

The Home Pass Jitters

I'll admit it, I was spooked. And it wasn't because Halloween was coming...it was because my daughter was coming! After 17 months in the Program, she had earned her home pass. My initial excitement to have her home for awhile, quickly became tinged with anxiety. For the girl who left here, those many months ago, was sullen, withdrawn, abusing drugs and full of risky behaviors. She was a walking time bomb of self destruction. Over time, through our letters and visits to the facility, I had seen her change into an outgoing, happy and self-confident human being, with a new joy of life. But that was all on the program's turf. My fear was that she might come home and slide back into her old behaviors.

These fears were played upon by my non-program friends and relatives who all had a horror story of a soul swallowed up on their return to the community that begot their lifestyle. No amount of program education could sway these doom-sayers from their dire litanies, and I began to feel more nervous.

I knew I needed feedback from fellow parents and facility staff. Instead, I chose one of my old non-working behaviors, my own slide backwards. I decided I would make everything perfect around the house! If everything looked great, everything would go great! Two weeks before Jenny's visit I began my tasks. First, shampoo all the carpets and furniture. That would certainly make everything better! Next vacuum and dust ever square inch of the house. Wash the cat, clean the gutters, manicure every plant in the garden. No time for that trip to the monthly support meeting. I had too much to do! Two hours before Jenny's plane landed I was waxing the kitchen floor with one eye on the clock and one hand on my car keys. I arrived at the airport with ten minutes to spare, feeling disheveled and triumphant. Everything in our world was spotless! Life was under CONTROL!

Jenny walked off the plane carrying a big smile and a bouquet of flowers for me, and smothered me in a big bear hug. She was the same daughter I had experienced during our visits. What I had forgotten, in my anxiety, were those important concepts learned during seminars...trust, integrity, honesty and self-knowledge. We both had them now thanks to the program. This was a wonderful opportunity to bring the whole process full circle, standing tall and proud in our new lights, communicating on a new level, with honesty and respect for one another.

The five days went by so quickly but were filled with fun, laughter, and long talks into the night. Things were not always easy for us but we were able to talk out what was at issue and to discuss future plans for both of us, as our respective lives change. We also worked hard on her home contract. Best of all, we enjoyed each other being home together, something that had not happened for a long time.

Jenny also coped well with some unexpected events such as running into old friends. I saw a mature, responsible, and happy young adult that had replaced the sad, self-destructive child from those many months ago.

Somehow, the clean house faded into its proper place of non-importance. The doom-sayers haven't been through a seminar with Duane...they know nothing! What is important is Jenny's new outlook on the world and her ability to function in a healthy way. My lesson was that of trust ...in myself, in Jenny and in the Program. My kitchen floor will only shine for a short time. Jenny's light of self confidence will continue to glow throughout her lifetime.

By Joy Reid Gridley (Mother)