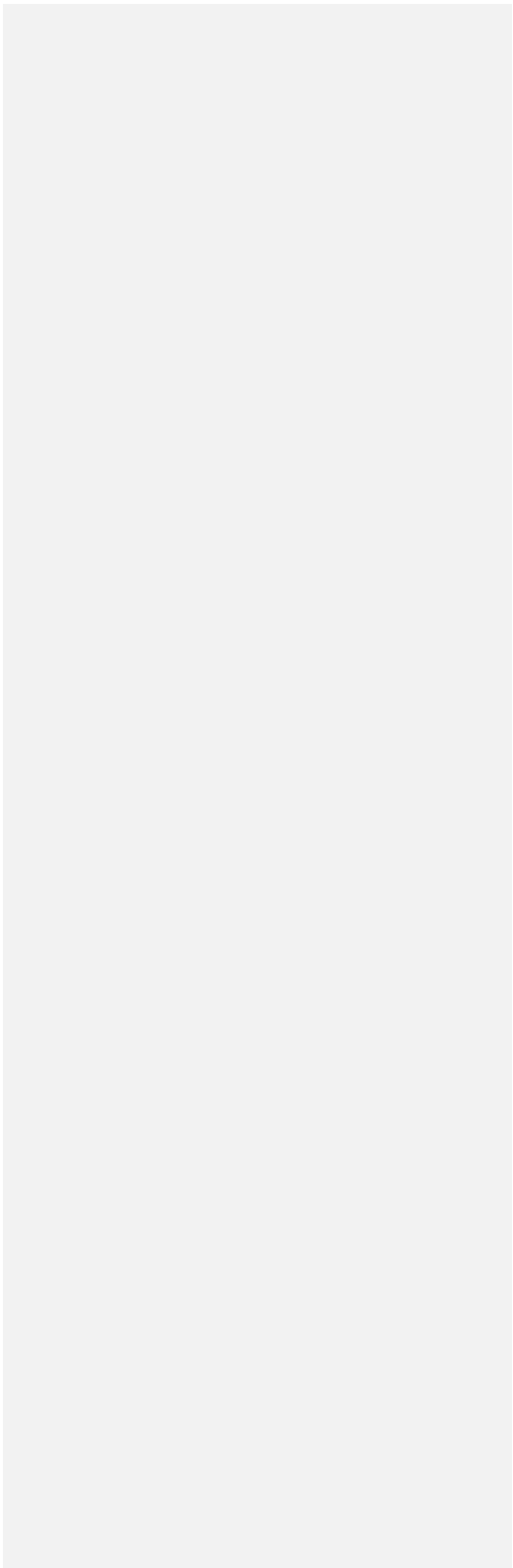


A Labor of Love  
Student Name  
University Name



## A Labor of Love

As parents of teenagers, it is important to understand how gangs draw in new members but more important that we work to prevent our teens from going down that path. Gangs gain new members by appealing to the sense of belonging and “family” members feel when part of one. Often members are recruited at a young age—some as young as 12 or 13 years of age. When our youth feel that they are not part of a family structure, or they have no sense of belonging, they may look outside the home for support. The search for that missing love and sense of belonging can sometimes be found by joining a gang. As parents, we can prevent gang activity by providing structure and support, as well as unconditional love to our teens.

When my kids were teenagers, I almost lost them. The sweet, kind, loving kids I knew were suddenly different. They suddenly began to come home late after curfew, were disrespectful at best, and their grades dropped. They seemed distant and didn’t seem to want to spend time with me. Now, I have to admit that I was a busy father, busy working, working too much, and I know I began to spend less time with them. As a worried parent, though, I knew I had to do something. We live in an area known for problems with gangs, and even my kids, it turns out, could be drawn to the supposed glamour and sense of belonging and acceptance that a gang can provide. If you are like me, though, you have to ask yourself whether you are spending enough time with them and providing your kids with the support and acceptance they still crave from you but that, as teenagers, they may be too proud to admit to needing and wanting.

How do we get a child back on the right path? A big appeal for joining a gang is a sense of belonging. We must make sure our teens derive their sense of belonging from their family unit, and not from a gang. So, I sat my kids down and we talked. I asked them what was going on and asked them to tell me if they needed to tell me anything. They hesitated at first, but

**Commented [JV1]:** Notice that the writing is personal and informal, through the use of first and second person and personal examples, but that this is appropriate to the writing situation. The writer’s blog is appealing to other parents and as such, the writer needs to connect with the audience and write in an appropriately informal and personal way.

**Commented [JV2]:** The writer here establishes a main point, suggesting to the audience that they can do something to help their kids, just as he did.

**Commented [JV3]:** By sharing his personal experience, the writer establishes authority about the topic. He has experience with the issue and hopes the audience learns from it.

**Commented [JV4]:** Notice the details the writer uses to show exactly what he did with his kids to help solve the problem.

eventually, because I made it clear I loved them and wanted to be a part of their lives, they talked to me. I began spending more time with them. It wasn't easy, but I realized I could spend more time with my kids and less time doing the things I liked doing on my own, in my free time. I enrolled them in a local softball league and I even volunteered to be the team father and help with coaching. I got involved in their lives, showed them by my actions how much I cared and loved them, and we started growing closer again. Their grades improved, they seemed happier, and they started listening to the family rules again. They no longer stayed out late, doing who knows what with who knows who.

If your kids feel support and belonging and have structure at home, **gangs** will have no power to tempt them. Imagine living in a world free of gang violence. But more importantly, know that you can do something as a parent to make a difference. I had to first make a difference in my actions, make my kids a more important part of my life, and literally sit down and talk with them. Try it. You may just see the difference it makes, not only in their lives but your own!

**Commented [JV5]:** Notice how the concluding paragraph sums up the writer's point and connects back to the audience, motivating them to also make a difference in their children's lives.