

GETTING OUT OF DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 1

Too many parents have the expectation that their child can "just say no" to a challenging situation. Research indicates that 7% of the children can literally just say no; the rest need a way to get out of any difficult situation.

Peggy Bielen's and my research in creating Project Self-Esteem taught us that the three primary reasons a child does something that he/she might not want to do are:

(1) Can't think of something else to do or say, (2) Did not think of the consequence of that choice and (3) Didn't have enough personal power to take care of self over peer pressure.

If my children prefaced any question with, "Mommy Dearest," the hidden signal was for me to say no even when they begged me to say yes. If one of my children walked towards me to ask a question and crossed his/her eyes, the hidden signal was for me to say no even when he/she begged me to say yes.

Play a choice making game (see *The Choice is Yours*) so your children practice a difficult situation before it becomes a reality. For instance, practice what you could do if someone offered you a beer at a party and you did not want to drink it. Research indicates that a person who has in his/her data base, "something to do," when a difficult situation arises, has a choice. A person who has no other thought of what he/she could do will go with the crowd.

If any of my children got into a difficult situation, they could call a taxi to come home and I would gladly pay the bill. I also left money in a jug for the taxi bill in case I was not home. If one of my children called me to retrieve them I would ask no questions as to why that child ejected him/herself from the situation.

Talk to your children about your standards. Don't give a lecture, talk. Why don't you want them to smoke (difficult talk if YOU smoke!), do drugs, have sex, etc. Be sure your children understand the consequences of their choices. Are you, as a parent, willing to raise a baby? Will there be a consequence if your teen is caught stealing? Set the boundaries, construct consequences and follow through on those consequences.

I work with difficult teenagers in our schools. The majority of these teens do not have coping skills. Their parents do not set boundaries, enforce rules and serve consequences. These students do NOT respect their parents. Most of them do not feel loved or valued at home. A huge part of helping teenagers get out of difficult situations to teach them how to get themselves out of problems, help them do so whenever possible, talk to them and set standards which you are willing to enforce.

It isn't easy, and it is more important to the development of your child than you can imagine.