Neutralizing the Adolescent's 5 Aces

Adapted from Scott Sells book, Treating the Tough Adolescent

When parents try to restore their authority, the creative, intelligent, and difficult adolescent will often use one of the five aces:

- Running away
- Truancy / poor school performance
- Disrespect
- Threats or acts of violence
- Suicidal threats or behaviors

These "aces" cause traditional methods to fail and lead to a high relapse rate.

Strategies

Atom bomb interventions:

1. Selling, pawning, or removing a teen's prized material possessions to your work, office, neighbors house or trunk of the car can work, (e.g. stereo equipment, CD's, telephone) if the adolescent runs away. First a warning, then 1-2 days, then not more than a week, and not everything the teen owns. If loss of possessions is too long they lose hope and stop trying. If they take something of yours in retaliation, their items are immediately sold. (Personal items are frequently sold to pay personal debt.)
2. Instituting a 24-hour watch, or having a parent, neighbor, or security guard accompany the teen everywhere he or she goes until the risk of running away has subsided: being in school, sitting in class, and escorting the teen between classes. This is much cheaper than hospitalization.
3. Removing all teen's clothes except for what the parents choose for the teen to wear. Running away becomes much more difficult with only a few items of clothing.

Regular interventions:

1. The bathroom time out
2. Gandhi strategy - Peaceful resistance to control
3. Poisoning the adolescent's safe house
4. Using positive reinforcers
5. Trust building when possible
6. Predicting relapse
7. Working with school system (school counselors)
8. Attending school with the teen
9. Have teen come to work with parent
10. Grounding 1:1 ratio
11. Home schooling