Love and Logic

"That's an Option!"

"Well, if you guys don't love me enough to give me more allowance, I'll just have to start selling drugs!"

"I guess that's an option," said Mom.

"That's an option? What do you mean that's an option?"

Mom shrugged and said, "That's one way to solve your problem."

"You've got to be crazy! What are you on?" questioned Mark.

"Nothing," replied Mom. "Even though I love you more than anything in the world, the time has come when you have to decide for yourself how you are going to live your life."

"No way! You're on something. Otherwise you'd be giving me a lot of grief about this! Do you know that I could get caught for dealing? I could go to jail!"

"Don't worry. Maybe you'll make enough money dealing that you can hire some good lawyers to get you some light time. I'm sure you've thought it all out. Anyway, just think, if you get caught, the state will take care of you. You don't have to worry about allowance, room and board or anything."

"Wait a minute! How am I supposed to go to college?"

Mom laid back on the couch and said, "Oh, you won't be in the slammer forever. With good behavior you'll get out and go to college later. You might even be better prepared because you'll have more life experiences."

"This is weird, man! Are you just going to sit there and let me ruin my life? Don't you even care about what happens to me? I can't listen to this! This is blowing my mind!"

And he stomped out of the room.

As farfetched as this sounds, it is an actual conversation between a child and a parent who had learned to keep the monkey on the back of the child who owned the problem. She had learned that teens love to "hit" us, like Mark did in this situation.

The whole idea is to get the parent defending, advising, and demanding. Then the child goes into his/her judge role with statements such as, "That's not fair," or, "I can't do that." Before long the parent totally owns a problem the child actually needs to learn to solve.

Analyzing this situation, we see that the mother did not criticize Mark's thinking by saying, "That's stupid. Don't you dare do that!' She did not tell him what to do: "If you want to go to that concert badly enough, you'll get out and get yourself an honest job." And Mom did not use anger, guilt, intimidation or orders such as, "As long as you live in my house you're not going to talk like that!"

This mother remembered the response, "That's an option," will apply regardless of the stupidity of a teen's suggestion. A teen's inappropriate suggestion usually has parents doing all the thinking and ultimately taking over ownership of the problem.

The second skill Mom used was to think of all the advantages to Mark's solution of selling drugs. However, she stated them in rather negative, yet enthusiastic, terms. As you can tell from the dialog, it blew Mark's mind, and he switched into the role of telling her what was wrong with dealing drugs.

The third thing Mom knew, was that Mark could learn from this type of dialog because she had a reasonably good relationship with him and things had gone well during his childhood.

"That's an option," forces your teen to really think about what he/she has said

People who are really successful implementing this skill
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