



CASE STUDY #16 SANDIE (The Root Beer Mustang)

This study falls into the category of “parent/child connections”.

It was a warm spring afternoon and I was hoping the afternoon would be somewhat stress-free so I could leave at the regular time and get in a longer run.

But Noooo... at 4:55 in came my 4:00 appointment. It was a girl who was skipping school (only the fifth such meeting with that theme today! Can't you people be just a little bit creative?)

Mom (Judy)speaks first: She just doesn't care about school...she just turned 16 and thinks she knows everything!

S: No I don't...It's just sooo boring!

Me: Well your Mom and I enjoyed every second of every class; didn't we Mom?

J: (smiling and laughing) Maybe not EVERY SECOND...Geometry not so much.

Me: Just one class? I hated everything but PE.)

S: (smile) And your job is to make us love school? Sucks to be you!

Me: Ha Ha... sometimes, but my kids enjoy eating and occasionally someone listens to what I'm talking about. Possibly you even?

S: We'll see.

At this time I ask Sandie to wait out in the office (under the watch of Broomhilda, the world's scariest secretary.

Me: So what have you tried?

J: The regular stuff; grounding, loss of screen time, allowance deductions, even down to no allowance at all!

Me: Any success?

J: We're here aren't we?

Me: Good point...So what about positive reinforcement? That sometimes works on my kids; like if they want money for a movie or something.

J: I'm glad you asked! My neighbor has a classic car that he needs to sell right away because they've got a baby on the way and need the cash more than a 1967 Mustang.

I told Sandie that It would be hers if she started attending school and got decent grades.

Me: Wow, wish you were my Mom. What color is it?

J: Root beer with cream trim and tan cloth top.

Me: A convertible?

J: Runs like top, less than 90,000 miles. I've wanted that car since I first saw it eight years ago and he really needs the money pronto so the price is 2k below the blue book!

Me: You and about everyone else in for a town. Go get the receptionist to send in Sandie for a little 1 on 1 OK?

Me: So your Mom says she has a gift for you if you straighten up and fly right?

S: You talking about the Mustang?

Me: Yeah, sounds like a pretty good deal to me.

S: You're not me.

Me: So true. So let's figure out what you would like.

S: For start I need her to stop treating me like a baby. I'm going to be 16 in 7 months.

Me: So you won't be able to drive the car until then...Is that why you don't want it?

S: Why is everyone so hung up on that stupid old car?

Me: Some things just get better with age. You will get it someday.

S: So are you going to tell my Mom to lighten up a little then maybe I'll do better?

Me: That wouldn't do you any good. Your Mom wants you to do better and graduate so you'll have a better life. She will always love you because you are her daughter. Hopefully you'll have a child someday, then you'll see how much you can love another person.

S: I never want to be a Mother.

Me: I've been around long enough to see how young people change. I'll be in a grocery store and hear a voice behind me saying "Is that you Mr D? This is my child and you were right! I love her more than I ever thought possible!"

S: Yeah, that won't be me.

Me: So beside not wanting her to care about your future what would you want as a reward for graduating?

S: I wouldn't mind a nice little Fiat or maybe a Mini Cooper. My friend got a used one and she loves it.

Me: So do you want your own wheels enough to work for it? Your Mom is pretty cool to even think about helping you. Have you thought about the "I CARE" program? I know the guy that runs it.

It would be nice to think that this was a success story but it wasn't. Sandie did a little better in school but even with summer school two summers she still didn't graduate with her class. The last I heard she was working in fast food. Her Mother still lets her live with her but the parent support group is working on Judy to cut her loose. Mom wants Sandie to be out on her own like most 20 year olds but hasn't yet cut the apron strings. The support group tells her she is now part of the problem.