

STANDING UP FOR ONE ANOTHER

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

If you are a baby-boomer you will remember the song, 'He ain't heavy, he's my brother'. Most of us would do anything to help a family member. In an emergency, or in tough times we would go through pain or even give our lives to ensure the safety and wellbeing of a family member.

Last summer there was an incident at the beach when a top football player went to the rescue of his younger brother who had been caught up in a rip tide. The older brother was able to swim out and support his sibling until he was rescued by the surf patrol, but when they turned around to pull the older brother into the inflatable craft he had disappeared. Though they dove and searched for him for a long time his body has never been found. The football community was in mourning for many months when they considered the loss of this brave young man, a man with huge potential.

There are so many young people being lost today who have given in to peer pressure and have wasted many valuable years. Even young people raised in functional families can be caught up in the 'rip tide' of our society and make poor choices. Sometimes they are rescued by people who love them. Sometimes they are lost to the canker of the darker side of our society. We need to teach our children to be loyal to family members and stand behind them in times of difficulty.

Recently, Sally and I were involved as providers in a parenting pilot program in New Zealand. We were teaching some troubled young people how to deal with their anger. The parent of one of the girls volunteered to speak to the group because he had been an angry person for many years and had made some very poor choices at times. Some of these actions ended with him going to jail and also being forced to not see his family without strict supervision. A restraint order against him on one occasion gave him no access at all.

How those troubled young people listened to this man! He told them that fist fighting was not the way to solve their problems and that they should just walk away. They asked how they could walk away and still save face. He told them that when they saw a buddy being aggressively confronted, that they should literally stand behind him and assure him of their support. The friends could act as a mouthpiece for him by saying to the aggressor, "Did you hear what he said? He doesn't want to fight you!" These words came from a man who didn't have anyone to support him. He had to learn the hard way. If we love someone we would not want him to make the same mistakes and suffer the consequences that were imposed on us.

Support of loved ones can come naturally if put to the test. However, when we talk about support, our natural tendency is to see it as protection in times of threat, but it is much more than that. We, as parents, need to support our children in the development of their gifts and talents and help them to find their purpose in life. We need to attend their sports games, dance lessons and recitals. We need to offer encouragement when they practice and as they work hard to improve their skills. This support will show your child that you are fully behind their endeavors and that you want them to reach their potential.

There are times when we need to physically stand behind our children and cheer them on, protect them and guard their backs. The difficult thing is finding the balance between protecting our children and letting them experience life in the real world. If they see us supporting them and we teach them the importance of being loyal and supportive they may develop this as one of their own values. It pays to start this process when the children are preschoolers.

By early intervention on sibling rivalry and rewarding kind acts and words we will show our children that supporting each other brings peace into the home and this will kindle other positive behavior. Teach them to do the same with their friends and to talk things through when a problem arises. They will need advice as to how they should handle such issues. Just ensure that you are doing the same in your marriage relationship and with your friends. Let's continue to support our family members and our buddies.

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.