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Identity Theft: What to do to Protect Your Identity

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes of the 21st century. In a matter of a few hours, or days, your personal information can be used or sold by someone else. You can greatly reduce your chances of having someone gain access to your personal information by carefully managing all aspects of your financial and other personal matters. It is important you act immediately and aggressively to minimize the damage to your financial and personal reputation.

Attending a Carroll County Farm Bureau Quality of Life Action Team sponsored program on "Identity Theft: What to do to Protect Your Identity" on Wednesday, April 14 at 10 a.m. in the Naaman Diehl Auditorium at the Carroll County Farm Bureau.

The program is at no charge to the public; however, registration is requested by calling the Farm Bureau office at 815-244-3001 by Friday, April 9.

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MT. CARROLL: 1 bedroom apartment. Rent is \$295 and includes water, sewer and garbage collection. Major appliances, off street parking and on site laundry facilities. Please call 1-800-686-4041 for more info. Equal Housing Opportunity.

SAVANNA: 2 BR House. Appliances, W/D hook-up. No pets. References & Rent/Deposit - \$400 each. 815-493-6664 or 815-821-4267

SAVANNA: 1 BR house. Appliances, A/C, 2 car garage. Water included. No Smoking, No Pets. \$425. 815-758-0591

SHANNON: Nice 1 & 2 bedroom apartments includes parking, water, trash and sewer. 815-734-6335 or 815-499-6732

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What's On Your Mind?

by Bob Herman, ACSW

Three Stories about Teens

The following scenes may be familiar to parents of teenagers, though some *endings* may seem strange. All come from my work with parents, and each, I believe, reveals some truth about life with a teen.

First Story. Two parents are explaining to me why they dread doing what they *know* they must do: suspending their 16-year-old's driving privileges. "You see, driving is the most important thing in Jack's life. He finds some reason to use the car every day. It makes him feel more like an adult to be able to drive himself. He thinks his friends admire him more since he got his license. He'll be *so* upset when we tell him we're suspending his driving." But in the face of his driving record over the past six months, his parents believe he is *not* safe. He's had two minor accidents (both his fault), has twice "borrowed" the car without parental permission, has allowed other teens in the car with him with no adult present (which he's not permitted to do) and he's had a *warning* ticket from a well-meaning officer for speeding. For his parents, the message is clear: he needs some time to mature before he uses the car.

Before they leave my office, I support their instincts that their son *isn't* yet responsible enough to be behind the wheel, and I encourage them to do the very hard thing they must do.

When they come to see me the next week, they report a hellish confrontation: they've told him the car was off limits for six months, and, as they predicted, he responded with rage, tears, accusations, threats, the slamming of doors, etc. "And what about the *next* day," I asked. "The *next* day?" mom asks. "Well, ...he came home from school," she recalls, "... and he seemed pretty normal. I think that was the day he asked if I'd make his favorite dinner ... just like nothing had happened the day before. Yah, he was friendlier than usual, not loathing us, I'd say. I remember I was surprised that he wasn't still enraged and bitter." I suggest that the parents can just dismiss their son's obligatory *first* response on the evening they laid down the law (like the first pancake you make that needs to be tossed out) and listen to his *second* response *the next day*. "That's where you'll find your son's *deeper* response to the limits you've set. If only *unconsciously*, Jack feels understood, cared for, safer and calmer. He's no longer alone, trying to manage what is beyond his readiness."

Second story. A mother tells me she is doing daily battle with her daughter. "War" is all that is left of their relationship, she says. Battles occur over anything and

everything they can fight about (the horrendous mess in the teen's room, the boys she hangs out with, her unwillingness to do her share of household chores, her slipping school grades, her hostile and contemptuous manner with *all* family members, her inappropriate dress, etc.). In tears, the mother confides to me that she never shares any nice moment with her daughter anymore. She hated these angry scenes between them, and she suspected her daughter hated them just as much. The mother tells me it feels like there never *was* (...never *had* been) anything good between them - that their former close relationship was all an illusion. "How can I feel like a mother when I'm perpetually filled with anger and hurt at her total disregard for me and disregard for what I ask her to do?" How, indeed?

I suggest that after a chosen length of battle with her daughter, she might try glancing at her watch and saying, in her friendliest tone (like in the old days), "Hey, if we hurry there's still time to catch that movie you were talking about last week. It will get you to bed pretty late, I know ... but you're not doing your homework anyway (friendly chuckle)." Or try, "You know, I haven't had a banana split in years. Why don't we go over to Bill's Diner and treat ourselves to a couple of splits." The mother cast a look at me that said, "You haven't heard a word I said. Are you suggesting that I should *reward* her for being so hostile? Can you expect me to do something *fun* with her on the heels of a knock-down, drag-out fight with her?" Good questions. I suggest another way to look at it: "Maybe stopping the action and switching to doing something pleasant together, if she'll accept it, would remind her that *you* still remember that your relationship includes more than your differences. Maybe it would cause your daughter to question *who* the angry person in the room really is. Maybe your surprise turnaround would

help your daughter realize that, in the final analysis, Mom can wish good things for her, no matter how red Mom's face may be during the fight. And maybe this turnaround will simply disarm her, *unscript* your daughter, especially if all that hostility is *designed* to make you angry and push her away."

The mother tried it. Her daughter was caught off guard and confused ... but went for the banana split. *Gradually*, things did lighten up between them.

Third story. A mother tells me a story. Her fourteen-year-old daughter is excitedly waiting to be picked up for a ride to a friend's party - the first party for which a fancy invitation has been received - and she's wearing raggy jeans and a sweatshirt. The mother cautiously asks, "Are you sure those clothes are dressy enough for this party?" The daughter explodes, "You still think we're living in the 50's, don't you? You think the boys are wearing ties and have their hair slicked down with Brylcreem, don't you? You don't know *anything* about how my friends dress. Stop trying to make me just like you. This is what *everyone* wears." The mother defers to her daughter's judgment.

Four hours later her daughter is returned home, looking terrible. Though her daughter's face has already answered the question, the mother asks, cautiously, "How was the party?" Upon hearing her mother's voice, the daughter again explodes with angry sarcasm: "Thanks a *lot!* You think it's just fine to leave me *alone*. Do you have *any* idea how humiliated I felt? Are you my mother, 'cause I thought mothers are supposed to *protect* their daughters from embarrassment. I guess that's just a modern idea - not something my 50's mother would know about. Do you know what's like to be dressed differently from everyone else. I hid in the girl's bathroom during the whole party. Does that sound like a good time, Mom?"
Moral: This, too, will pass.

I invite suggestions for subjects you'd like to see discussed in this column: mail4bobh@gmail.com, or send a note (Attn: Bob Herman) through *The Prairie Advocate*. I also enjoy opportunities to meet personally with any group interested in discussing family or child-rearing topics (at no fee).



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