

# OREGON SCHOOL DISTRICT

## PRESENTS:

### PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

#### Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

#### Social and Extra-Curricular Activities

Parents and teens often find themselves in the heat of battle over extra-curricular activities. These battles are usually centered around the parents' belief that the activities are not acceptable. As parents we often confuse acceptance with approval. There is a big difference. For instance, we can accept the fact there are wars. It doesn't mean that we have to approve of them. This means we can listen to a discussion about war without being afraid that we are giving the impression we approve of war.

As parents, we hope our teens will discuss many of the things that go on in their lives. Like adults, teens make mistakes or find themselves in difficult situations. It is helpful for them to be able to talk with an interested, not blaming, adult about these experiences. The fact that they are willing to talk to us is a good sign. It gives them a chance to relive, in a safe way, what happened, and get their own beliefs in order. Effective parents listen without being afraid that their willingness to listen, in a non-blaming way, means approval.

A parent who is able to listen with interest, curiosity, and sincere questions about the teen's thoughts, opinions, or values can actually help the youngster look at these situations in a healthy way. Parents who use this approach find the more they listen, the more their teens actually start evaluating the wisdom of the activity.

Parents who are quick to be critical, or to restrict and punish, soon teach their teens to withhold information. At the same time, they greatly reduce the amount of thought the youngster gives to an activity. Teens who have critical parents, spend more time defending their actions and thoughts than they do thinking about the activity.

Wise parents are more concerned about their teen's plans for handling undesirable activities than they are about restricting those activities. Whether an activity is good or bad is not nearly as important as knowing your teen can handle any temptations associated with the extra-curricular activity.

The following scenario illustrates this:

Teen: "Mom, I'm old enough to go to that concert. Can I go?"

Mom: "I'll know you're old enough when you can tell me about the possible pressures you're going to have to face and your plan for handling them."

Teen: "Geez, Mom. Are you worried I'll do drugs? You know I don't do drugs."

Mom: "That's not what I said. I want to know what you are going to say when the other kids are telling you that everybody does drugs at a concert and that you're not going to get hooked if you do some once in a while."

Teen: "Geez, Mom. Don't you trust me?"

Mom: "That's not the point. I know how hard it is to be in awkward situations. I also know that once you have thought it out, and come up with a plan for handling those situations, you'll be ready to take care of yourself. I'll be glad to let you go to the concert when you can describe that plan to me."

This mother knows that the day this teen can describe her plan for handling an activity is the day that she is ready for the activity and that Mom no longer needs to worry.



*Acceptance of extra-curricular activities is not the same as approval. Wise parents accept the activity, and help their teen learn to handle the temptations that may be associated with that activity.*