

**CIRCUIT COURT OF CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI
FAMILY COURT DIVISION**

K. Elizabeth Davis
Judge

Janet Rogers
Juvenile Officer
Director of Court Services

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Dear Parent,

If you have a teen in trouble, you may feel powerless and frustrated over how to help them. You could do nothing, but you don't want to give up. You could also hope for some magic to create a trouble-free child, but you know that is not realistic. Even if that could happen, a perfect, obedient teen would learn nothing about who they are and how to live as a responsible, independent adult in pursuit of happiness. In other words, their troubles can point to the unique skills and experiences needed that will define them. As Juvenile Office Counselor, I can offer ways to help you and your child explore troubles with less pain and more skills, resources, and understanding.

Stories can be a way through trouble, like this: An Indian boy, about 11 years old, asked his grandfather, "Grandpa, do you think I will grow up to be a good man?"

"I don't know. That depends," he replied. "Think of it as if you have two wolves inside you. One wolf focuses on the negative, like pain, fear, anger and doubt; the other wolf is more positive and focuses on things like healing, courage, peace and confidence."

"Yes, I know about those," the boy answered.

"You know how they sometimes fight inside you?" Grandpa continued.

"Yes, which one wins?" the boy asked.

"That's easy, it's whichever one you feed."

There are many ways to discuss a story, but this one directs us to think about what feeds us. A simple idea is that a teen might feel frustrated in search of a particular "food" – such as a type of relationship or experience to help them group up, and no one is aware of it. For example, a teen might need to be loved through physical presence and quality time, but the parent wants to express love through gifts, and so everyone is disappointed. There's no room for blame here; that will only make someone's negative wolf angry. However, with new skills or resources, the wolves of both you and your teen might be better fed and more happy. (No, you cannot kill the negative wolf!)

I may be able to help you in several ways (at no charge), including phone consultation, brief therapy, and classes that focus on coping, relaxation, and "emotional literacy" (similar to anger management). Please call me at 816-736-8405 to discuss options.

Sincerely,

David Strabala, LCSW, Storyteller
Juvenile Office Counselor

P.S. If you are looking for books/audio resources, here are a few favorites you may find in your library:

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

The Five "Love Languages" of Teenagers, by Gary Chapman

Screamfree Parenting, by Hal Edward Runkel

Raising Children You Can Live with: A Guide to Frustrated Parents, by Jamie Raser