

Opening Story, Unit 7: Hang in There

People who hear the stories of our older son, Greg, always ask, *so where is Greg today? Did your interventions work? Do you think you did the right thing?* There was a time when my wife and I asked ourselves those same questions. *Are we doing the right thing?*

I remember a time when Greg was grounded nearly every other weekend over a five- and one-half month period. Either he had been drinking or, when we spot-checked, he wasn't where he said he was going to be. The results were always the same, TEASPOT, one weekend to one week. As the weeks drew on and the groundings became more frequent, my wife and I discovered a bonus. When Greg was grounded, we were not worried about where he was or what he was doing. We had complete peace of mind when he was on TEASPOT. Of course, he would try to make life miserable around the house, but that was to be expected. We learned not to get sucked into the arguments.

We began to notice something else. Greg was a little more at peace, as well. When Greg wasn't with his friends, he was not being forced to choose. He had no decisions to make. *Do I have a beer or joint because everyone else is doing it? Do I have enough time before I have to go home? Can I cover it up? I know they will be waiting up for me.* Peer pressure is fierce at that age, and it is getting worse. If he chose, Greg could even use us as an excuse. *I can't do that. My parents will check my breath the moment I walk in the door.* Yep. It was starting to get more comfortable around our house.

Around the fifth month, during one of his TEASPOTs, Greg came to me and said. *You can see this isn't working.* (Inside, of course, I was wearing a big smile and doing backflips. It was finally working.) Yes, I said. *It isn't working. You agree with me?* Yes, I repeated, *I agree with you. This isn't working. OK. Let me get this straight. You agree with me that this TEASPOT crap isn't working. Yes, son. I agree with you. This TEASPOT stuff is not working.* Greg walked away, shaking his head.

About twenty minutes later, Greg announced that he was going over to Tim's house. *You're not going anywhere,* I said. *You're grounded. But you just said that you agreed with me. This TEASPOT stuff isn't working. Yes. I agreed with you. It isn't working. But your mother and I are going to keep doing it. You see, Greg, when you are home with us, your mother and I don't worry about where you are and what you are doing. And we like that. So even though this isn't working, we are going to keep doing it until you turn 18, and you move into your own place. But, if you stay here, we are still going to keep doing it because it is illegal for you to drink until you are 21.* Greg walked away, shaking his head. And that is when I knew that we had done the right thing.

His mother and I are not naive enough to believe that Greg never drank or smoked again. I am sure he could leave the house at 7:00 PM, have a beer, and we probably couldn't smell it on his breath. But he knew we were waiting up for him when he returned. And in our book, it was a successful intervention.

You, too, can be successful. But you will need a plan. And at some point, you have to take the bull by the horns and put your plan into action. It's time to make it happen!

Oh yeah. Greg is married with three children of his own and works with Autistic children. He enjoys working with challenging kids the most. *Go figure.*