

449 06/02/08 How good rhetorical skills can help your teen

Briefly, good rhetoric involves several skills. *Inventio* is putting together a logical argument and gathering the supporting evidence. *Dispositio* is the skill of organizing the information in the way best to persuade another person. Finally, *elocutio* is using words, metaphors, figures of speech and other language forms in the way that most clearly expresses the truth.

Aside from learning some impressive Latin words, what does all that have to do with steering your child through adolescence? A teen needs to know how to speak well in several instances:

- When persuading peers to do something good or refrain from doing something bad,
- When presenting a case to a parent or other adult,
- When needing to defend oneself from verbal attacks and
- When defending a belief (such as his Christian faith) to peers or adults.

Suppose that your teen is working on a group research project. The other members are arguing that they could save time by plagiarizing some of the material, but your daughter does not want to cheat.

Begin by helping her choose a logical argument. It might be that there will be dire consequences if they are caught. Or, perhaps the argument might be that they will need to know how to do their own research when they go to college. Maybe she might argue that being in the advanced class comes with a degree of trust between students and teacher, and she does not want to destroy that trust.

Next, help her gather facts. She may find that cheating in college is so common that they could survive without research skills. She may also find, upon investigation, that there is already a lack of trust between her teacher and the class members. Staying honest may not affect their relationship. Perhaps, it is only the fear of consequences that could change the minds of her group members.

Your daughter is using *inventio*, the skill of putting together a logical argument and gathering the evidence. And the best part is that the two of you are working together toward the same goal.

Next week, we will continue with this same scenario.