

Love, Teaching, & Positive Discipline: The Power of Effective Parenting
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This is a Reality Therapy concept- any rule or activity should be explicable in terms of one's goals and values. If you cannot explain the reason or the value of the rule; it's probably a bad rule or a least pointless rule.

This should be true of anything worth doing. Imagine you would like to have a profitable restaurant business. You have determined that your essential activities toward that end will be 1) fast and friendly service 2) a great food product in 3) a comfortable and entertaining atmosphere. Would it make sense to put a grouchy, monotone introvert at the front door as your "meet and greet" person? Or, would you change channels in the middle of a winning, Beaver's Hockey game? Or let someone sit an extra ten minutes because they sat at a dirty table? Parenting is more serious business and should be undertaken with intentionality equal to any other venture. You need to be prepared. You also need to know where you are going.

What is the goal of parenting?

Legitimate Interdependence

Parent Mission- As in any noble venture, parenting should have mission statement with clearly defined goals and objectives. We (the parents) are in a collective effort to raise our child to be legitimately interdependent by the age of _____ or when they graduate from _____ or _____.

The means should be effective in achieving the mission. At the Evergreen Shelter our parent support model is supported by three foundational, value-laden, activities that position the parent to effectively raise legitimately interdependent children. These activities support and compliment each other. We call them the:

3 Pillars of Parenting and they include:

Love- It's my opinion that C. S. Lewis was one of the finest minds of the 20th century. In Lewis's book, "The Four Loves," he describes several different types of love and the limits of these loves.¹

Affection is the most common and natural love within a family. Over time, bonds are formed as people live in close company. Affection is also a form of love we tend to have with our pets.

However, it has limits. Familiarity can also breed contempt. It tends to be the little things that will annoy a person over time. For some bizarre reason, bathrooms are contentious environments, when it comes to pet peeves. Over time, folks also learn how to really hurt each other. Hence, most murders fall into the "crimes of passion" category. An insult from a stranger is easier to brush off than an insult from a trusted friend. The sense of betrayal, the emotional impact and subsequent response will be much greater among intimates.

¹ Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves*. New York, NY: Harvest , 1960

Affection has its place in helping us bond and persist in parenting. However, the love we need to foster as parents is not so much an affectionate feeling, but a decision you make to work toward your child's best interest or ultimate good.² Lewis used the terms "charity" and the Greek word "agape" to describe this love. This is "give" love. It allows a parent to embrace the notion that we do not have children to keep them, but to give them away. "You'll fly away young birdie, you'll fly away..."

It will enable us to make the tough decisions when necessary. We will realize that we will need to love our children enough to hold them accountable, to sometimes watch them as they struggle with painful situations, especially those tough situations that only experience can teach.

Teaching- As parents, we will need to teach "legitimacy." Parents will need to instill a moral construct in their child, to help them internalize core values. In several books, Lewis explores humanity's moral structures and finds that all moral codes are surprisingly similar.³ He envisioned a Natural Law similar to the laws of mathematics. If someone were raised in isolation, they would not learn an alternative multiplication table. They would stumble upon the same multiplication table anyone and everyone uses when they multiply. Lewis had compelling evidence and arguments that this was also true of moral structures.

Jesus of Nazareth is credited with a one-sentence summation of all principled and ethical thought. Confucius made a very similar statement, but in the negative form. Confucius instructed, "do not unto others that which you would not have done unto you."⁴ Jesus's statement began, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" Matthew 7:12. Jesus and Confucius were drawing from the same well. In fact, some version of the "golden rule" can be found in most historical, ethical codes.

Now, why is that statement considered golden? Regardless of how you esteem Jesus, his statement captures the moral framework for "legitimacy." An effective moral system needs to incorporate two essential assumptions.

First, there needs to be an assumption of "personhood" or transcendence. We have some inherent dignity that needs to be recognized and approached with reason. We should be treated as persons, not objects or things. Kant proposed that we are ends in ourselves and should not be treated as a means toward an end.⁵ We should not be manipulated, used, conned or coerced. We need to be huge respecters of freedom.

Culturally speaking America went through a nihilistic phase and is now floating on a sea of postmodern existentialism. We have come unmoored so to speak. An

² adapted from- Lewis, C. S. *God in the Dock*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970. pg 48.

³ Lewis, C. S. *The Abolition of Man*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1947. Lewis also develops these arguments in *Mere Christianity* and *Miracles*.

⁴ Confucius. *The Analects of Confucius*. Translated by Burton Watson. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007.

⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. (Kant's book was first published in 1785.) Edited by 3rd. Translated by James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.

epidemiologist visited Bemidji and delivered some frightening data. Depression has increased in America 10% per decade since 1930. This trend was abated for a few years when the pharmaceutical companies rolled out their anti-depressants. India, the Netherlands, France and America have the most depressed people in the world. In United States over 1/3 of our population suffers with clinical depression.⁶ This is not just “their” problem as we all feel the affects of our cultural malaise. Prozac cannot cure a lost of personhood or value. It alleviates some of our angst as we face the abyss.

We need to recapture that unique essence we have a human beings, our inherent value, our personhood.

The second essential, ethical assumption is what philosophers might call the “assumption of other selves.” We need to assume that others share our basic essence or humanity; that our personal essence is shared equally. This is Martin Buber’s, “I-Thou,” concept. I remember reading “The Autobiography of Malcolm X.” He recounts being in a room with wealthy white adults. Malcolm was just a boy. The adults were talking about the black man as subhuman and inferior as if Malcolm were incapable of reasoning and understanding. Malcolm was there; listening and drawing every inference. The heart of racism is the notion that one’s ethnic or reference group has obtained personhood, but other groups have not.

The third deep insight in Jesus’s statement was the, “In everything, do,” part. As parents, we need to be bold and take action. We need to be proactive. In my parenting, this was my biggest failure and subsequent regret. I am an introvert, so I need to really challenge myself in this area. Growing up, I did not have this sort of relationship with my father. He was the strong, silent type. His heroes included folks like the Lone Ranger. The Lone Range hid behind a mask and was... well, pretty much alone. He had one friend and they didn’t talk much. I was also too enmeshed in our culture with its emphasis on personal privacy, giving kids their space. I should have taken more initiative to go after my kids, regardless of my or their comfort level. Luckily, my wife was there to offset my deficiencies in this area.

So, if your child is alienated, isolated or seems depressed. Go after them. If you are the parent, foster-parent or adoptive parent of a child with a RAD diagnosis, your task is much more daunting. You are going to need a huge dose of that “agape,” “give” love. The goal in parenting a child with an attachment disorder is not really “attachment.” This is hard, as we naturally yearn to have our love reciprocated. If one becomes desperate and pushes for a loving, reciprocal, response, the unattached child will become threatened, push back and/or flee. It will serve you better to focus your attention, not on attachment, but on teaching and modeling “pro-social behaviors,” how to do the right thing. Yours is the extreme task of loving/giving without an expectation of receiving love in return. If it is to someday be reciprocated, it will need to come as an unexpected surprise after years of sacrifice.

In review, we need to instill personhood and a sense of equality or shared personhood. How do you teach these things? Every method you can muster. Converse. Lecture. Do a power point if you are so inclined. Most importantly, model and teach the Golden Rule.

⁶ See, <http://www.lef.org/Magazine/2007/7/profile/Page-01?p=1> (Emmons 2007)

Don't worry. I'm not going to ask that you give your child a philosophy primer. I just wanted to break down the essential idea of "legitimacy." This presentation will teach practical ways to empower a child as a person, to bolster their self-esteem and to teach them proper respect for other persons.

How do you teach interdependence? There are two primary facets involved- social skills and independent living skills. Soft skills, social/emotional skills will go a long way toward one's success in life. Some cultures excel at this. My Mexican relatives have taught their children great "meet and greet" skills, with excellent introductions and good-byes. Some of my sober, Swedish relatives are a bit more challenged in this area.

A former Supervisor, Dan Stark, had sage advice on teaching independent living skills. Dan said, "Never do something for a child that they can do for themselves." We want to train leaders, not followers. A child needs increasing opportunities to make independent decisions and to think for themselves.

Now, this is a terrible analogy. I want something you will remember to demonstrate the mind-set I am endorsing here. Imagine a group of kids playing at the top of a cliff. Would we build a fence on the cliff edge or plant an ambulance on the bottom? I am suggesting, that as children develop we slowly get into the ambulance business. OK, we plant the signs and give warnings, but we need to allow increasing opportunities for independent thought, decision-making and responsibility, knowing full well that there are risks involved. Your EMT skills will be your relationship, communication, consistent consequences and your sage advice.

Positive Discipline- This is a form of structured teaching where a child learns to internalize their values with the help of consistent positive and negative consequences. It is a form of experiential learning. Our goal is to help children develop what psychologists would call an internal locus of control. Eventually, they will not need external control or structures because they will carry their values along with them and use self-control... when they're 30 something...

The over-manager parent fails to provide opportunities for children to exercise self-control and to think for themselves. The under-manager parent fails to teach values or provide a consistent structure for experiential learning. The child tends to learn their values on the street or from their peers, which are as clueless as themselves. The child of controlling parents will fail miserably their first year in college. The child of permissive parents may fail their entire life.

If you are the parent, grandparent, foster-parent or adoptive parent of a child with a FASD diagnosis, your task is much more daunting. Your child has suffered traumatic brain injury that affects their ability to learn from ideas or to learn quickly from consequences. Forget the ambulance analogy. You'll need your posthole digger and a firm commitment to fence building. You'll need to lower your expectations and realize your child will fail, repeatedly, but not necessarily intentionally. Maturation is possible, but the process will require patiently applied consequences and structure over a very, long period of time. The parents that understand this and stay effective are saints, every one of them.

Parents of ADHD children will need a similar patient attitude and will need special parenting techniques. Please email me and I will send you a primer.

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Before I lay out the means and methods of achieving legitimate interdependence, I feel the need to discuss a couple of self-defeating parenting styles that we routinely encounter and some of our successful intervention ideas. You know these parents and may be casting about for ideas.

One common Misdirected Parenting Style is what I will refer to as the:

Wounded/Traumatized Parent- This parent carries the poison of past injury or injuries. Their fear and victimization naturally produce anger. This anger becomes internalized and over time morphs into hatred and vengeance.

Fears generalize naturally. This can happen to anyone. I was attacked by dogs when I was young and for years every dog in the neighborhood was scary as hell. If attacked or mistreated, as a matter of survival, it is very easy, almost natural to go from, 'there are abusive people out there,' to 'the whole friggin' system is going to screw me and my children.' The traumatized individual becomes hypersensitive to issues of fairness. "The world is not fair; the deck is stacked," so their defensiveness extends everywhere. The parenting style of the wounded parent has the following characteristics:

1) Generalized victimization and defensiveness- the parent extends their victimization to their sons and daughters. Traumatized persons are prone to all sorts of mental, physical and chemical health issues and can be very codependent. Consequently, they may find themselves in situations that expose their children to trauma. If their children get mistreated while in their care, it adds another layer shame and defensiveness.

When their child gets in trouble, it is always someone else's fault. If their child were caught on camera instigating an assault, there would be something hidden from view that provoked the child or an accusation that the adults should have been doing a better job with supervision. The evidence will not be considered because it is heavily filtered. Defending their child is a matter of survival in a hostile world, a slanted system.

2) They teach retaliation- Again, as a matter of survival, they will model and teach their child, "If anyone messes with you, you mess them up good." This can spin out into pre-emptive aggression, i.e. bullying.

3) "Peerenting-" The wounded parent can be reactive and unfiltered, so they tend to share too much. The parent's boundaries become very blurred. Because they are living out their own victimization, they model and teach blaming and retaliation. Some of these parents have an anarchistic approach to parenting. The primary lesson this parenting style teaches is, "Nobody has the right to tell you what to do." They are also quite needy, so their children become supports and confidantes. One can see where this would lead to truancy as the lack structure and parent neediness can become more important than class time in what may be perceived as an unfriendly or hostile educational system.

Good News- This dynamic can change by making an investment in the parent. First, they need to feel that you see them as a person and have a genuine interest in them and their child.

One needs to go back to the beginning and address their response to trauma. The parent needs insight into how to extract the poison injected by past trauma. They need to

understand how that poison has affected their parenting and how the cycle turns. I start with Steven Covey's Snake Analogy.



I have found that Steven Covey's analogy can be extremely enlightening for the traumatized parent in understanding what kind of damage has been done through adverse experiences. This trauma is increased when layered on top of historical trauma. With historical trauma the wounded are usually walking among wounded. The poison goes inside to the spiritual or psychic core of the individual.

It is very exciting when you see the parent get that flash of insight into what dark experiences have been driving them. Poison from their abuser continues to plague them and then spreads to their child. Victimization is their default disposition and has been probably been a part of their survival since childhood. In other words, their defense mechanisms have been habituated, so they need help in identifying times they continue to react with anger and vengeance.

At some point, they will confess that they have coddled or spoiled their child. "I wanted them to have all the things I was not able to have." They can also see their child justifying aggression with their siblings and the chaos that seems to pervade their home. Over time, they can learn that they need to love their child enough to hold them accountable.

Authoritarian Parent- I believe that at the heart, the authoritarian parent is insecure and feels powerless. To compensate, they tend to be power hungry and controlling. I have not had much luck explaining this to these parents. This approach is characterized by:

1) A strong need for compliance- this need for obedience, compliance and subordination is not as an expression of a principled life or a well-defined value system. It is meeting a need for the parent more than the child.

2) Polarization and power struggles- The parent has to win. "I'm the adult; you're the child. When you get your house, you can make your own rules. Not on my shift or my watch..." You get the picture. These parents seek justice at the expense of understanding or compassion. As children attempt to assert their independence, which is a normal part of maturation, the parent and child will increasingly bump heads. This parent becomes

frustrated and is often angry. The parent exerts external control rather than nurturing internal control. "Rules without relationship leads to rebellion."⁷

3) A punitive approach to discipline. The primary lesson the authoritarian parent teaches is to "fear authority." They fail to teach the reason behind the rule. They may not have a clear, communicable reason other than "because I told you so."

This approach does not teach a child independence- how to think for one's self. So, it misses the mission of parenting, which is legitimate interdependence/independence.

My colleague, Mick, has had some luck asking these parents to look back at times they have demanded action or compliance and which of these times they have enjoyed success. This search almost always comes up empty. He will also explore how the parent was raised and how they felt about their parent's approach.

The other intervention that produces some success is to point out that they seem to be taking all the ownership of their child's problem(s). This moment of realization has been pivotal in Mick's intervention. To the parent- "You seem extremely worried and are donating all kinds of emotional energy and time to your son/daughter's problem. Now, here they are, sitting and looking pretty casual. Somehow, this problem and the responsibility for this problem needs to shift from you to him/her."

Alcoholic/Drug Addicted Parent- One will meet some great people that have been enslaved by addiction and really dysfunctional or even despicable people that are addicts. Regardless, addiction will have a nefarious impact on a one's ability to parent. I conferred with Addiction Counselors and offer the following typical characteristics of the addicted parent. Their home environment and style are characterized by:

1) Extremes- the addicted parent is going to be all over the map and may appear 'bi-polar' in their approach to parenting. Chemicals are not rational. In fact, most drugs, with alcohol being no exception, are toxic. It is also common that the addict will invite toxic individuals into the home. Their extremes can range from being their child's best friend to beating their ass for making too much noise. The environment will become increasingly chaotic.

2) Misplaced Priorities- Children are never the priority in an addict or alcoholic's home. The addict is not very accessible and is not reliable. The compulsion to get high or drunk trumps all other priorities. This compulsive, self-centered, behavior can run the gamut, including- in extreme cases even soliciting their children for sex, broken promises, a lack of parent accessibility, using children to get drug money, hawking toys and household items, and abuse of welfare intended for their children. Children of alcoholics or addicts describe a "1st of the month mania," where their addicted parent tries to make amends and appease their children for all the pain they caused throughout the month. Of course, this shift in priorities creates a huge hole in a child's heart.

3) Shame, then Blame- The alcoholic or addict really does not see much in the mirror that they can feel good about, which in turn drives the compulsion to get high or drunk. It is a desperate dynamic that is immersed in lies. The addict will cover their

⁷ McDowell, Josh. "Rules Without Relationship Leads to Rebellion." *www.josh.org*. Josh McDowell Ministry.

shame with denial and blame shifting. Faultfinding will also be compulsive and relentless. The sickness is progressive. When the addict or alcoholic parent is sick, the whole family will get sick.

4) Role Reversals/Enabling- When the parent is taken out by addiction, someone need to “step up.” Children end up parenting and older siblings are placed in charge of younger siblings. Some of this effort to “shore things up,” becomes classic “enabling,” where the family cushions the consequences of the parent’s addiction and in effect, allows them to continue to “use” and further deteriorate. Alcoholics may ask their underage, unlicensed, children to serve as designated-drivers. They may have their wife or husband call them in as “too sick to work” when they are too intoxicated or hung-over to work. Again, the sickness spreads throughout the family system.

Unfortunately, the success rate in the treatment for chemical dependency is poor. The restoration process needs to go deep and encompass the soul and the extended family. Mere sobriety is often not enough. The “dry-drunk,” that has a desire to drink and has not addressed the underlying spiritual, psychological and relational damage of drugs or alcohol is still toxic.

Effective intervention requires at least a year of sobriety with a great deal of soul searching, treatment and support. Parenting skill training should be mandatory with some form of testing to see if the concepts were internalized.

Children of alcoholics and addicts need a lot of support to survive these environments that are so resistant to change. Unfortunately, Bemidji is lacking some key support groups, namely a consistent, accessible, Alateen or Al-Anon. These programs teach children how to survive without enabling and how to find one’s self-esteem in a shame based, chaotic, neglectful environment. Alateen or Al-Anon facilitators review three critical ideas:

1) You did not cause it- (your parent(s)’ addiction/alcoholism)

2) You cannot control it.

3) You can learn to cope with it. Overcoming adversity can make you stronger.

Supportive adults can help teach these concepts and create safety plans for youth, giving them backup plans and letting them know how and when to protect themselves. Of course, this follow up and support will be needed longer than the day their parent has taken the first step to quit drinking or using drugs.

OK, on to some techniques to teach legitimate interdependency-

Effective Parent Role- Manage; do not over-manage or under-manage. One’s parenting relationship and structure should teach and reinforce internal values and resourcefulness. One’s approach should promote increasing your child’s freedom and responsibility.

Intentionally build assets, social and independent-living skills, interests, hobbies... A child should be importing support from many resources and developing healthy habits. These assets become protective factors against developmental diversions, chemical dependency, physical and mental health problems including suicidal ideation.

Effective Communication and Confrontation- A family’s communication climate needs to promote self-respect and respect for others. We all know the old adage, “It’s not

always what we say, but how we say it.” Our language should be dignified. It should be rational, respectful, direct and honest. We discovered years ago, that if we could merely change the way family members communicate with each other, we could yield extraordinary results.

Encourage abstract thought- Promote reading, by reading to your children and encouraging them to read. Reading promotes patient, systematic, abstract reasoning. Television and gaming promote immediate gratification and impulsivity. For a compelling overview of the impact of technology on our ability to think, read, “Amusing Ourselves to Death,” by Neil Postman.

Explain the Reason behind the Rule- A principle will take one much farther than a rule. It is imperative that a child knows why they should do something. This is especially true at times we break the rules, even our own rules. What if a child had some fun breaking a rule and then discovered a whole group of persons that routinely got together and were devoted to breaking that rule. Will they have any cognitive ammunition to resist joining them? We need to explain why certain behaviors are detrimental to our self interests, self respect and the interests of others. I do not really believe in victimless crimes. We are always the first casualties when our behavior gets cheap, impersonal or undignified.

Make a Value Circle- One way to promote your family values is to create a values circle. Make this a family activity. All of our rules should come from our values. At the Shelter, we have and list of our rules. The first sentence explains. “Our basic rules come from our values. It is our mission to promote- Safety, Respect and Responsibility. The following rules exist to achieve this mission.” A simple circle or line, communicates your values or standards, what is in the circle or above the line.

This next concept is hard for some parents to accept, but it logically follows that if our rules reflect our family values, then in some way they apply equally to all the family members, child and parent, young and old.

Offer choices not ultimatums- Choices affirm personhood and empower your child. Choices build a child’s confidence, independence and emphasize the importance of good decision-making. When you put your child in the driver’s seat, so to speak, you are teaching self-control and “Response-ability.” This is dignified. Children should see themselves as capable of real authentic action, that their decisions are meaningful, powerful and count for something. We want to train dynamic leaders not followers.

Get your child’s input on consequences- Teach them self-regulation or internal control. “When do you think you should be home? What do you think an appropriate consequence if you are late?” This has a huge secondary benefit for parents. If your child blows it (and they will), they will only have themselves to blame. This avoids unnecessary conflicts or power struggles. It is also much easier to follow through with negative consequences, if your child already agreed on the terms.

Put the responsibility back on your child- “You got a problem.” It’s your problem, not mine. What are you going to do about it? Get them problem solving and working to correct inappropriate actions.

Use contingency consequences- Contingency consequences help a child establish priorities, important things like, “work first; play later.” It also minimizes conflict and power struggles. Contingency consequences allow the parent to get out of the “no mode.” “Can I go out and play?” “Yeah, as soon as your chore has been checked.” Or, “Can I go out and play?” “Sure, as soon as your homework has been checked and the finished work is in the right pocket in your folder.” If your child has multiple contingency consequences, write them out as a list, so your child can see the “light at the end of the tunnel” and will not feel bullied, like you are making them up as you go along.

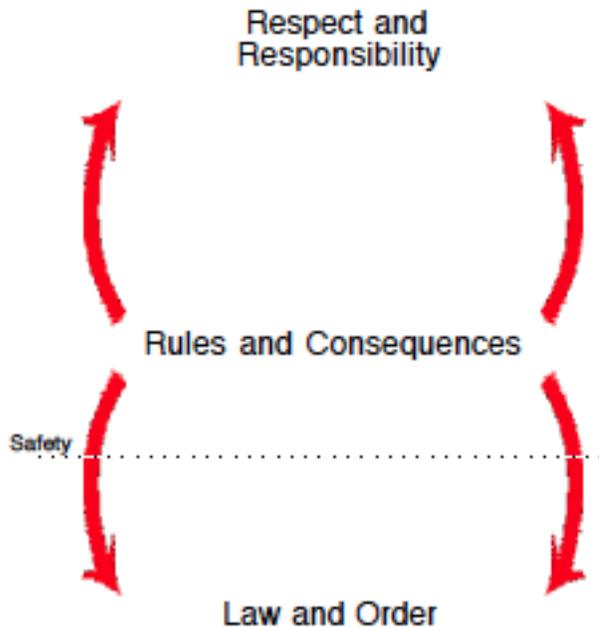
Use restorative consequences- Punishment is basically trying to make the child feel bad to make their behavior better. Most of the kids I work with already feel bad. Feeling bad is a big part of why they are misbehaving. Feeling worse will not improve their behavior.

Teach them how to fix the problem they have created. If they messed it up they can clean it up. If they abused trust and freedom, they need to earn it back. If they hurt someone’s feeling, they need to make apologies and amends. Restorative consequences affirm the significance of their decisions and teach them to repair relational damage they created. This teaches “equality of essence,” that other persons deserve the same respect and regard they have for themselves.

When the going gets tough- There is an inherent agreement or contract between a parent and child. Your child has to agree to be parented. If they do not, you are going to need some outside support, quite likely, some professional support.

We use the following diagram to assess the seriousness of a child’s behavior. Our hope is that our children will carry their values with them and will just do the right thing. They will internalize their values and naturally practice “decent treatment.”

Families try to create a consistent structure with reasonable rules and effective consequences to teach youth legitimate interdependence.



Unfortunately, some children will make decisions that drop below the safety line. This will put a knot in the parent’s stomach and cause them to lose some sleep. At these times, parents need to avoid the tendency to rescue or cushion the affects of their child’s decisions and/or deception and let some of the natural consequences take effect. If the child’s behaviors threaten their safety, the parent might have to make hard decisions to involve the Police, Sheriff’s department, chemical or mental health professionals or other outside supports.

Here are some of those dangerous decisions that we believe necessitate a strong, firm, targeted intervention. We call this tier, “bottom-line consequences” or “law and order.”

Drugs/alcohol- We implore parents to take drug and alcohol abuse very seriously. Drugs and alcohol can rapidly derail a child’s development. A child that starts drinking at age 13, instead of waiting until they are 21, is 80 times more likely to become alcoholic. Chances are very good that by the time you finally notice potential indications of alcohol or drug use, your child has been using for quite a while. The drug subculture is a toxic abyss. If your child is “using,” do not trust them any farther than you could throw them. The parent needs to:

- Receive some guidance. Evergreen can provide coaching free of charge. Call 218-751-8223

- Keep your eyes wide open- search bedrooms, check school attendance, investigate, keep notes.

- Involve LEC if drugs and alcohol are present

- Set up a Rule 25/CD assessment- Get a release to access the results ahead of time.

- Provide collateral information and

- Follow the recommendations of the alcohol/drug assessment.

Hold your child accountable with random urine analysis (UA) kits. Evergreen makes them available at cost at \$5.00 each.

Runaways- Warn your child how you will respond if he or she runs away. Then, follow through. Tell them, "

"I will immediately notify the police,"

"I will attempt to charge anyone who provides you a place to stay with harboring a runaway,"

"I will call around and try to find you,"

"To ensure your safety, I may have you placed somewhere more secure."

"Running will result in a substantial loss of trust and freedom."

Look for influences that may be luring them out of their beds at night- alcohol or drug involvement, negative peer influences, et al. Monitor their peers and activities more closely and network with the parents of your child's friends that you think might also be affected.

Find counseling and support services to guide your child on safer ways to handle their problems. This is one of Evergreen's areas of expertise.

Give your child a clear a plan to regain trust and freedom using open and honest communication and respectful and responsible actions.

Mental Health Issues- Educate yourself. If your child has a mental health diagnosis, standard parenting techniques may not be effective. You will need new tools, special skills and likely a different mindset or attitude to effectively manage their behaviors. Do yourself a huge favor and get this specialized training.

Of course, seek a therapist, preferably one that specializes in your child's diagnosis to provide them with mental health support. Become very familiar with the treatment plan and any medications that may be prescribed along with any possible side effects of these medications.

Get informed on IEP's. Parents are supposed to be in the driver seat when shaping their child's IEP. Parent input goes in the IEP unless there is a compelling reason why it should not. The IEP is law for that child. The IEP behavior plan supersedes the school district's general behavior plan. The parent can invite anyone into the meeting, including advocacy representatives (like PACER) or your child's therapist.

Behavioral intervention plans need a minimum of 3 effective interventions prescribed for your student. They must be used over time within the EBD classroom. Intervention compliance and results need to be documented. If the behavior is a manifestation of the child's disability, the child cannot be removed to any site that is not specifically named in their IEP. This includes suspension.

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