

Another Week Beyond - 1308

Dear Team

A 15 year old girl was at odds with her parents for constantly returning home late. Her parents were also concerned that she was not doing well in school. They blamed their daughter's friends for being an unhealthy influence. Hence, when we arranged for a family meeting, we thought that it was appropriate when their daughter brought along 2 friends aged 17 and 13 years old. We began the meeting by asking those present how they expected this 15 year old to behave as a daughter, student and a friend. Before anyone could respond, the 15 year old spoke. She related a list of behaviours for each of these categories and then self-assessed where she could be doing better. So, as a daughter she could be speaking to her parents more respectfully, keep the house rules and disappoint her parents less. As a student, she should do better at school and move on to the next level. However as friend, she believed she did pretty well.

Her parents and friends then took turns to share what they expected of her. As we were trying to sort out the information shared in a way that could take things forward, the parents and the friends kept the conversation going. The parents wondered if the friends had been encouraging her to stay out late and why was it that they had to answer the phone when they tried to contact their daughter. The 13 year old explained that she answered the phone because she wanted to "defend" her friend. The parents then gently asked her if she had to be so rude on the phone. They said that she speaks to them like they were going to harm their daughter. After a few moments, the 13 year old apologised to the parents and the tone of the conversation improved. The 17 year old explained that they always reminded their friend to leave for home early as the journey back takes at least an hour. However, she would then start arguing with them and that delayed her leaving their home. She realised that this was her friend's method of prolonging her stay but did not know what she could do.

At the end of the meeting, the parents, the friends and the 15 year old agreed on a weekly schedule of events aimed at ensuring she succeeded in school. The friends will help to monitor that schedule and keep in touch with the parents where necessary. We believe that when problem solving is a collective effort involving all concerned, good sense will prevail.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

Every kind of peaceful cooperation among men is primarily based on mutual trust and only secondarily on institutions such as courts of justice and police. ~ Albert Einstein

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