Saying "No" Might be the Right Answer

"All my friends are allowed to, why can't I go to the party?" This time-honored comment from young people is shared with parents on an almost daily basis. Interpose the "party" comment to almost anything else and you probably hit 100% of our households. Our children like to see everything from their perspective and some parents fall into the trap of believing that everyone else is going to the party.

It is difficult as a parent to find out that your decision to say "no" might cause your child to miss out on the party of the year. It might be equally traumatic for your child when they find that all other parents are permitting the viewing of "R-rated Movies" or that all children are permitted to have a curfew of 1:00 a.m. on school nights and you said "No". (Of course these are outlandish examples to make the point, as parents, we have the responsibility to say "no" at times.)

A very widely used tactic among children and young teens is to place "guilt" upon the parents for being a good parent…in other words for saying "no" when we have determined a film, a party, or a particular friend is not good for our children. How do you deal with an issue when it appears that many other parents are saying "yes" to a situation where you feel your child might be pressured into doing something wrong or harmful? There are several tips you might want to consider.

♦ Make sure your child knows the rules before they go to a party or visit someone. Now is the time to build habits that you will want your child to follow when he or she is in high school. Children also need to know when to call their parents in certain situations. Example: They are at a friend's house to spend the night and there are no parents at home. Your child needs to know that it is appropriate to call home. By going over the scenario before a situation has happened can give your child the perfect excuse to call you. (Your child might say, "My dad will go crazy if I do that." This takes the responsibility off the child, placing directly on the parent.)

♦ If your child is going to a friend's house for a sleep-over or a party. Take the rap for your child by calling and talking to the parent ahead of time. You can offer to help chaperone or bring snacks to the party. You are also establishing a routine of care and concern for your child. Sometimes we call this "putting yourself in the way" of a potentially harmful situation. Most parents having a children's party are thrilled to have additional support at a party.

♦ Find other ways to put yourself in harm's way for your child. As a parent, you have the obligation to ask questions and to insure their safety. It is appropriate to drop by a party if you are concerned about supervision or just to see if the hosts of the party need help or support.

Our children are faced with many difficulties in their lives. There should never be a question of who and what their parents stand for. It is all right to say "no" and to ask questions…in fact, it is what being a parent is all about. Our children need guidance and fortunately many parents understand that might mean saying, "No".