

BUILDING FENCES

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We all want to know what is expected of us at any given time. When we do not know what the rules or boundaries are, it makes it very difficult to function with any confidence or security. It is difficult enough when two parents cannot agree, but it becomes more frustrating to a child when other authority figures in their lives have even different expectations.

Fifteen-year-old Megan Berry was an only child. Her mother had had a number of miscarriages prior to her birth and was over forty years old when Megan was born. In fact, the hospital thought Megan was about to be stillborn because they could not hear her heart beat just prior to her birth. Fortunately, all was well. Mr. and Mrs. Berry doted on their precious baby. She was the center of their world and as time went by Megan realized it.

Mr. Berry had a serious hearing disability that made it impossible for him to detect Megan's developing disrespectful ways. The wider family couldn't understand Megan's mother's indulgence. After all, she had proven to be a very objective foster parent to other children in the past, but with Megan, all that common sense somehow flew out the window. Yes, Megan was the golden girl and as the years went by she was given the choice of almost 'every instrument in the orchestra', as the saying goes.

When Megan reached her teens, she said to her mother one day, "I'm going to try smoking pot." Instead of her mother explaining the dangers and firmly establishing a boundary, she mused, "Well, maybe I will try it with you!" What??? Another day, Megan told her mother she had been drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes. Instead of explaining that these activities become habitual and would harm her body, Mrs. Berry turned a blind eye, deciding that Megan would 'just grow out of it'. As it happened Megan became a self confessed pre-alcoholic at 18 years of age.

What happened to the objective parent figure Megan's mother had once been? What was Megan looking for? A parent that would stand up to her and say, "No!" Sadly, Megan went on to make some silly decisions and, even though she eventually succeeded in gaining a Masters degree and a successful nursing career, I know she was disappointed that her parents had never clearly spelled out their expectations or created boundaries.

Parents have an obligation to their children and to society to shield their younger kids from situations that might harm them physically and/or emotionally. As the children get older the parents are responsible for teaching their kids how to make wise decisions and remind them of the consequences of bad choices. When a mistake is made (stuff does happen!) a parent should coach their child

through the experience rather than always rescue them or allow them to blame others.

The working world will not tolerate a pampered, 'precious' employee. There are policies and rules to be followed and consequences for non-conformance. We do not do our kids a favor by soft-soaping them through this world. We have to prepare them to become responsible, self-motivated, productive adults, who will become effective role models within their own families.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.