

Parenting Teens Just Got Easier!
Is a free monthly eZine for parents of pre-teens and teens from Saso Seminars
By Patt and Steve Saso

August Issue 2007 – Complaining without Blaming

Parenting Tip This Month: Start this school year off by giving your student feedback that helps performance, rather than hindering it. You might be surprised to learn that your attempts to motivate might be part of the problem.

I hope you all are having a good summer holiday. With less than one summer month left I decided to begin the dialogue about the upcoming school year.

Announcement Hot Links

Free TeleSeminar: Tuesday, 8/28/07 @ 1:00 Pacific Time
“Tips for Applying to Catholic High Schools”

Learn the ins and outs of increasing your chances of acceptance into a Catholic high school.

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/tele.html>

Saso High School Prep
“Preparing for the High School Placement Test (HSPT)”

Whether your student enters SHSP for remediation, enrichment or acceleration we can help your child experience academic success.

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/hspt.html>

Parenting Seminars
“Informative, entertaining and affirming”

For over 15 years we have been speaking to groups, assisting parents in raising responsible teenagers. Call to schedule.

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/index.html>

I experience parents in family counseling giving “constructive criticism” to their teens. They believe it is helpful.

Take for example the Smith family. Their son’s grades have dropped and they are upset because there is not much time left in his sophomore year to recover. They know Jake can do better.

Mom opened with what she thought was constructive criticism. *“Jake, I don’t know what’s wrong with you. You are smart and capable, but lazy.”*

Dad then turned to me and added, *“He doesn’t care about anything. He has a bad attitude. We’ve tried everything!”*

Constructive criticism doesn’t work

Parents, I will tell you right now that there is no such thing as *constructive* criticism. It does more harm than good.

The apparent solution may be part of the problem

Without awareness Mrs. Smith’s solution to motivate with criticism was actually part of the problem. She had to learn to complain without blame.

Complaining versus blaming

A complaint describes the problem - without pointing a finger. A complaint labels feelings.

Making a Complaint

For example, Mrs. Smith’s complaint might have sounded like, *“Jake, I am worried about your school progress. There’s not much time left in the school year and you have a lots of work due. I’m concerned about how you are going to complete it.”*

Criticism appears to be a complaint but adds an ingredient of accusation.

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Reread Mrs. Smith's opening statements and you'll see what I mean. The unspoken message is that Jake is the problem because he is flawed (i.e. lazy, bad attitude).

Another way to turn a complaint into a criticism is by adding: "You *always*..." or "You *should* ..." or "You *never*..." These are accusing words and imply fault.

It is okay to make a complaint.

But when it becomes disparaging and judgmental it damages self-worth and relationships.

How to make a complaint without blame

- 1. Be calm and neutral** in your tone when stating your observations. Be non-judgmental.
- 2. Focus on the situation. Do not draw in the past.** Describe what you see and express feelings in an unbiased manner.
- 3. Identify the needs of your child**, instead of giving "constructive criticism." Help connect solutions to problems by providing resources, not condemnation.
- 4. Keep your mind open and flexible.** Let go of your desire to have a particular outcome. Remember parenting is helping your teens to discover and learn, not manipulating and directing their behavior.

Complaining instead of blaming will guide your teen toward more responsible behaviors.

It's a skill to learn how to make a complaint without being judgmental or derogatory. By practicing making a complaint rather than a criticism, it will help reduce conflict between you and your teen by focusing on solutions rather than shortcomings.

For more parenting tips and resources go to:

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/tools.html>

Free TeleSeminar: Tuesday, 8/28/07 @ 1:00 Pacific Time

"Tips for Applying to Catholic High Schools"

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/tele.html>

In the San Francisco Bay Area competition is stiff trying to get into a Catholic High School. Learn the 8 steps you can take to help improve your child's chances of gaining acceptance.

If you are unable to participate visit our web at:

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/hspt.html>

Saso High School Prep

"Math & English Programs for 6 – 9th graders"

A child's job is to be a student. Learning builds confidence and increases motivation. Saso High School Prep has proven programs designed to build academic confidence for life.

Tools to Help Your Child Succeed Academically

Whether your student enters SHSP for remediation, enrichment or acceleration we can help your child excel intellectually.

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/hspt.html>

Fall HSPT Preparation Course

Increase your student's chances of getting into the Catholic high school of his or her choice.

Mr. Steve Saso's High School Placement Test

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(HSPT*)

Preparation Course is a proven program designed to:

- Increase your chances of getting into your dream high school,
- Improve proficiency skills in Math and English,
- Strengthen test-taking skills,
- Practice real HSPT exams,
- Build study skills habits,
- Motivate and build self-confidence as a student,
- Master time management strategies, and
- Give a boost to your self-confidence on the HSPT exam.

Limited class sizes with personal attention.
Classes begin the week of September 17th and run ten weeks.

For more information go to:

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/hspt.html>

*The HSPT is used for high school admissions, grade placement, and scholarship awards predominately by Catholic high schools.

HSPT Prep Course Testimonies

From Carrie Doolittle --

My daughter took this summer course as a rising 8th grader, and we felt that it helped her confidence and skills for the HSPT test. She will tell you without question, it was helpful.

However, the biggest difference that we saw was that her skill and confidence in just regular academics in 8th grade improved, particularly in math.

From Elva Wilson --

My son did great on the test! Without a doubt, your preparation class was instrumental in his performance. With so many factors considered in acceptance to private schools, it was reassuring to

have the confidence that he would do well on this test, based on the preparation from your class. Thank you very much for the outstanding preparation. Please feel free to refer any parents to me who may want a recommendation from a satisfied customer.

To learn more:

<http://www.sasoseminars.com/hspt.html>

Parenting Seminars

“Informative, entertaining and affirming”

Parent education is a necessity these days. We use humor and real life anecdotes from the parenting trenches to entertain and educate parents to build strong and influential relationships with teens.

Patt, a marriage and family therapist, and Steve, a high school educator, offer participants the skills and resources necessary to help make raising teens easier.

If you are interested in inviting us to speak visit our web or give us a ring @ 408.262.6837

<http://www.sasoseminars.com>

From Leianne Wong Lamb, Commonwealth Club of California ---

You folks took the roof off last night! Everyone was enraptured by your enthusiasm, expertise, honesty and comprehensive tools you shared. The stories and anecdotes really brought the information home and reinforced that our lives are not unique or alone.

From Kristen Klein, MSW ---

I want to thank you for your continued dedication to teaching parents (and professionals) how to better communicate with children. I am a social worker with Children and Family Services in San Mateo County. I am not a parent of a teen, yet I have learned a lot about how to talk with my teen clients

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and how to help parents of teens understand how to develop a better or stronger relationship. I just wanted to let you know that I appreciate your hard work and plentiful resources to me and the community.

Upcoming Seminar

“Ten Best Gifts for Your Teen”
Sunday, August 26, 2007
9:15 – 10:15 am
St. Jude’s Episcopal Church
20920 McClellan Rd.
Cupertino 95014

All are welcome to attend.

Until next time,

Patt & Steve Saso
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<http://www.sasoseminars.com/freestuff.html>

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At Saso Seminars we are committed to inspiring parents to strengthen relationship and raise caring and competent youth. Visit our web @ www.SasoSeminars.com for more helpful information and resources on trouble-free parenting.”
(Make sure the link is live if placed in an eZine or in a web site.)