



Places for Struggling Teens™

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"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."

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CHILDREN IN CONTROL

How Much Is Healthy?

By Lon Woodbury



Children manipulate. Every parent knows this as an almost universal law of child behavior. It is the person who has never been a parent who sometimes buys into some idealistic mantra like "A Child Would Not Lie," a belief that was very common in the 1970's when many of our child abuse laws were written. But, how can you tell when a child is being straight forward, or when the child is being manipulative?

Educational Consultant Marla Simon found a great article that gives six major patterns of manipulation a child (especially teens) will use to get their way. Written by Lisa Zarnoksky and titled Six Ways Your Teen Is Playing You, I would hope that all parents of teens would study it. Perhaps it would be even more enlightening to adults who haven't had the parenting experience and are confused by all the conflicting claims of how to understand what children are doing, and accusations that the parent is the problem, or the child needs fixing etc. This brings up the question as to why children might manipulate. Simply to say that they manipulate to get their way doesn't really answer the question.

I think it comes down to a matter of control in order to gain security. They manipulate for control and thus hope they will then be secure when they get their way. Every living thing, and especially humans, wants to be in control of their own life. Even children want their views and thoughts to at least matter. Much of the acting out teens do are an attempt to gain control over their lives, and manipulation is sometimes used when the child feels they have no control over their lives and are feeling very insecure. When, in their view, their views, needs and/or wants are ignored, or brushed aside as being "childish," is when a child escalates. Manipulation, temper tantrums, lying, and anger are all efforts at control to solve their own problems by an escalation to try regaining some control over their lives and that elusive goal of security.

Being inexperienced, these efforts are often counter-productive and the child often winds up being their own worst enemy. It is the adults' responsibility to understand what is happening in the child's head and work to help the child gain some control of his/her life. They need to teach the child healthy ways to obtain some control so they no longer have a feeling of powerlessness.

The child needs to be taught how to gain control in positive ways in appropriate matters, and also taught that in other ways they shouldn't be in charge. The goal is a process of learning how to be an adult, and part of that knows when they should be in charge, and when they need to allow others to be in charge.

As the old saying goes, sometimes you drive the bus, and sometimes you just ride in the bus, and a mature adult will know which is appropriate.

RESPONSE

By: Dodge Johnson, Educational Consultant, IECA, NACAC, CEP

[The following was in response to this essay on LinkedIn.com. I think the writer added good insight to the topic of control so I am including it here with his permission. -Lon]

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Of course teens play their parents, and methods Ms. Zamosky describes are as good as any in classifying a pretty imaginative range of tools. And there's no question that kids will fight for autonomy, even in things they aren't ready to handle. Sometimes, though they protest, they are even grateful when limits are set if for no other reason than that they don't want to deal with peer pressure.

What bothers me is the assumption in her piece that the parents are right and the kids are wrong. And I don't think that's always true, particularly in this age of helicopter parents, which I see all the time in my college

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[Essays and articles appearing in this publication are the opinions of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the policy of Woodbury Reports, Inc.,™ or StrugglingTeens.com.™ We urge our readers to conduct their own investigation of the products and services identified herein.]

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NEW PERSPECTIVES...

[New Perspectives schools and programs are those new to Woodbury Reports, Inc., and are presented to expand your knowledge, with the disclaimer that we know little more about them at this time than what appears here. Inclusion in Places for Struggling Teens™, of course, does not imply any endorsement by Woodbury Reports, Inc. -Lon]

SEACHANGE HAWAII

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The Marimed Foundation's program, SeaChange Hawaii is a 28 day ocean based adventure therapy program for young men ages 14-18 who are struggling with negative behaviors such as alcohol or drug use, negative peer relationships, anger and/or defiance, entitlement issues in addition to emotional and academic issues that include depression, anxiety, mood changes, isolation feelings, ADHD/ADD, underachievement, low self esteem or gaming addictions.

Accreditation for the Marimed Foundation is by the Council on Accreditation, the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Division and licensed by the State of Hawaii. Certification is through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division and the US Coast Guard. They are also members of the Association for Experiential Education, American Sail Training Association and Hawaii Youth Services Network. Program director for SeaChange Hawaii is Robert 'Craig' Norton, MFT, who has been with Marimed since 1993, Captain of the ship is Harry Sprague, Master Mariner, Clinical Director is Scott Allred, LMFT and Medical Director is Ilona Laszlo Higgins, MD.

The young men or "cadets" spend 22 days aboard the 96 foot, SSV Makani Olu (Gracious Wind) a sailing school vessel, exploring the Hawaiian Islands and perform all the duties aboard the vessel as a team, performing "watches" every four hours in rotating shifts, meal preparation and cleanup in addition to learning safety procedures, knot tying, sail identification, basic orientation to navigation and life aboard a ship. With an individualized plan in place, each cadet will participate in a variety of therapies including group and individual, family therapy, adventure therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy. Cadets will experience solo time, journaling and physical and emotional challenges and gain real work skills, cultural enrichment and self efficiency.

[This information came from the SeaChange Hawaii website and brochure.]

RIVER CENTRE CLINIC

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Founded in 1996 under the original name the Toledo Center for Eating Disorders, River Centre Clinic provides treatment for children and adolescents aged 12 to 17 as well as adults who suffer from eating disorders of all types. Youth in the program can opt to participate in the residential program or commute from nearby.

The President and Clinical Director of River Centre Clinic, Michael Anderson, M.D., Ph.D., has previously been part of the medical faculty at University of Minnesota and has attended and performed emergency psychiatry research at multiple prestigious

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