

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL

PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

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!