
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Do you feel dumber than a fifth grader when your child asks for help with homework? Well, it's that time again. It's hard to believe that kids are already going back to school. Remember when kids went back to school in "the fall" after Labor Day? Well, when some of us were young, we started school in the fall, after Labor Day – it symbolized a new beginning: pools were closed, camp was over, it was back to school and back to business for the kids, meaning that the adults had an attitude adjustment as well. Summer is always just a little laid back. Fall is when we take life more seriously.

As parents, we are our children's role models, like it or not. It's our job to teach our kids, and to let them know when they are not dressed appropriately, exhibit poor manners, or use inappropriate language. Many of us in OJJ are role models for our youth – surrogate parents, so to speak. Certainly our PPOs and frontline facility staff function as parental figures in many ways. When we teach our kids - and "our kids" – what is appropriate behavior and dress for certain occasions (school, church, court appearances, visits to grandparents, etc.), we are also teaching them life lessons. They will grow up knowing how to dress, and behave, in the workplace and in the adult world. Being a parent/parental figure is a big responsibility, and one of the best ways to teach is by doing, *modeling the way* we expect kids to behave and dress.

One of the most difficult things to do, whether it's with a child, a co-worker or a friend, is to find the right way, and the right time, and the right place, to say what is on your mind, what you think they need to know, that might be embarrassing or hurtful at the time, but really is for their betterment. It's sort of like having lunch with someone who gets a piece of broccoli stuck in their teeth and no one gently nudges them to look in the mirror. Then they go off to a big meeting with the broccoli still in the teeth, which really is off-putting to everyone in the meeting, but still, no one says anything. That person is going to be really embarrassed when they get home and look in the mirror. Wouldn't it have been more kind for someone to have let them know, in a kind way?

A friend of mine relates that a much-older friend of hers took her aside one day and very gently explained that "it's not what you say, it's how you say it." It was a life-changing experience, after my friend picked herself up from the shock of hearing the heartfelt, concerned constructive criticism.

Telling someone that they "have a piece of broccoli stuck in their teeth" is a way to treat people the way you want to be treated. It could be something simple, like their appearance, or something sensitive, but if you find the right moment and way to express concern, they will appreciate the feedback. If you care about helping the person to succeed, you will find the right way.

If you are getting ready to send kids to school, have a great weekend. Have a great weekend anyway – and thanks for all you do to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc"

Dr. Mary Livers

Mary L. Livers, MSW, PH.D, Deputy Secretary

Office of Juvenile Justice • PO Box 66458 • Baton Rouge, LA 70896 • e: Whatsupdoc?OJJ@la.gov • www.oyd.louisiana.gov