselves, we will tend to act like the parent who says, "We will be serving dinner for the next 30 minutes. I sure hope you make it because we love eating with you."



*Great parents teach their children ...rather than control them*

# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:*

## *PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC*

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

*Presented by:  
LSTA 05-3055*

### **When Death Hits Close to Home**

When teens lose someone close to them - whether it is an immediate family member, a friend, or a close relative - the experience may be the first time death has hit so close to home.

In addition to the feelings of sorrow felt by people of all ages, a teen may be dealing with other intense emotions.

Some become consumed by guilt. If the death involved the suicide of a close friend or some type of accident, the teen may think, "Why didn't I do something to prevent this?" When teens lose a sibling, they may feel guilt over being the one spared from death. Some teens, particularly those predisposed to depression, may interpret the loss of a loved one as just one more sign that life isn't worth living. Others are stunned by the finality and reality of death.

**Parents are encouraged to help teens cope with death in the following ways:**

#### **Accept Your Teen's Feelings**

Grieving over the loss is natural. It is healthy for teens to be allowed to express their feelings of sadness and remorse, regardless of how the death occurred. Parents should not negate their teen's feelings with "I told you so," statements like, "If John hadn't been so reckless, he would probably be alive today."

#### **Talk About Emotions**

Parents should encourage teenagers to identify and talk about the emotions they are experiencing. Does the loss prove to them that life is unfair? Are they holding themselves responsible? Are they angry because their friend caused his own death through foolish behavior?

When parents are experiencing the same loss, as in the case of the death of a family member, it is best if a teen talks with someone outside the family. A counselor, therapist, or friend who is not emotionally involved, can help a young person sort out and handle his or her feelings.

#### **Death is a Natural Process**

A teen must learn to accept the reality of death as a part of the cycle of life. For the first time, some teens realize, "This could have actually happened to me!" For the first time, many recognize that life does not go on forever. In other cases, they recognize that death may be the consequence for the disregard of life.

After a teen has been given the time to deal with his or her immediate emotions of grief, parents may help the young person come to grips with reality through questions that encourage thinking. A parent asks his son, "Do you think Eric thought a lot about dying before his car accident?"

This question helps teens realize that their own behavior and thinking may also fit the profile of someone who is flirting with death.

#### **Teens Cope Well When We Do**

Children and teenagers generally handle life's difficulties only as well as their parents. If parents express their grief and sadness, while showing the ability to accept the loss, their children will generally follow their lead.



*Encourage your teen to identify and talk about the emotions he/she is experiencing*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

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## When Substance Abuse Threatens

Substance or drug abuse is a common and complex problem. Unfortunately, many teens experiment with drugs at some point. Fortunately, most do not go on to use or abuse drugs.

The following are eight important facts about substance abuse:

1. **Alcohol is the most commonly abused substance** - Alcohol and nicotine cause far more deaths than any illegal substance. Adults are the largest abusers of both.
2. **Nicotine is linked to the most deaths** - Parents who smoke need to be up front with their children by admitting their addiction is seriously hurting their health.
3. **Nicotine is the most addicting substance** - Nicotine is now believed to be even more addicting than cocaine. Let teens know that manufacturers are counting on them just trying cigarettes so they'll be hooked!
4. **Some types of drug use are more dangerous than others** - Experimentation, drug use and drug abuse are three types of drug involvement. Although most who experiment do not go on to abuse drugs, parents must take a hard line against any type of drug use - without demonstrating anger.  
*Anger simply makes drug abuse more likely!*
5. **Cocaine and other drugs are being distributed and used by elementary school children in all socioeconomic groups throughout the country**- Parents need to provide their children with solid information on drugs. They are generally interested as long as articles and material are factual.
6. **A loving and open parent/child relationship is the best insurance against drug abuse** - Drug use/abuse does not occur in a vacuum, but is a sign of a poor parent/child relationship. Strong bonds of love and open communication are the best ways to prevent the problem.
7. Because much drug use is a sign of rebellion, orders are bound to make the problem worse. Instead, as difficult as it may be, opinions and consequences should be given without anger.
8. **Learn how to talk to your teens about drug abuse** - Let your teens know that parents are accessories to a crime when illegal drugs are in the home. You will simply call the police. The same applies to drinking and driving. Statements about taking care of ourselves and not being accessories to a crime are much more effective than lecturing about what's good for them! Thoughtful parents let their teenagers know that drug users pretty much have to deal with the law on their own!
9. **Learn the signs of drug abuse, while understanding that other problems may mimic drug abuse** - Signs can include a sudden drop in school grades or change in friendships. Changes in the size of the eye pupil may indicate acute drug use, while marijuana use can cause a reddening of the eye conjunctiva. Amphetamine use may cause teens to act like they have a chip on their shoulder or are paranoid. Drug highs may be followed by depression.



*Anger simply makes drug abuse more likely!  
Open, loving relationships with our teens are the best insurance against  
drug abuse*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

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### When Teens Won't Talk

If you're worried because your teen won't talk, take heart! There is probably more reason to worry about a teen who shares everything with you. But many parents, accustomed to talkative youngsters, blame themselves when their children both grow up and clam up!

**It is absolutely normal for young people to withhold information from adults. Why? The following are a few reasons:**

**Teens don't feel safe sharing certain things with their parents** - We have a natural tendency to become angry and upset when our teens tell us certain things. It's a rare and wise parent who says, "That's sad. I'm glad you shared that with me. How can I help you?"

**Teens often think they are the only ones who have certain thoughts** - Teens may not share embarrassing thoughts or problems with us because they think (often correctly) we won't be able to handle what they say.

**Teens are seeking independence** - A teen's thinking goes something like this: "If I tell my parents everything, that means I am not independent."

**Teens sometimes lack the right words** - Some adolescents don't talk because it may be difficult to find the words that match their feelings.

**Teens are going through more changes than at any other time in life** - The physical, emotional, and chemical changes taking place in a teen's body are intense. It's understandable why an adolescent behaves differently than the child who told you everything.

### Help Your Teen Open Up

A few rules for parents can go a long way in helping our teens talk to us.

1. **Don't interrogate** - Parents who get the best results don't fire a lot of questions at their teenagers. Instead they say, "Let me tell you about my day!" Sometimes, their own enthusiasm rubs off.
2. **Make it safe for your teen to talk** - This means don't criticize. Don't tell your teen they're wrong-even when they are! A teen who is criticized will talk back or clam up even more. We need to show our teens we can handle what they say, without anger.
3. **Don't try to force your teen to talk** - A person's natural tendency is to keep quiet when someone tries to make them talk. Withholding information also makes some teens feel they are in control. Their silent message is, "You can't make me talk!" Keep in mind that teens will talk when they're ready and only when it's safe.

### Normal and Natural

It's both normal and natural behavior for teens to keep information from adults. We're probably better off not knowing everything about them anyway!



*Make it safe for your teen to talk*

# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24*

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### *PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC*

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

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#### **Whining and Complaining**

It's ten o'clock in the morning and Mikey wants a cookie. He knows he can't have one, but that doesn't stop him from asking.

"Mommy, I want a cookie," he whines, his little fist clutching a fold in Mom's skirt.

"Mikey, you know you can't have cookies between meals," Mom returns. "Now, run off and play."

"But Mommy, I want one," Mikey continues.

"You can have one at lunchtime. Now, off you go."

"Mommy, I don't want to wait. I want one now."

"Well, you can't have one."

And then it happens. There's something about parents who tolerate whining from their kids: eventually the parents whine back. "Will you stop that whin-n-n-ing?" Mom says. "I hate it when you whine like that."

No wonder Mikey whines like he does. He has a good teacher. The fact is, parents who spend a lot of time pleading with their children, raise kids who are experts at pleading themselves.

Oftentimes, just to get rid of that sing-songey record of complaint, we give up the battle and grudgingly fork over the cookie or whatever our child has been whining for. The message the child gets is that whining works.

The secret of handling whiney behavior is similar to that of dealing with disrespect. We must make it known to our child that he or she will get no results until the tone of voice changes.

Some effective school teachers fight whiney behavior with multiple-choice questions. "Do you suppose I'll be able to understand you better when you're whining, or not whining? Why don't you think about that. Come back when you've decided."

We can do the same. Saying, "When your voice sounds like mine, I'll be glad to talk with you," addresses the real problem with whining, which is the tone of voice the child uses. Whether or not Mikey can have a cookie will be discussed later, after the syrupy pleading stops.

Kids are nothing if not persistent. Sometimes saying, "I won't listen to you while you're whining," gives them the emotional feedback they're looking for and encourages them to keep on.

If we aren't getting results by asking them to leave, or if we find ourselves drawn into a discussion about it, then we can win the battle by ignoring the whining altogether. It is best, however, to explain this method before employing it. Sit the child down, when emotions are calm, and say, "Mikey, if we ever act like we don't hear you, it's not because we don't want to hear you. We'll respond when we hear you talk in the same tone of voice we talk in."

Parents have the best luck when they rehearse their reaction to whining until they hear themselves thinking, "I can't wait for little Jeff to whine. I hope he does it today so I can practice my new techniques. Come on kid, make my day!"



*Address the real problem with whining  
- the tone of voice used*

# *MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24*

## *PRESENTS:*

### *PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC*

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

*Presented by:*  
*LSTA 05-3055*

#### **Who Owns the Problem?**

There are practical benefits to figuring out who really owns every problem. Psychiatrist, Foster W. Cline, M.D, once commented, "Parents who have trouble figuring out who has the problem keep child therapists in bread and butter." When parents do not figure out who has the problem, they raise an irresponsible child.

There is a useful concept called "units of concern." Every problem has a given number of units of concern. And you can bet nobody wants to carry those units of concern around - least of all the child causing the problem! Most kids would rather have teachers and parents carry units of concern. If the parent insists on worrying about whether a child does his homework, for example, then the child is free to drop that concern.

When parents carry their kids' concerns, it works about as well as trying to solve another nation's concerns. Let us suppose that on the television news this evening we see a green Martian. With antennas waving and yellow eyes bulging, the Martian might declare, "Earthlings, you are a very warlike species. You could wipe each other out! From now on, we are not going to let you hurt each other. We're going to step in! The missiles of any nation being fired at another nation will immediately be destroyed. We are doing this because we love you!" Can you imagine the response? You bet. Within fifteen minutes, the U.S. and Russia would both be shooting at the

Martians, who would end up saying, "Well, we were only trying to help." It never helps to take on someone else's problem. It just doesn't work.

**Tote up your problems** - Understanding who has the problem is important. The list of problems that kids directly cause parents is very short. Mainly it covers:

- How the child relates to the parents
- How the child does chores
- What life support systems the child requires from the parent (bread and butter, room and board).

On the other hand, the list of problems that children need to solve for themselves is very long: getting to school on time, getting to school at all, dropping out of school, being hassled by friends, hassling friends harassing teachers, being harassed by teachers and more. Frankly, it's an unending list. Parents who get involved in their kids' problems can keep themselves busy for a lifetime.

In summary, if everyone figured out, "Who really has this problem?" most problems between nations would be solved quickly. Most battles on the home-front would also be solved quickly. Would we be bored!



*Solving my children's problems meets my own needs. Then I feel like a good parent. Allowing them to find their own solutions meets their needs. Then they learn to problem solve.*

# MILLBURN CC SCHOOL DISTRICT 24 PRESENTS:

## PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

*Special Thoughts on Raising Kids*

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### **“You’re Grounded!”**

In the real world, the only time people are “grounded” is when they’re locked up. Foster W. Cline, M.D., of the Cline/Fay Institute believes that grounding is usually ineffective for teens. It should be used after all other methods have failed - and only then, with great reluctance.

When parents give out heavy consequences like grounding, and then back off, they lose their teen’s respect. Teenagers often refuse to obey them. We should never give orders we can’t enforce.

**There are better ways to handle a teen’s behavior than grounding. Here are some ideas:**

1. **Express your concern to your teen –**  
Letting teens know we are concerned with their actions is usually more effective in the long run than grounding. Let them know how their behavior is stressful to our relationship with them.
2. **Make fewer, not more rules –**  
There are three basic rules most teens need, but outside of that, they should be given the chance to make their own decisions and live with their mistakes.

**The three rules are:**

1. Treat parents with the same respect you gave them in elementary school.
2. If you’re of average intelligence, you get average grades.
3. Do your chores.

The best parents are those who are counselors. What they do best is listen and ask questions, instead of giving orders.

3. **Let natural consequences take over –**

Luckily, most consequences of behavior occur naturally. When teens get too many traffic violations, their licenses are taken away. If they drink and drive, their parents simply call the police.

There are other ways parents can let teens experience consequences. “Good guy” auto insurance, paid for by parents, is for teens who maintain good grades, receive no tickets, and pass driver’s education. However when a teen drives irresponsibly and gets poor grades, the parent says, “What a bummer, your insurance has gone up.” The teen pays the increase in cost.

4. **Take good care of yourself –**

This is a number one rule for parents. Adolescents learn far more from what they see us do than anything we tell them.

Instead of telling teens they can’t drink and drive, a wise parent says, “You’ll have to find some other car to drive and your own insurance. I can’t take the chance my car will be in an accident involving drinking.” Always follow through with your actions.

5. **Think of solutions, not punishment –**

Wise parents often sit down and talk with their teens, rather than dish out punishments like grounding.

Today, many parents are coming up with solutions that include showing concern, reinforcing positive behavior, helping their teens reach their own conclusions and letting natural consequences do the teaching.



*Grounding works best for those teens who need it least*