

Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County
2107 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 258-3450
www.swfjac.org

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The JAC Perspective



The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County ... assisting youth and their families to seek the treatment and programs they need to lead productive, crime free lives.

Free drug testing kits are available at the JAC 24 hours a day for parents to use with their youth.

Law enforcement should call ahead to

**258-3461
or 258-3471**

when bringing an arrested youth to the JAC or to confirm that a youth is eligible for a civil citation.



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

The Gift in Saying "No"

We are all wired to want things. That's not bad, but sometimes both adults and children can lose clarity over the differences between "wants" and "needs." Youth are exposed to many messages every day - through television, movies, advertising, and friends at school - that may lead them to believe that everyone else is acquiring something and they've got to have it also to be "cool." Kids can put a lot of pressure on parents to get them what they want. It is normal for parents to want to give things to their children and an occasional indulgence is usually not problematic. But sometimes



parents can lose clarity about what their children really need which may lead them to giving their children more than they need and sometimes more than they can afford. Kids need adults in

their lives to help them sort out the differences between needs and wants so adults should be clear about these themselves.

"Needs" are necessary for our survival, health, and emotional wellbeing.

To live a fairly decent life one needs a certain amount of food, water, shelter, clothing, energy, love, safety, and a
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No Thrill in Locked Cars

The crime does not require a mastermind. Compared to most felonies it is a fairly easy crime. While the victims might describe the crime as a "break-in," usually the perpetrator does not break or force anything. Their victims make it easy for them because they leave their vehicles unlocked. "Car hopping" is a term that refers to someone wandering through a neighborhood looking for vehicles parked in driveways and checking for unlocked doors. When they find a door unlocked they grab whatever is inside and quickly move on. While they are mostly looking for cash, they'll grab other items left out in the open including wallets, purses, GPS units, cell phones, and laptop computers. Car hopping burglaries tend to be committed by juveniles and young adults. Car hoppers tend to go in pairs



or as a group rather than alone. They tend to go late at night or in the early morning hours, sometimes sneaking out without their parent's knowledge. While some youth go car hopping for the money they find or can get by selling the items they steal, for some it is like a game. They do it for the thrill of it. Due

to the nature of the crime - rapidly targeting as many vehicles as they can - when a youth is caught they can easily rack up multiple felony charges from a single night of car hopping. Car hopping is a crime of opportunity. If a car is locked a youth will usually move on, preferring to keep quiet rather than smashing car windows and drawing attention. Part

of the thrill of car hopping is that most of the time the youth will eventually find a vehicle that is unlocked. Car hopping is a crime that residents can easily help to prevent by locking the vehicles parked in their driveways.

The Gift in Saying “No” (cont.)

sense of purpose. Beyond that, most other things are mostly optional and are “wants.” Sometimes our conditioned “wants” can get confused with “needs,” as in, “I need the newest toy or gadget,” “I need that promotion,” “I need her approval,” or “I need him to agree with me.” A lot of emotional suffering can be avoided by learning to sort out what are our true needs and not just First World problems of the “worried well.”



The following youth attitudes are signs that a youth may be struggling with an attitude of entitlement.

- “I want it now and I expect you to get it for me.”
- “I don’t have to work for what I want.”
- “I don’t have to clean up after myself.”
- “I want it because everyone else has it.”

There is another attitude of entitlement that has less to do with kids always getting what they want without any effort on their part but has more to do with youth not being expected to take responsibility for their own actions:

- “I expect you to fix all of my problems.”

It is natural for parents to want to protect their children and make things easy for them, but there is a fine line between helping and aiding bad behavior. When kids are always protected from their own failures they learn to be irresponsible. By allowing children to experience the natural consequences of their actions for smaller things while they are still young, parents can help their children to avoid the bigger consequences for making bad choices when they become adults.

Parents’ Attitudes Can Contribute to a Youth’s Attitude of Entitlement

Sometimes parents’ own issues and attitudes can contribute to a youth’s struggle with entitlement: “I always give him what he wants because...”

- “I want him to have the life I never had.”
 - “I’m afraid to say ‘no’ because of the threat of an embarrassing temper tantrum in the store (when he is young) or his sulking, anger, or blaming (when he is older).”
 - “I’m afraid to say ‘no’ because I don’t want him to think that I don’t love him.”
 - “I want him to like me. I don’t want him to hate me.”
 - “I want him to be my friend.”
 - “I want him to fit in with his peers. I’m afraid he’ll be different.”
 - “I want him to impress others (so I feel better about myself).”
 - “I want to make up for not spending time with him.”
- “I don’t insist he take responsibility because”...
- “It saves time by me doing the chores that he could be learning to do.”
 - “It is easier to give in and just do it myself.”
 - “I want to protect him from failure, frustration, and/or other’s criticism.”
 - “I want to protect him from the consequences of his own actions.”

Developing the ability to delay gratification is strongly correlated with academic, social, and emotional success.

When kids are given everything they want, without having to work for it, this can result in youth developing an attitude of entitlement. That is, the youth comes to believe that they are owed privileges in life without ever having to work for them. When given everything they want when they want it, kids are deprived of the gift of learning delay of gratification, responsibility, a sense of accomplishment, and gratitude for what they have. Without having the opportunity to learn how to delay gratification, the principal of having to work for things that they want, and that there are consequences and rewards for our behavior and choices, youth will be unprepared for the “real world” and lack the skills needed to become successful adults.

Teach kids that there is a clear relationship between what we do and what we get.