

Mom, Just Say No

By Paula Howard

"Fourth of July? Um, I don't know. Let me ask."

My daughter covered the phone receiver and looked at me with pleading eyes. "My friend wants to know if I can go on a picnic and watch fireworks with her."

Since July Fourth is not a big holiday in our family, I saw no reason to deny her. I smiled, "Sure. No problem."

Her brow furrowed. "That means I won't be able to spend the day with you."

"I know. It's okay." My heart swelled with satisfaction. I managed to cut an apron string and allow my daughter the freedom to spend a holiday with a friend. What a wonderful mother!

A look of pure aggravation crossed her face. Apparently, she had to spell it out for me. "Mom, just say no."

My heart deflated. "No," I intoned.

She removed her hand from the receiver. "I'm sorry, but my Mom said no." She hung up the phone, her expression returned to that of a normal, spaced-out, pubescent pre-teen, and bounced from the room.

I remained, wondering what just happened. My child, who had lived with me for many years and who never had a problem telling me "no," felt guilty turning down an invitation from a girl she's known for a few months.

This scenario repeated itself many times before I finally realized the reason behind the charade. At this point in her young life, her hold on friends is tenuous; their relationships immature and fleeting. Through



trial and error, she's still learning how to sort out true friendships from mere acquaintances.

In the meantime, she needs a scapegoat. That's where I come in. But, as she gains confidence in herself, my job diminishes.

I'm sure that, before long, she won't need my permission to say "no". Until then, whenever my daughter covers the receiver and looks at me with pleading eyes, I'll just say "no".

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: Paula Howard is a self-syndicated columnist and freelance writer. She lives in Hurst, Texas with her husband and two children.



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