



## **Susan Stone Belton, BSE**

### **Setting Limits: Real Parents, Real Kids, Real Talk**

*Attendee Notes from Menlo School Workshop: Feb. 5, 2011*

Susan Stone Belton, BSE, is a family coach, motivational speaker and special education teacher with over 35 years of experience working with children and families. Susan's professional experiences include teaching teenagers with emotional and behavioral problems, managing crisis hotlines for parents and teens, and individual family counseling. She is a sought-after motivational speaker and has presented hundreds of talks to parent groups. Susan is the mother of two successful young adults; her DVD is titled *Real Parents, Real Kids, Real Talk: How to Raise a Successful Adult*. More information about Susan Stone Belton may be found at <http://www.susanstonebelton.com>.

#### ***On the goal of parenting:***

The Goal of Parenting is to raise a successful adult. In order to do that, parents should ask themselves "What do I want my child to be like at age 21?" In this exercise, parents develop a list of adjectives they hope will describe their child at 21. For example, a parent may say they want their 21 year old to be honest, responsible, empathetic etc. For your child to grow up to embody these adjectives, parents should:

- Be and model the person they want their child to be.
- Realize that everything has to be taught.

#### ***On the parental experience of raising teens:***

Rule and limits are for teenagers as swaddling is for infants.

The teen experience is often like a roller coaster and parents sometimes get in the second car and choose to go for the ride. Parents can empower themselves by choosing not to get on the roller coaster. When teens are getting on *Space Mountain*, parents can choose *It's a Small World*.

Teens are on their worst behavior where and when they feel safe. In fact, it is a sign of social maturity that they can decipher the safe place to be vulnerable. If parents want a confidence booster regarding their kids' behavior, Susan suggested calling a friend or neighbor to ask how the child behaves away from home. This might decrease parental anxiety. Susan took time to stress that children are not bad or good, but have good or bad behavior. All kids misbehave, so be selective in your battles.

***On arguing with your teen:***

Parents have to *choose* not to argue with their teen.

If what you are doing with your teen is not working, then parents have to be open to trying something else. Often the parent's behavior or approach will have to change before the child's behavior will change.

**3 Steps to Setting Limits:**

1. First, you have to have a rule. Everything we say to our children is a rule. We set up rules in our directions, instructions, and house rules. When setting up expectations, give kids a choice and an end time for when they should complete the expectation.
2. Determine a consequence and make sure all parties understand it.
3. Parents must follow through.

Example: I need you to take out the trash by 6 pm or there will be a consequence (cell phone and screen time are recommended currency). Do not get in the battle of nagging and reminding. At 6:01 pm, parents will ask if the garbage has been take out. If not, the consequence is administered without debate. Do not get into a debate or argument with your child. Remind them about choices and consequences.

When you do this, you are teaching your child that when you make good choices you get good consequences, which could simply be to not get in trouble or to have the privilege of screen or phone time.

***Take-aways:***

- We cannot parent from a place of fear and we have to be in charge.
- Parenting is about values. Find opportunities to teach your family values.
- Look for opportunities to have calm interactions with your child.
- When communicating with your teen, respond with empathy, take charge and emotion out of conversations, and remember that you do not need to know everything, but you need to know enough.