

WHEN THE SCHOOL CALLS HOME...

“Parents are powerfully biased in protecting their children.” (Dr. Phil) It is a parental instinct to protect your children. It is a reflex that does not require thinking or planning.

When we as parents receive a call from a neighbor, the school, coach, scout leader, our defense shields immediately go up. Probably more calls come in with complaints than compliments so we expect the worse. It is a wonderful surprise when the call is positive and complimentary.

Usually the call is probably about a misbehavior. That feels like an attack so defensive we become. We take very personally how our children do in the real world. We see it as a reflection on us. First mistake.

Children are born with free will: the ability to make their own decisions despite pressure, laws, and authority figures standing beside them. Free will starts at birth and grows as the child grows. It is an inborn drive to be independent, “beholdin’” to no one. Kids will make decisions contrary to family values to:

- Be accepted by the group
- Look cool
- Struggle for independence
- Break the ties of the parents
- And the occasional poor decision, misjudgment

Second mistake is to believe our kids will be totally forthright with us even when it means big trouble for them. Most children, if not all, will do just about anything to avoid trouble. That is just about the sole function of lying: avoid trouble. Listen to your child, remembering they are likely to slant things in their own favor. (didn't you do that with your parents?) It is called self preservation.) It is pretty rare for a kid to come home and confess, fully, completely and accurately. It is NOT a sign of parental failure, rather normal child development.

If they are successful at aligning you against the school, they just learned to disrespect authority, school and the truth.

So, it is important to get all the facts. Listen to the school

One last piece of wisdom: If you promise to believe half of what your child tells you about school, we promise to believe only half of what we hear about home.