

## TOUGHLOVE HELPS PARENTS TAKE A STAND ON CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS

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Months of facing a teen-age daughter with a drug problem taught Pat Nida a lot about family togetherness. And it's not always the glue that binds, she'll tell you.

"It got to the point where she didn't want to be around me, but I wanted it," Nida said. "I saw us falling apart. We still spent time together, but what good did it do?"

Today, Nida's daughter is drug-free and mother and daughter have a good relationship. Nida says she now understands what is meant by a slogan touted by Toughlove, the parents' support group she belongs to.

"The essence of family life is cooperation, not togetherness," it says.

Nida said members of the Toughlove group try to work toward solutions that yield a cooperative existence, not just time together.

And whether the latest battle is being fought over truancy or drugs - or both - Toughlove says parents of children with behavioral problems need to take a stand.

That's where the "tough" comes in, Nida said. It doesn't necessarily refer to being a harsh disciplinarian.

"It's about giving them (the parents) the support to say, 'I will not tolerate that action,'" Nida said. "They're able to say it and mean it. They're able to take a stand on their beliefs."

The Grandview chapter of Toughlove, which is a national organization, meets at 7 p.m. Sundays at Grandview Heights City Hall, 1016 Grandview Ave.

Nida, who lives on the West Side, said the group is looking for more members. Problems range from verbal abuse to alcoholism, and the child need not be a teen for parents to come for help.

"It's about getting back to your basic parenting," she said. "Over the years, maybe you've slacked off, and when a crisis arises, you don't want to deal with it.

"The group helps the parent get back on the track and look at the situation more objectively. It's hard, and that's the purpose of having other parents in the group."

**Nida joined the group after her daughter was recovering. Her daughter spent several months attending an intensive program called Kids Helping Kids in Cincinnati.**

"She's out, she's better and now I'm giving back," Nida said. Toughlove does not have a group on the West Side where she lives.

Nida also said the group does not promote any particular form of discipline. "That depends on the parent," she said. "But depending on how old the child is, some parents finally say, if you cannot abide by the rules, you can leave."

What the group often does is encourage parents to make use of other forms of support, such as counseling groups or their church.

"We are not a counseling group, and we don't profess to be," she said.

But parents often receive some constructive criticism about their own behavior, she added.

Nida said a drop in attendance is a problem plaguing Toughlove groups nationwide.

Part of the problem may be the group's perceived identity - tough - but more likely, parents simply are not aware help is out there, she believes.

For information about Toughlove chapters, call Bobbie Richardson at 486-7395.

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