



## Principally Speaking

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

### THINGS TEENS DON'T LIKE TO HEAR

Consciously, and generally unconsciously, all of us like to hear, "I love you." That's probably the most important message in life. However, when raising children, the "I love you" message may be coupled with other messages that children may not, at first, appreciate.

The messages teens don't like to hear include variations of, "*It looks like you have a problem.*" These messages drop the child's problem on his or her own shoulders. On the other hand, children like to hear parents make statements that show the parent is concerned, worried, or going to fix the problem for the child. Let's look at some of these messages:

Children like to hear parents say, "*What am I going to do with you?*" They don't like to hear parents say, "*Gee, Henry, I hope you figure out what to do with yourself.*"

A child likes to hear a parent say, "*Am I going to have to...*" The child, resistant, answers, "*Yeah, you're going to have to...*" Children don't like to hear parents say, "*I wonder if you need to...*"

Once a parent says, "*Am I going to have to...*" they have given their youngsters an all-time favorite response, for the child knows that he or she is in control of the situation. As teens like emotion, they love to hear parents say things like, "*Am I ever mad at you.*" It's not nearly as much fun

when a parent says, "*Am I ever sad for you.*"

Then, there is the effective response to replace "*Gee, Henry, you have a problem.*" Telling a person that they have a problem can get old and it sometimes sounds uncaring. It is better to substitute, "*Gee, Henry, good luck!*" the "good luck" message, when given by a loving parent, means that the problem rests with the child.

We know children do not like to hear these messages because they respond with, "*I hate it when you talk to me like that!*" or "*Have you been going to one of those parenting seminars again?*"

Although these messages are, at first, upsetting to teens, they force teens to accept their own responsibilities. These teens will become happy and responsive individuals who take care of themselves.

#### The statement:

***"It looks like you have a problem,"***

**forces teens to accept  
responsibility for their  
own actions.**