



CASE STUDY#6: YVONNE (Intervention)

Yvonne was a beautiful young girl; the pride and joy of her parents. Their friends would decide to have kids when they saw how well behaved she was. Every night she would go to both her mom and dad and tell them how much she loved them and how glad she was that they were her parents.

She did everything right until her 16th birthday. With a lot of young people independence afforded by the automobile accelerates the natural separation process. (What a nice way to say your kid becomes so obnoxious that you want them as far away from you as possible.)

Behavior changes began innocently enough; being 15 minutes late after the agreed upon family curfew, hanging around with some seedy looking characters forsaking many of her long time friends, When questioned Evonne would say: "these are real people too, they have just had a little rougher time growing up than I've had, Their parents weren't as cool as mine." She was always the child that would bring home the bird with the broken wing or the stray in need of food and love. Her family needed to budget in vet bills every month so Evonne, "the rescuer", could save the animal kingdom one pathetic beast at a time. As she was now in mid teens nothing had changed except the complexity of the organism.

The curfew challenges were just the beginning. Next came staying out all night followed by traces of drug paraphernalia and isolation. The more concern her parents showed the more withdrawn she became. The final blow came in the form of the police bringing Evonne home from a two night stay in San Jose with a "chicken hawk" She had been having drug-induced "pity sex" with some of her boyfriend's buddies who "really needed to get a little". What Evonne didn't know was that she was being groomed for professional sex as a way of supporting her boyfriend. When the police told her parents how serious the condition was in San Jose, they knew it was time for action.

They attended their first Tough/love meeting and were inspired to try an "extended family" confrontation.

The next Sunday morning she was literally drug out of bed and forced to attend church with her parents and younger brother.. When they all returned home the entire family and some trusted friends, with whom Evonne had a history of mutual respect, all gathered around to tell her how afraid and concerned they were about her future. At first she was angry saying she felt betrayed and picked upon. The breakthrough came when her 10 year old younger brother expressed his concern. She started to believe that the people present were all there because they cared about her. She agreed to enroll in a residential drug treatment program with excellent results.

Analysis: This kind of support for the parents is worth its weight in gold. Of course it was all done for their daughter but she couldn't hear it when they were the only ones saying it! That is one of the main problems of the child/parent relationship. (Mark Twain, as an 18 year old, talked about how stupid his father was and was surprised at how much his old man had learned by the time Twain reached the age of 24.) This is true for most families as long as nothing happens to totally destroy the relationship in the meantime.

NOTE: This story has an unfortunate side note. About four years after dealing with Evonne and her support group I happened to be a counselor in another community, and was dealing with an obnoxious young man and needed to communicate with his mother. Imagine my shock and surprise to discover I recognized the voice on the phone as that of Evonne's mother. The kid who was raising

hell in my new school district was that 10 year-old younger brother from 4 years ago. I took a lot from that revelation:

1. Some parents go 0 for 2 in the easy to raise kid department.
 2. Mom's health started to fail...we all have our limits of endurance. Superwoman is a cartoon.
 3. Seeing an old sibling make stupid mistakes doesn't give us immunity from SDBS . (self defeating behaviors)
 4. There is no reason that I can see to explain why such together parents had to go through so much grief raising their (basically wonderful) kids.
 5. A great trait like compassion can also be the antecedent of a major relationship downfall.
- Don't stop caring, just learn to differentiate what is being done for them and what you are doing to make yourself feel wanted and needed. (Also important; this rescuing behavior can interfere with a child's personal growth and responsibility.)
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