WHY DO WE LOSE OUR KIDS?

Probably the most frequently asked question in society today.

“SOCIETY HAS AN “ILLNESS…”

All across America, our society is sick and that sickness has brought on a series of horrible “Symptoms.”

These symptoms are affecting our families, our communities, our children and our homes.

Symptoms….

I use street gang involvement as an example; However it is but one symptom of society’s ills. Other symptoms include:

* Drug abuse
* Teen pregnancy
* Teen Runaway
* Teen Suicide
* Domestic violence
* Disintegration of home
SYMPTOM CHARACTERISTICS...

Regardless of the “symptom,” the characteristics that lead to them are often the same. In certain circles of the professional social mindset, children caught up in these characteristics are considered...

At Risk Youth

For as many kids as you have involved in gangs, is how many reasons you’ll get….

Certain reasons are more common than others. However, most lead right back HOME.

PARENTS NOT ALWAYS TO BLAME…

Yes… Sometimes, parents are to blame and kids involved in gangs will come from ‘dysfunctional’ homes.

However, even parents with awesome parenting skills might lose their kids to gang involvement or other “symptom.”

An assortment of influences may lure the child away from home or impact their character negatively. IE: Associates, Music, Television, Internet and so on.

PARENTS HAVE THE “KEY”

While we can’t say parents are ‘always’ responsible, we can say parents have the key to keeping their children from dropping by the wayside.

That KEY is to be an informed and involved parent. Know everything there is to know about your child.

DO NOT allow your child to control the home environment. Kids have a tendency to ‘manipulate’ parents.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Be Involved In Every Aspect of your child’s life.

* His friends: Know them? Meet them? Their family?
* His music: Gangsta Rap? What is he/she listening to?
* His clothing: You buy it? What is he/she wearing?
* His schooling: Grades? Involvement? Teachers?
* His social life: Girlfriend? Parties/gatherings?
* His Room?: Accessible? Search it? Writings?
COMMON REASONS FOR JOINING:

- Family disintegration (separation/divorce etc.)
- Seeking guidance via a role model
- The child feels he/she gets 'no respect' at home
- Physical/Sexual abuse
- Sibling rivalry
- Domestic violence
- Gang/drug activity at home
- Fellowship/companionship

REASONS: CONTINUED...

- Peer pressure
- Protection
- Socialization
- Finding people who can 'relate' and 'understand'.
- Excitement/Power

BOTTOM LINE: THERE IS A "VOID"

Chances are, the child is trying to fill a “Void” in his/her life. Something he doesn’t get at home:

- A hug
- Responsibility
- Rules
- Discipline
- Confidence
- Reassurance
- Guidance
- Support

It might be he/she is trying to get away from something or someone. He/she might be having sibling rivalry, problems communicating with parents, being ‘abused’ sexually or otherwise by someone in the home. He/she might feel a need for fellowship or companionship of sibling(s)/peers.
Tell me this kid isn’t going to gang-bang some day…

BUILDING YOUR “FOUNDATIONS”

8-13 years old
“Toying” with gang culture

14-20’s years old
Fully “involved” with gang

20’s-40’s years old
“O.G.’s/Veteranos” [Prison/leadership role]

INGREDIENTS FOR A SOLID FOUNDATION.

1. Love and Attention
2. Parental leadership and guidance
3. Confidence and support
4. Rules at Home
5. Discipline and Consequences for violating those rules.
6. *Respect them as a person, respect for themselves, respect for others and others’ property.*
POLICE SHOULD BE YOUR LAST RESORT.

Police officers are not “social workers.”

Officers’ primary responsibility is to protect the innocent public from the criminal element. When they come into the picture, a crime has likely occurred and their first position is to “arrest” the person who committed the crime.

Arresting your child will put him/her into the criminal justice system. While it sometimes helps to “scare” him/her, there is a chance you might be sending the wrong message.

POLICE MIGHT BE THE WAY TO GO.

If all has failed... or your child is being physically abusive and aggressive, calling the police might be the way to go.

* A stint in Juvenile Hall might awaken him/her into the real world.
* Conviction/True Finding in a juvenile court would provide “probation officer supervision.”
* Loss of freedom might make him/her realize what they have at home. They might learn to appreciate home.

WHAT DOES A PARENT LOOK FOR?

A parent should look for a pattern indicating an interest of involvement. Review each characteristic carefully because some of these activities might be consistent with normal and typical adolescent behavior:

- Dropping school grades
- Rebellion at home
- Detachment from family involvement/out late etc.
- Graffiti... [Probably the most visible sign]

SIGNS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Specific styles of clothing, specific colors etc..
- Practicing hand signals/hand signs
- Identifying with moniker/nickname (graffiti)
- Tattoos identifying w/neighborhood or group
- Possession of weapons: guns, knives, clubs.
- Identifying with group that has a name. [Hispanic/Latino groups often identify with their neighborhood’s name. IE: Varrio .......]
TODAY, OUR CHILDREN FACE:

- Drug abuse in astronomical proportions
- Violence in our schools and workplace
- Domestic Violence
- Teen pregnancy
- Teen Suicide

But you know what…
It boils down to one point.

INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- As individuals we are responsible for our own actions. Finding people to blame for our short-sightedness, our short-comings or our lack of effort is an excuse.
- Excuses are “crutches” we use to lean on.

EVERYONE HAS ONE
AND THEY ALL STINK

WE HAVE AN “ETHICAL” OBLIGATION

- We need to look at who we are, our character, our personality, our morals and our values.
- We need to look at ourselves, before we criticize others. Life is complicated enough. Think about:
  - Where am I headed?
  - Where do I want to go?
  - What do I have to do to get there?
  - Never… ever stop trying to achieve your goals.