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P.O.K.I.S.

A Newsletter for Parents of Kids in Samoa

October 20, 1996

Vol. 1, No. 6

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This is a monthly newsletter published and written by parents, for parents of kids in Samoa. Though program staff review P.O.K.I.S. prior to printing and distribution, as well as provide information for several columns, the content and format was designed by Linda F. and Sheryl J., the parents of two boys in Samoa. Both of our sons have returned home.

Unless a column is written by Paradise Cove staff, the information doesn't necessarily reflect the opinion of program staff. We appreciate individuals at Paradise Cove, Brightway, and Teen Help for their invaluable assistance and for the printing and distribution of this newsletter. If you have any suggestions, comments, or questions, please contact Teen Help at 1-800-355-8336.

Sheryl J	Editor in Chief
John J	Support
Linda F	Associate Editor
Elizabeth D.	Assistant Editor

GENERAL INFORMATION

Due to the very large volume of newsletters mailed out, we will no longer be able to mail back issues of P.O.K.I.S. However, the newsletter is now available on Internet at <http://www.vpp.com/teenhelp/pokis.html>.

In this issue please pay particular attention to What's New in Samoa. Paradise Cove is planning a wonderful holiday celebration for the boys, and they need you to send some slides. The program also has newly formed Disaster, Health, and Safety Committees. Look for a report on these committees in What's New in Samoa. Sonja

Fullwood was unable to submit her regular column - Inside Out - for this issue. She will be back in next month.

This is my last issue as editor of P.O.K.I.S.; Deborah J. takes over next month. As I write this, I'm surprised at the depth of emotions I'm experiencing - sadness, but also a lot of joy when I think about the larger family we've all become. I will miss all of you, and hope you'll still keep in touch. I'll let you know when I get E-mail, so keeping in touch will be a lot easier!

As this is my last issue, I would like to say a few things about the program and about my son. We've been with the program for about 19 months now. There have been hard times and joyous times. We've seen a lot of changes and understand that the program isn't perfect.

But the bottom line is that the program works! Our son has come home as the person he was always meant to be, that magnificent magical child. Is he perfected? Well, maybe he will be.....when we are! Is he a son to be proud of? As the Montanans would say, "YOU BET!"

We owe a debt of immeasurable gratitude to Bob Litchfield, Brent Facer, David Gilcrease, Sonja Fullwood (our stateside coordinator), Jay Kay, Brian Vaifanua, and all the staff at Brightway and Paradise Cove. Because of their assistance, our son was literally able to save his life, both physically and emotionally. Our son loves himself and not only is he determined to succeed, but he knows that he can.

Through the months, any time we have had a concern about a specific problem, we have found the program to be very responsive and more than willing to take a look at the possibility of change. For example, administration was very cognizant of the fact that we are a very long ways from our sons, and that communication is difficult, at best. When I presented Brent with a proposal for the newsletter, it was enthusiastically received and fully funded by the program, at no additional cost to the parents. The program also offered me compensation for my time, but for a number of reasons I felt it was very important for this to remain a service from parents to parents.

Finally, I'd like to share a little with you about transition. Since Craig has been in the transition home, we've had a couple of minor issues come up. The boys do not come home FIXED AND THAT'S THE END OF THAT. Sometimes they still make mistakes. Don't expect everything to be perfect, either in transition or at home. They are still teenagers, albeit very mature teens, and we still have family issues that need addressing. What I have found is that transition is a safe place to deal with those remaining issues, and help is available to work out whatever may arise.

When our son does come home after PC 2 in November, he and we will be ready. One thing we believe to be key to all of our success, is FOCUS. John and I will be attending the Seattle FOCUS this month. To be honest, when I first heard about it, I thought, "Well, we're OK after Discovery. Focus is kind of expensive, and we don't really need it. We all are doing fine now." However, after we talked to parents who have attended Focus, we knew we didn't want to have our son home until we'd completed it.

I would like to express my appreciation to all of you for your love, suggestions and support. I couldn't have done it without the continuous communication I've received from you. God bless you all. I'll miss you a lot!

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WHAT'S NEW IN SAMOA

by Brian, Director-Paradise Cove

Another month has come and gone. Soon we will be preparing for another holiday season. We recently sent out a holiday memo to remind parents to send their holiday packages by October 25th [included in this issue]. We have found through previous experience that if parcels are not sent by the end of October, some of them arrive after Christmas! It is important for all boys to have something to open Christmas morning, so we would just like to stress this reminder.

I also wanted to discuss our Christmas Program. My wife, Angie, is again starting to prepare for a wonderful Holiday program. She will be doing a special slide show as part of the program. We would like the parents to please send 3 slides for this presentation:

- 1 - baby photo of your son
- 1 - family photo (any kind)
- 1 - miscellaneous activity or accomplishment of your son

I would like to encourage you to send these slides NO LATER than November 25th. If you do not have slides, you can take the photos to a local photo shop and they can make slides from the photos. This is an important part of our program. We encourage all of you to please send these slides so your son can be involved. Thank you for your cooperation with this and all other matters regarding Paradise Cove.

We are really looking forward to another wonderful Holiday Season. We will be video taping these festivities and the video will be available to you for \$10.00 at the end of January. We will get back to you with the details of when you can purchase this video.

Finally, we would like to introduce our new case manager, Doreen. Doreen was born and raised in Western Samoa. She is a former employee of Payne Airlines and also assisted her parents in managing Apiolefaga Inn in American Samoa. We are excited to have Doreen on board our staff of Paradise Cove and she looks forward to working with the boys and their parents.

REMEMBER, we are now hooked up with E-mail. If you can't get through by fax, feel free to E-mail. Our E-mail address is paradisecove@talofa.net

Disaster Planning Comes to Paradise Cove by Christian F.

This past month I have been working with the boys at all three locations to prepare for any possible natural disasters. We have been conducting practice drills in order to facilitate an organized evacuation process. At first, the boys were gathering themselves at the appropriate spot in about five minutes time. Now the Le Tiara groups has managed to reach the goal set of two minutes total. The beach facilities' groups still have a little work to do. They have only come as far as three minutes from alarm to collection. Le Tiara has had some excitement with these drills. We conducted one a few weeks ago at a little past midnight. Needless to say, this particular drill did not set any records, but we are working on it!

I have also met with the Western Samoa Health Department. The chief nurse is making arrangements for a meeting with Paradise Cove staff and the Red Cross. The Red Cross has been traveling from village to village instructing the people on how to conduct themselves in case of an emergency. They will be sharing this training with us.

All in all, we hope never to be faced with such a situation. but, if we are, you can be assured that well laid out plans are in place for your sons' protection.

Health and Safety Committees, by Ed O.

The Health Committee is comprised of two youths from each beach, the chairman Falatusi (one of the assistant shift leaders), and the duty nurse. This committee is charged with the responsibility of regular inspections of the kitchens, bathrooms, and other common areas. Potential concerns are recorded in the committee binder, then reviewed by the chairman and the director. The committee also trains all boys on the beach to properly preserve a healthy environment.

The Safety Committee is comprised of two youths from each beach and the chairmen Kika and Siosi (assistant shift leaders). This committee is charged with the responsibility of scheduling weekend work projects. All safety concerns are reported and recorded in the committee binder for review.

Both the Health and Safety Committees get together do their inspections. In addition to their committee responsibilities, they also share the task of ordering necessities for the students.

Note from Brent Facer: We feel really good about the Disaster, Health and Safety Committees. The Health and Safety Committees are a pilot program being tested at the beaches. If they continue to function as well as they have been, we expect to adopt them at Le Tiara as well. Currently at Le Tiara, one of the staff members conducts daily health inspections and also consults with the nurse on a regular basis.

Changes for the Case Managers

by Brian V., Program Director

Dear Parents, It is our purpose and goal at Paradise Cove to be of service to you as parents, so that your needs can be attended to in a timely manner.

We are pleased to announce that Ofeira has recently been appointed as the Case Manager Supervisor. She will be the Case Manager for all new boys coming into the program for their first 2-3 weeks. During these first few weeks she will be conducting workshops to orient the boys to the program. The workshops will consist of:

1. General orientation to the program
2. Rules and discipline
3. Points, merit system and allowance
4. Academics
5. Grievance procedure

After Ofeira feels the boys are properly introduced and understand the mechanics of the program, she will assign them to either Rita, JoAnn, or Doreen to be their permanent Case Manager. Ofeira will not be going to the beach facility, but will have regular office hours Tuesday through Saturday 8:00am - 4:30 pm.

Case Managers' Schedule, as of 10/28/96 Samoa			
Manager	Days	Location	Hours
Seneritha	Tu,F Sa W,Th	Office Office With Boys	8-4:30PM 10-5:00PM
Ofeira	Tu-F Tu-F Sa Sa	Office Cottages Office Cottages	8-2:00PM 2-4:30PM 10AM-12:00PM 12-2:00PM
Joann	M,W,Th Tu F	Office Beach Le Tiara	8-4:30PM 8-4:30PM 8-4:30PM
Doreen	M,W,Th Tu F	Office Beach Le Tiara	8-4:30PM 8-4:30PM 8-4:30PM
All lunches are taken from 12-12:30 PM.			

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HOLIDAY REMINDER

by Angie V., Office Manager

Dear parents, We wanted to remind you of the upcoming holiday season as it is again rapidly drawing near.

We would like to remind all parents to mail your Christmas packages by the 20-25th of OCTOBER to ensure that they arrive before Christmas. The longer you wait into November to send your packages, the less chance of them making it here in time. Please keep in mind when sending your packages that we recommend you use the following couriers: UPS, DHL, Federal Express, Priority Mail/US Postal Service.

We have had many problems in the past with parents sending large quantities of packages; many of these boxes have been very oversized. If you send a package through Brightway please be aware that you are taking a risk, as we only send things when there is space available. We have many demands from the program, and are constantly having supplies sent over to Samoa as well. We would like to encourage all the parents to send their packages and letter directly to Samoa. If you do send something through Brightway, other than letters; please follow these guidelines:

- (1) Enclose a check (\$8.00/lb. on total package).
- (2) 5 (five) pound limit per box (shoe box size recommended).
- (3) Please be aware your package may be opened at Brightway and repacked with other supplies and inventoried.
- (4) Please keep in mind that sometimes Customs will hold certain items here in Samoa and we are charged before items are released. These fees will be deducted from your son's allowance.

I just want to be very direct, and let you know the proper procedure to help make this issue more consistent. We need your full cooperation and total support in assisting in this matter. The holidays are very busy for us here, and we need to be as organized as possible.

We also ask that you only send one box per student due to the high volume of packages that need to be stored until Christmas morning. Please contact your family members, friends, etc. to get any items from them so they can be packed in one box.

We are again planning a Christmas Program and will be videoing the holiday's for you. the video will available to order for \$10.00 at the end of January. We will let you know the details on ordering your video as the holidays draw near.

Following are some suggestions and ideas when sending your holiday gifts:

- (1) Journals
- (2) Approved videos, board games or educational cassette tapes (to be donated to the program and used with their families)
- (3) Appropriate books or magazines
- (4) T-shirts, socks, underwear, necessities, towels, bedding, pens, pencils, lined pr, other school supplies
- (5) Christmas stockings; and
- (6) Candies, treats (within reason).

These are only suggestions. Please send things that the boys may be in need of, replacing old items. PLEASE DO NOT SEND: razors, baseball hats, tennis shoes, strapped sandals, Walkmans, tapes, other items not on the approved list.

Thank you for your cooperation. We look forward to another wonderful holiday season with your sons.

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TEACHERS' CORNER

by Dace & Laurie

Recently, Browning Academy at Paradise Cove has made some great improvements. As an educator, I feel the improvements will most importantly give the students a better opportunity to learn.

Our support staff has increased dramatically. The teacher to student ratio is now 1:24. Browning Academy at Paradise Cove employs only certified educators, and all have previous teaching experience.

Browning Academy at Paradise Cove is in the process of instating new curriculum, better for the students in a self-paced situation. The biggest change, to this point, is the implementation of a totally independent study program. All papers will be graded at the Browning Academy office in LaVerkin, Utah. This frees our teachers at

Paradise Cove to better assess the student and give better individual and small group tutoring. The independent study also gives Paradise Cove an opportunity to make a centralized testing area.

These changes, along with a comprehensive proficiency exam, will give us an accurate view of any special needs of the student, or concerns of the academic director or the parent.

An academic file containing all work completed by the student will be kept by Browning Academy. This will give the boys an opportunity to create a portfolio (sample of work) upon their completion of all high school requirements, or upon entering another school.

A commitment by student, parent, and educators within Browning Academy at Paradise Cove, and the above changes will give the student a better opportunity for a complete and well rounded education.

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TRAINERS' CORNER - by David G. President & Trainer, Resource Realizations

Tasks Program in Samoa

In a recent conversation with a parent, some concern was expressed about when their son would have a chance to "redo" the training if he was asked to leave the training. Like many, I assumed parents understood our schedule. Assumptions create problems.

A TASKS trainer is in Samoa once every month. We stay two weeks when we make the trip. Generally, we leave the US on a Monday and then come back 12 days later on a late night Friday flight.

While in Samoa we have the following schedule:

- 3 day Discovery
- 3 day Focus
- 3 workshops
- Family groups

If your child is asked to leave or quits a training, he can return the next month. The wait time is about 4 weeks. After about a month of getting processed and hearing "seminar" talk, the boys generally want to return to the training. In fact, some of the biggest contributors to a seminar are boys who have left a previous training.

We hold a workshop at each location. The workshops may be the same at each location, or may vary depending upon the need at each site. The trainer discusses with Brian the program needs and together they make a decision as to what material should be presented. Typically the workshops for the level 1 group focus on working issues in the program, while workshops for the upper levels (4-6) focus on leadership.

Once a quarter we hold the 18-year old workshop. This is a special workshop for all teens turning 18 within the next 6-7 months. This workshop is designed to be a wake up call for those teens who think every thing will be wonderful when I turn 18. As you and I know, nothing changes at 18, other than they get to pay the bills and be TOTALLY responsible for their lives. Sounded fun when we were 17 too!

While on the island, trainers spend as much time as possible with each family. Typically we have lunch or dinner with a family and spend time working with the boys. I spend additional time with the upper levels coaching them on skills and ideas to assist their families. These are the skills and attitudes necessary to handle old friends once home.

Due to the number of trainings and workshops, once your son reaches the upper levels, he will have many opportunities to staff. This is additional time we work with the boys on personal and family issues. As one of the teen trainers for Samoa, I believe this is some of the most valuable time I spend with your sons.

UPCOMING TRAINING DATES

The following gives the training dates for upcoming Parent Seminars and Parent Child trainings. Remember, your child must be scheduled into a Parent Child I, and then into transition. Parents must be graduates of the Parent Discovery Seminar to attend the Parent Child Sequence.

Parent Seminars

TEXAS DISCOVERY	November 22-24
TEXAS FOCUS	December 12-15
LA DISCOVERY	December 13-15
LA FOCUS	November 14-17
SEATTLE DISCOVERY	November 15-17
SEATTLE FOCUS	December 5-8

Parent-Child Seminars

PC I	St. George, UT December 27-29
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Call the TASKS Coordinator at (801) 635-0918 or E-mail at renmc@juno.com to register and obtain exact locations.

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SEMINAR EXPERIENCES - by the parents

Parent Focus Seminar, by Jeff M.

My wife and I attended the "first" Parent Focus Seminar held in Los Angeles September 19, 1996 through September 22nd. This was a powerful experience that was started in the Parent Discovery Seminar, and was brought to an exciting conclusion in the Parent Focus Seminar.

The Parent Focus Seminar taught me the importance of living my life to the fullest, instead of just surviving. When I was just surviving, I was only interested in adding years to my life. After this seminar, I want to live my life to its fullest, and concentrate on also adding life to my years.

I developed 40 of the closest friendships in my life---41 if I count myself, liking and loving myself more. Each of my seminar friends are very special to me, because of what we learned about ourselves, and about the sweet rewards of our accomplishments. Each of us were exposed to the greatness that is in all of us. I didn't want to leave this seminar, but it also taught me the importance of a life purpose and the significance of risking. This experience was very exhilarating, and a natural high, that continues to challenge and reward me for my risk taking.

Because of time commitments and costs, we were both initially reluctant to attend the Parent Focus Seminar, but after attending, we are very thankful for the experience. I wholeheartedly recommend this seminar to everyone, and I believe sincerely that this will be an experience that will help you to communicate better with your child, and an experience that you will never forget.

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ON THE INSIDE - by current Level 4 boys

Letter #1: by Danny

The first day I got here I cried my eyes out because of how much I missed home and how much I wish I would've never come. After that things didn't go too well. I got a cat 3 for run talk and had my share of time in isolation. A little while after that my best friend got moved up to level 3 and family leader of my family. He helped me get motivated to start changing my life. About a month later I got level 2, and kept going.

All through my life I always knew that I was a leader, and my leadership got tested when my best friend got lowered and got sent to Le Tiara, because he was my friend and he gave me so much, and he left. I was hurt so bad that I didn't say much that day. [Then] I realized that I'd have to move on and be much stronger and more of a leader than even 2 weeks before. I got moved up to level three, and kept going.

Roughly around 1 1/2 months later I got moved up to level 4 and learned the most on this level and became more mature and responsible. Now I'm on level 5 after 4 1/2 months and still keeping up my progress.

Paradise Cove has taught me a lot about life and about being myself. I'm a graduate of both Discovery and Focus trainings where some of the greatest moments of my life had occurred. I am greatly thankful for this opportunity to learn and grow so much. I've been here for 10 1/2 months and my time to go is getting closer and I just keep going and going and going.

Letter #2: by Edward

Life in Samoa for me is a great experience, and is continuing to be one. I came here with no control over my life what so ever. I would do anything just so someone would like me or be my friend. At the rate I was going I would not have been able to make it in life for very long. This place has assisted me in learning the tools I need to live a life I want to lead, in a positive direction. I have also learned a lot about the Samoan culture and their way of life. It's not every day I walked around in a skirt in a tropical island setting, learning another language. This place is so different than when I was at home, yet it is not different at all when I took a better look at it. I am so thankful that I came here, and I will never forget it.

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ON THE OUTSIDE

Letter #1: by Randy , home since 9/2/96

Hello! My name is Randy. I was recommended home in September 1996 after nineteen months in the program. What I will do is put this article into different categories so it's easier to understand.

JOBS - I went out job hunting and I landed the first job I applied for. It was as easy as that! Yes, I do believe a lot of it was to do with the communication skills I learned at Paradise Cove. I also believe the self confidence and self esteem I have gained about myself is powerful and shows through. After approximately three minutes of my first interview, he told me to consider myself hired. Then I found he started working around my schedule because he really wanted me to work there. I also informed him I needed time off to go staff seminars and he let me know that was not a problem. I did a little bit of explaining that these were personal growth seminars and that this was with a program for troubled kids. I opened myself up about being solution focused and then he let me know that they are always looking for assistant managers. So my point is to encourage your kids to really express themselves and to share what they have learned because I have found people really do become attracted to that. Don't even hint for them to hold back for fear of communication errors. Be proud of their accomplishments.

PARENTS' FEARS - I know all the parents have their fears and concerns about their kids coming home and relapsing into old behavior problems. Well parents, some of those fears can be real helpful because they will keep you and your son on the alert. Keep in mind a word called BALANCE. I know it may be new to some of you, so remember this involves anxiety and risk at the same time. I recall a thing a very dear friend of mine said. Maybe you know him too - David Gilcrease. Do you remember this axiom he shared? "What you fear you create." You'll actually make it worse if you are running on those fears and anxiety. If you let those fears run you during the times you have any kind of debate with your son, you will focus on the worst, most extreme thing they say and it will be blown out of proportion. And it will really backfire on you. Solution: Stay cool, calm, and collected! In fact, I have found when I do that I learn a lot from my parents, because I remain open. If you remain open, and apply the communication skills you have learned, you might be surprised at what you can learn from your son as well.

CHRISTMAS - Now the reason this article is of such weight and importance is because Christmas is a big time event, no doubt. But I did not say to send them all the food and clothes they will need for the rest of their lives, or every board game that has come out in the past 5 years. And please don't use the excuse, "but I got such a great deal." You can make Christmas great for them by sending pictures and letters from you, and from as many relatives as possible, as long as they are truly supportive of his program. Or you can focus on material "stuff" and then you will only have the cheap satisfaction of feeling like you are a good parent just because you sent him so much stuff. Get the hint parents. Don't you realize you have already won the game? If you look down the road a ways, you can see how beautiful your results are going to be. Then you will know you are really heading in the right direction. Sending lots of stuff to him for Christmas isn't going to affect that positively, is it? Take a serious look at the issues going on with you and your son. Parents, not everything has to be Disneyland for them to love you and accept you, so stop trying so much for their cheap acceptance. You've already given him the greatest gift of all by sending him to Paradise Cove, where he can choose to change his life.

Letter #2: by Liz C.

Home Contract - It's More Than a List of Rules

A home contract is much more than pages of rules, consequences, and rewards. At the Parent/Child Seminar, we had been advised to clarify the simplest of terms. For example, the facilitator said, "Do not assume that the definition of 'clean' is identical between you and your teen." In our family, there are four parents, working together, along with our son, to make this work. Following the seminar, we spent two extra days to develop our family contract. Defining terms was so important to all of us that we plagiarized another family's idea to create a glossary at the end of our contract. We all felt that we had been pretty successful in maintaining a clear, concise, agreeable, and easy to follow contract.

We all agreed that a home contract gives the structure our teen needs. We also felt it would make adjusting to life at home and in the community more fluid. Because it is in writing, we found it easy to refer to when an issue arose. Even though we are still short timers at this contract stuff, we have discovered the greatest benefit of all in having a contract . . . unbridled dialogue!!

This contract is the creator of quality communication time. Frankly, if we will all be honest with ourselves, our communication skills in the past have been less than successful. The seminar assisted all of us in learning why our old communication habits caused us to hit walls. With our old games being revealed and this contract in hand, we found ourselves talking --- a lot!!! Because our teen has internalized the principles that were taught in the program, he is very capable of remaining calm and direct. He never runs out of the room because he is frustrated in trying to clarify his point. Once, although he did not agree with our decision as parents, he agreed to comply with what we asked. These issues and discussions will sometimes occur late at night, early in the morning, or during the time of day when we should be earning a living. However, we never put the discussion off to another time. Quality communication time cannot be scheduled! Parents need to stay flexible enough to grab the opportunity when it presents itself. From our experiences, it is rarely convenient.

I truly believe that without a home contract, more than your teen is at risk. A family cannot be made whole again without thorough communication. We will never get skilled at our new way of communicating without lots of practice. The home contract offers hours of practice!

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THE EBB AND FLOW OF PARADISE COVE

by Glenda C., Parent Coordinator

How Can I Help?

When it comes to this process in human behavior, called 'Change,' there are no quick, easy fixes. As parents, we logically understand this, yet yearn to see changes happen quickly. However, there are many things parents can do to assist this process along.

One of the most important ways to nudge and support your son's progress is to keep him focused on himself. Look at his accountability. Is he giving 100% each day? Or is he satisfied with mediocrity? Is he getting too comfortable with whatever level he is at, or is he challenging himself to move forward? Is he 'hanging out' on one of the lower levels as a way to 'punish you' or to 'wait you out,' hoping you will get discouraged and bring him home? Are any of his old behaviors getting in his way or tripping him up? Has he been on the same level for a long time?

If any of these things ring true, don't be afraid to confront him on it. These behaviors will not produce positive results for him. Shut him off at the pass. Work as a team with his Case Manager and Stateside Coordinator. Make them aware of the circumstances and your response.

Receiving manipulative letters? "I've really changed, so you might as well bring me home where we can finish working this out as a family." "Am I going to be home for my sister's wedding?" "You might as well bring me home now, because I've learned everything I am going to." "How can you possibly leave me here for Christmas?" "I feel so bad at all the money you are spending on me."

Or perhaps you've received a really nice letter, showing some real effort and progress on his part, but peppered with a real zinger, or two, intended to get a big reaction from you. He hits one of your 'hot buttons' that will get you to immediately take action, stirred up, and staring sleeplessly at the ceiling at night. You probably won't even see it coming. They know us so well.

Manipulative letters can come in the form of no letters at all. How does that work, you ask? Well, does it bother you when he goes for long periods of time not writing to you? Is it possible he knows that? In the case of letters written to be manipulative, circle the manipulative parts in red, and send them back. Confront him with the manipulation. Let him know this is unacceptable. Challenge him to remain focused.

In the case of long periods of no letters received, write a one paragraph letter confronting him and again be clear that this is unacceptable to you. You can also ask his Case Manager to confront him. Don't be afraid to tell him you will be on hiatus from writing until you see some committed, consistent effort on his part.

You can also affect change by, again teaming with your Case Manager, asking her to confront him and insist that he receive an appropriate consequence for manipulation.

Do not fill your letters with 'news' from home, his favorite sports events, entertainment news, or what's going on at school, etc. This is a privilege, not a right. It can also be a distraction, a way for him to avoid being focused and committed to himself each day. If warm, fuzzy, supportive letters are not getting results, try something different. If you are exhausting yourself with letter writing and sending faxes in the hope of affecting change, and none is forthcoming, change directions. Try another approach.

Did you ever experience your child playing the 'mom against dad' game? Don't be surprised if he creatively adds a twist to this game by playing 'parents against the program.' Anything to keep the focus off himself. Getting caught up in that game will undermine his program and progress. Certainly follow up on any concerns with the appropriate staff. However, in the program, just as in effective parenting, it is critical to demonstrate support for one another.

Also remember, resistance is not always bad. It is merely part of the change process. Reflecting on your own life, can you recall that some of your most important lessons learned were via struggle and challenge? If your son is struggling, it may mean he is choosing to work harder than he needs to. However, if he remains focused, he will achieve his goals.

Remove the focus from your son and put it on yourself. Give more of your energy and commitment to you, your spouse, friends, siblings, your hobbies and interests. When was the last time you were able to have a conversation that did not include your son? Does your life feel in balance yet? Are you actively striving for peace and personal growth in your own life? After all, the only life we can truly affect is our own. Does your life reflect what you would like your son to model?

Be firm. Hold your son accountable and focused. Do not tolerate manipulation in any form. Work as a team with your Case Manager and Stateside Coordinator. When stumped for solutions, ask for their direction and be open to it. They have experience and they know what works. Live your life in balance. Being a parent is not a popularity contest, and sometimes it requires that we be the tough guy. If you are lovingly detached and solution focused, your son will benefit in the process.

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Parent Coordinator's Corner

Glenda Cook.

Your Christmas packages should be in the mail by the first part of November. Note on the outside of the package that it is for Christmas.

Remember, "Less is More!" An important part of their program is to get over the 'universe-revolves-around-me' syndrome. You might even consider putting something in his package that he can share with the staff, as a way of acknowledgment, i.e. hard wrapped candies, pencils, marbles, small candy canes. This is a way to 'get him outside of himself' and thinking of others. You could also follow up on this with his Case Manager or Stateside Coordinator. Is he considerate of others, or does he hoard for himself? Encourage him to give his gift with an acknowledgment of the person he is giving it to. It could serve as a powerful lesson. And what better time of year to do it than during the holidays?

My office hours are listed below. Please note that I attend the parent seminars and will be out of the office during those times.

1-801-467-3768 - Voice & Fax
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm - Mountain Std. Time
P.O. Box 540048
No. Salt Lake, UT 84054-0048

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FAMILY SUPPORT

Supporting Your Son When He's "Stuck"

Several of you have expressed concern about your sons being "stuck" at one level for a long period of time. I've been talking to other parents and some boys who've come home about how you can best support your son who is "stuck." Glenda's column has addressed most of the suggestions. Following are suggestions from my son, who is completing his last three weeks in the Transition Home. Editor

One thing parents can do is to not send their son any packages (except for needs like contact lens) until they move up to the next level, or show solid progress toward the next level. Do send packages for Christmas and birthdays, though. Also, parents can always be giving their son feedback about getting moving in their letters to him. Parents can talk to the case managers and have them get on their son about being comfortable on a certain level. Last, to motivate your son to move up in levels, you can give him a reward when he reaches the upper levels - 3, 4, 5, & 6.

Turn Around, by Carolyn

The following letter was written by the mom of a boy who was stuck. Our son Brandon has been in Samoa for six months. During this time he has really struggled with homesickness, reasons why he should not be there, and self imposed health problems. He has been so desperate to come home he had convinced himself he was going blind. In his mind his appendix had ruptured. Recently, he has been experiencing headaches, something he felt was nothing less than a brain tumor. He has been to the doctor for a cat scan and blood tests. He was found to be in good health. The headaches are caused from his stressing out.

Through all of this he did work hard. On July 23rd he was recommended to level two. Once there he shut down. He was stuck. He was depressed, and wanted nothing more than to come home. He had a very negative attitude, was right back getting many demerits, and didn't seem to care. August 25th found him back on level one, placed in a family he did not want to be in. Regardless of his complaining, he was not taken out of this family. We wrote what we thought were encouraging letters, sharing our love, concern and support. Nothing seemed to change, especially his attitude and the demerits he was getting.

We started to wonder if we should have him come home. Needing help, we knew the parent child seminar was being held in St. George. Following the three day seminar, we went to the Holiday Inn hoping to find some boys who had just returned from Samoa, who knew Brandon.

There are no accidents. While we were there we met six boys that personally knew and had worked with Brandon. Three of these boys we had visits with, one on one. We found it most interesting that their feedback was all the same. Here are a few things they shared regarding their experience with Brandon. Brandon is wasting time. He is in resistance. He holds back and does not interact. He is defensive. He does not like feedback. He makes lots of excuses why he shouldn't be there. He uses his homesickness to manipulate. He plays games. He uses his health for attention to come home. They all agree he is not ready to come home.

Most of our time was spent with Randy C. He answered all of our questions and concerns. He put our minds at ease and gave us some suggestions of what to write and not to write in letters to Brandon. We shared with Randy some of the things we had been writing about. Randy said we had been playing games with Brandon and he with us. He suggested we shorten our letters to two pages, and that we get tough and be firm. He told us to report to the case manager anything Brandon writes that is inappropriate and that exceeds more than two or three pages.

Putting our trust in Randy, we wrote a shorter, right to the point letter. We told Brandon he was not coming home until recommended. He was not coming home until he graduated from high school (he is a senior). We told him to stop wasting time, to write something besides six pages of "I am homesick," that we didn't want to hear about it again. We told him to stop crying wolf with his health, and that the only thing they found on the cat scan was a normal brain that was not being used to full potential. It was a very hard letter to write, but we did it. Now the pay off.

Since receiving that letter four weeks ago, Brandon wrote home and said, "well, I guess I am here to stay until I graduate the program. I have been here five months already; what's a few more?" Brandon has not mentioned any health problems, nor homesickness. In a family activity by the level 4 boys Brandon found himself in last place on a rating of progress and attitude. He decided to get to know each member of his family, and to work with them and not against them. Within four days during the same activity, Brandon was in 6th place instead of 11th. It was a wake up call for him.

He is working the program. He has no consequences, and will be heading back to the beach, hopefully within a few weeks. He has a wonderful attitude. His spirits are up, his sense of humor returning. He is now ready to make the changes in his life that he is there to make.

This is just one example of how effective being firm can be. Thank you Randy, for your help and suggestions. Our letters to and from Brandon are so much better. We are connecting at the heart.

Brandon is in Samoa until recommended home. We know it and he knows it.

Lane and Carolyn

Support Groups

Lately, I've been talking to various support groups about how they function. The groups can truly be a support for each of the members, but there is also a danger that negativity within the individual members can defeat the group and its purpose. There are a couple of really proactive ideas that have come up.

I would like to highly recommend that you have ground rules for each of these groups, and that one of those rules be that all members must attend Discovery Seminar within three months of joining. I have also asked Charles P. to give us some tips on running an effective support group and on preventing and treating negativity within support groups. Charles is a therapist with Tarrant Community Outreach in Texas. His facility runs various support and treatment groups for troubled teens and/or families, many of whom are Paradise Cove and Cross Creek families. The suggestions of Charles and his colleague, Lois B., are below. Thanks Charles and Lois for helping us out on this issue.

Finally, I've kept in contact with Tim Flood, who helped start the Bay Area (Ca.) Parent Support Group. I'm really excited about some of the things they're doing, and think you'll agree that this group might serve as a model for others. Editor

Suggestions for Parent Support Group

Start with formulating a statement of group purpose and evaluate the group's progress using the purpose statement as a guideline.

Agree to meet separately from the support group meeting to discuss problems, concerns or complaints about the program, facility, etc. In other words, avoid using the support group for "gripe sessions." Invite other parents in the community who have their kids in treatment facilities, or who are struggling with parent/teen problems. This will help to keep the group on track and open for newcomers with a fresh approach.

The group should have a format and structure to its meetings. Also, it is helpful to have a specific topic for each meeting, ie., control issues, letting go, parenting skills, family of origin issues, anger management, etc., etc.

Groups that are facilitated by an objective counselor/facilitator will be more effective. Parents are emotionally involved and cannot be as objective as an independent facilitator. [Note from the editor: You might pool funds and invite a local therapist to facilitate this group, with a minimal cost for each family.]

Host a parenting skills program and have Lois facilitate it. Tarrant Community Outreach also requires parents read Parenting Teens with Love & Logic by Cline & Fay and Codependent No More by Melodie Beattie. They recommend that their clients also attend the same Discovery Seminar offered free of charge to Paradise Cove parents.

Report on the Bay Area Parent Support Group

by Tim F.

We held our third meeting on September 14th. Several of us recently attended the Discovery Seminar in L.A. We shared what we learned about ourselves from the seminar, and encouraged new people in the program to attend. Others staffed the Discovery seminar and gave their perspective from that angle. One of the mothers recently staffed a girls' Focus seminar, and related how this was a very powerful and emotional experience for her. She recommended anyone able to do so to staff one of these seminars.

We talked a little bit about program inconveniences -- e.g., communication problems for Samoa parents. Most of us are willing to be inconvenienced because of the immense value of the process to our children and ourselves. Some observed that there is even something to learn from how we handle/react to any inconveniences.

We had a good discussion about the home contract process. Bill G. handed out sample contracts (with names blacked out to protect confidentiality), along with other information about the contract process. We also discussed post-Teen Help educational options -- particularly those which match the Browning Academy experience. Jan P. shared a handout related to the book Reviving Ophelia.

We talked about the mission of our group and what we want to do, as follows:

(1) We meet monthly to exchange information and hear from young people who have been in the program. This meeting was attended by four teens, two boys and two girls. Our next meeting is at Woodland School in Portola Valley on Oct. 12, 11:00 a.m.

(2) Our group supports an alumni group for kids who have been in the program. Debbie J. of Martinez, CA, will work with the young folks we know of in the Bay Area to help them get started in planning some activities together. Any youth interested in joining the youth group may contact Debbie.

(3) Those of us who have been to Discovery Seminar will support families brand new to the program living near us. One family will serve as a "buddy" family to a new family, providing them the benefit of our experience with the program, our perspective from the Discovery seminar, our link to the support group. We'll also help them through those first few difficult days and weeks after their child has been sent to the program. Shirley F. volunteered to contact Teen Help every couple of weeks to identify new Bay Area families and to assign buddies. Any Bay Area parents of kids in Samoa or Cross Creek are invited to join our support group by contacting Shirley.

Parents Interested in Forming Support Groups

Chico, Ca Area
Atlanta, Ga Area

Existing Support Groups

Huntsville-Conroe-Houston
Salt Lake City
Dallas-Fort Worth
Miami
Los Angeles
San Diego
Seattle
Maryland-Virginia

Please call Teen Help if you're from any of these areas and would like more information.



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