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**Eyes Wide Shut**  
By Andrew Malekoff

As we come to the end of another motion picture awards season, an independent and relatively unknown film that stands out for me is *Wendy and Lucy*. In this movie filmgoers are introduced to Wendy, a young woman that is hanging by a thread and doing her best with little support and money to survive day-to-day and maintain her dignity. Along the way she loses her dog Lucy, the only stable and loving relationship in her life. Ultimately, she is faced with making a heartbreaking decision that their mutual welfare depends upon.

As Wendy's car that also serves as her bed breaks down and her resources dwindle, she collects cans and bottles and shoplifts dog food. She encounters a group of homeless people making a fire, a self-righteous store clerk, a smug auto mechanic, a sympathetic security guard, and a psychotic drifter, among others. We see each of them from the unique perspective of a young woman alone and on the verge of homeless destitution.

Wendy offers us a lens through which we can see such a transformation evolve. Most homeless people, unless born into this state, were something and somewhere else first. Wendy is such a person.

Although this low budget, spare film is a work of fiction it reminds me that we cannot afford to overlook the impact - the anxieties and fears and concrete consequences - that the downturn of the economy has on today's teens and young adults. Parents need to be open, direct and engaged with their teenaged children.

According to Allen Cardoza, founder of West Shield Adolescent Services in Newport Beach, California, there are four significant ways parents can help teens survive and thrive during an economic downturn:

1. Speak immediately and honestly about the family financial and employment situation. Provide reassurance that the economic situation is not their fault. You cannot predict when it will end, only that as a family you will get through it.
2. Be firm about spending changes that will need to be made. Allow reductions across the board. Prioritize what is needed most by whom.
3. Assist your teenager with income producing ideas such as a dog walking service, grocery delivery, mowing lawns, etc. Allow your teenagers to contribute a percentage to the household budget and keep a portion for their own "extras."
4. Budget a fun family activity at regular intervals to keep everyone connected and motivated.

*Wendy and Lucy* is a film that offers a window on an extreme situation in which a young woman barely out of her teens demonstrates resilience in her quest to overcome the significant risks she faces. Teenagers today, despite what we might perceive as apathy,

have strong feelings about what is happening in our world and in their families. We need to do our best to keep them informed and engaged without imposing guilt or blame.

*Wendy and Lucy* pleads with us to do what we must all do with all teens that we care about at home and in our communities during these difficult times - not to close our eyes or turn our backs on them.