

Have you ever met a person who passes judgment on something based on hearsay rather than their own experiences? I have to admit that I have experienced this many times during my career in social work. I am not trying to say that only people with mental health issues make these kinds of rash decisions or opinions; however it is quite common amongst this population. They convince themselves that something is bad so that they do not have to take the risk of trying something new. It is quite a challenge to get them to change their opinions.

I found myself doing a similar thing with my son. He is in his third year of college. He announced that he want to go on a Florida spring break. My initial response was absolutely not. I have heard stories and have seen pictures of the parties, drinking nudity and drug use that occurs during the spring breaks. I told him that this was only asking to get into trouble and that he did not want to get caught doing some illegal activity that would block him from going on to law school or from getting a good job. I heard Florida spring break and I reacted without letting him finish about what he wanted to do. He had brought this up on the telephone. He said we could discuss this more when he came home for the weekend. I told my husband that our son wanted to go on a Florida spring break and that I was totally against it. I wanted to want him in advance so that we would both be giving our son the same message when he came home for the weekend. My husband asked me several questions regarding what part of Florida he wanted to go to and who he was going with and where they would be staying. As my husband asked these questions I realized that I had not given our son a chance to fill in any details. I heard the words spring break and automatically jumped to conclusions and through out an opinion based on media coverage alone. I in fact was doing the same thing that I work with clients on not doing. My husband suggested that we hear what our son had to say about the arrangements and then make a decision.

When our son arrived home I immediately apologized for cutting him off and jumping to conclusions. I know that he is a responsible kid and he does have firm goals for his future. He shared that he wanted to go to a friend's family condominium for the week. The friend and his parents would be there. This sounded like a great opportunity for him to relax and to have some fun. I cannot believe how quick I was to react without having detailed information.