

**Mike, Melissa, Mia, and Matt Dempsey**

In many respects Mike, Melissa, Mia, and Matt Dempsey are a typical family. Mike is an executive at a local manufacturing company that subcontracts to make parts for cars, busses, and trucks. Melissa is a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mia is sixteen, and Matt is seventeen. Matt will be graduating from high school this spring. Matt's grades have fallen off considerably in his senior year for a number of reasons. Matt has never really liked high school. The one thing that motivated him to work hard and keep his grades up was football. He loved football. But in the last game of his junior year he tore his left knee up badly and was unable to play at all in his senior year. He hoped to play college football at an NCAA division two college, or possibly an NAIA college, but even that looks doubtful now. And to complicate things, Matt thinks he has found the woman of his dreams and has fallen in love. His girlfriend, Shelly, graduated from high school last year and now works full time at a mall department store and has no plans to go to college. Mike and Melissa are both concerned about Matt. If he continues at the present rate, his grades will only be good enough to get into the local community college. And Mike and Melissa definitely do not like Shelly. They see her as a bad influence on Matt. Their perspective is that she has no motivation to get ahead in life. They know she has a least one arrest (charges were later dismissed) for drug possession and was cited at least once for MIP. Both Mike and Melissa expect a lot from Matt and think he can do much more in life without Shelly. They would very much like to get Shelly out of Matt's life. But of course, Matt has other ideas.

This conversation occurred between Matt and Melissa. Melissa is cleaning the refrigerator and Matt is in the next room watching TV.

**Matt:** Hey mom, Shelly is coming over in a little bit. She says I need to redecorate my room and she's going to give me some ideas about how to do it. She wants to be an interior decorator you know.

**Melissa:** (softly) Honey, the only thing she wants to be is a druggie.

**Matt:** What, what'd you say?

**Melissa:** (Louder) Nothing, I said your dad and I thought maybe we would all go out to dinner tonight, just the four of us. Maybe we could go to Woody's. You like Woody's.

**Matt:** I'm not going anywhere with Mia, she's a pig with a pizza-face.

**Melissa:** (shouts) Stop that right now. I told you to never, ever talk like that about your sister. I won't have it. Do you understand?

**Matt:** (softly) I understand that you are an idiot.

**Melissa:** (Loudly) What, I can't hear you, the TV is too loud. Do you understand?

**Matt:** Yes, I understand, but I want to do something with Shell tonight. I think we might paint my room.

**Melissa:** (Firmly) You are *not* painting your room. Your dad would have a cow; we just had the whole interior painted last year. Forget painting.

**Matt:** But mom...

**Melissa:** (Firmly): ***NO!!***

**Matt:** OK, me and Shell will do something else then.

**Melissa:** (Firmly): Matt, we are all going to dinner tonight

**Matt:** Shelly is already planning on coming over tonight, can she go too?

**Melissa:** Absolutely not. Matt, honey, that girl is just...she's just not right for you. You can do better than that.

**Matt:** (Raises his voice) You and dad are so unfair! I'm 17 and I still have a curfew, can't talk on the cell and drive at the same time, can't have more than one other person under age 20 in the car when I'm driving. I can't even pick my own girlfriend. And so on, rules, rules, rules, I get sick

of it. And then there's grades, oh yes, get those grades up. (Shouts) I HATE IT HERE. I can't wait until I move out!!

Melissa: (Shouts) WE CAN'T WAIT EITHER!! (mumbles to herself) I can't believe I just said that.

Matt then storms out of the house and slams the door extra hard on the way out. Shortly after this happened Mike arrived home from work. As soon as he walked in he could see Melissa's watery eyes.

Mike: What's the matter hon?

Melissa: I just had another fight with Matt.

Mike: What was it about this time?

Melissa: Oh, he wants that girl of his to come over and paint his room and I told him no and then he stomped out.

Mike: Yeah, I saw him on my way home. He made a rolling stop at the 4-way stop there at Sorensen and Webster. I knew something was up.

Melissa: I feel so bad, could you call him on his cell and see what you can do.

Mike: I shouldn't, we tell him not talk on his cell when driving, but I will.

Mike calls Matt on his cell and Matt answers:

Matt: (answers his cell phone) Hi dad.

Mike: How'd you know it was me?

Matt: Mom wouldn't call.

Mike: Hey where are you, could you come back home so we could talk?

Matt: I'm just up here at BP filling my tank. I'll be home shortly.

Mike: OK, thanks, and remember to come to a complete stop at stop signs.

Matt: OK dad.

Matt arrives at home and he and his father sit down on the sofa to talk.

Mike: Hey what happened between you and your mom?

Matt: Dad, she treats like me crap.

Mike: Don't talk like that, she is your mother and you will respect her.

Matt: But she does dad.

Mike: OK, just tell me what happened.

Matt: She is so unfair dad...

Mike: No, Matt, I don't want an editorial, just tell me what happened.

Matt: I told her that Shelly was coming over and that we were going to redecorate my room and then she says no, we are all going to go out to dinner and she starts putting down Shelly again.

Mike: Why don't you go apologize to your mom and I bet she will do the same.

Matt: But what about tonight? Can Shelly go to dinner with us?

Mike: Why don't you let me talk to your mom about that?

Mike talks to Melissa about plans for the evening:

Melissa: How'd the talk with Matt go?

Mike: OK I guess. How 'bout if just you and I and Mia go for dinner.

Melissa: Mia won't want to go if Matt doesn't

Mike: Well, than just order some pizza.

Melissa: OK

Mike: You're disappointed?

Melissa: Yes, and I don't see why our entire life has to be organized around Matt. He is still a member of the family and may have to do things he would rather not.

Mike: True, but he's also at that age where he wants some independence. Anyway, I told him to apologize and told him you would do the same.

Melissa: uh huh.

The next day, Matt stops by home after school to change his clothes before he goes to work.

Matt: Hi mom, I'm sorry about yesterday.

Melissa: I am too. We wouldn't have these kinds of arguments if you would listen to me and your father.

Matt: I do listen.

Melissa: Not about Shelly you don't.

Matt: (said firmly) Mom, don't start that again.

Melissa: But you have so much potential. What in the world can she do for you?

Matt: (raises voice) Mom, stop it, I mean it.

Melissa: Matt, let's not fight again, please, just listen. We love you so much, and I'm sure Shelly is a nice girl, but Matt honey, she has no ambition in life. Her mother works at the post office and that's probably what she will end up doing...

Matt: Mom, you don't even know her!!

Melissa: But I know her type and I know...

Matt: (interrupts) What do you mean you know her type?

Melissa: You know what I mean....

Matt: (Shouts) DANG IT MOM!...(pauses as if he wants to say something, and then stomps out of the house and slams the door on the way out).

The next day Mike and Melissa had this conversation:

Mike: You know hun, I wish you and Matt could find some better way to work out your differences.

Melissa: The problem is that he just won't listen.

Mike: No, the problem is that you won't loosen the reins just a little.

Melissa: What does that mean?

Mike: He's at that stage in life where he's ready....

Melissa: (interrupts Mike)...no, no, no, I don't want to hear that again, right now he needs tighter, not looser reins, and YOU won't reign him at all, not even a little.

(Mia, Matt's 16 year-old sister walks in the room)

Mia: Tell dad what I found in Matt's room.

Mike: Mia, you stay out of this.

Melissa: Yeah, let me tell you, Mia went in to Matt's room looking for, what was it, something you needed for your computer and what did she find...PORNOGRAPHY on his computer. It was awful!!

Mia: You should take away his computer.

Mike: I said, stay out of this, Mia.

Melissa: No, she's right. I won't tolerate that behavior in this house. We should take away his computer.

Mike: OK, we'll finish this conversation later.

Melissa: No, let's discuss this now. Mia said that we could get some software to put on his computer that will track the websites that he views. I think we should do that. I think that we need to control what he does with that computer.

Mike: Mia, would you please leave for a minute while your mom and I have this conversation?