



*...those wonderful, smiling families
of bright-faced children, radiant
mothers, and untiring fathers...*

3

Keep Love Alive

“To love, and to be loved, is the greatest happiness of existence.” —Sydney Smith

There they are again . . . those wonderful, smiling families of bright- faced children, radiant mothers, and untiring fathers. . . those scenes of unflinching joy — at least that’s what the advertisements for breakfast cereals show us. If only life could be like that! But have you ever tried to get the children off to school?

As members of society today, we live in many kinds of situations. Some of us are single parents, some of us live alone. A good many of us are married (happily or unhappily!). Quite a few of us, as the statistics show, are undergoing the painful experience of divorce. And all of us are coping with our particular circumstances with varying degrees of success.

The truth is that for many people in our world, relationships are often troubled and family living is frequently a disheartening experience. Parents feel disappointed by their children and children by their parents. Husbands and wives react to pressures in ways that hurt their marriage. Everyone is affected by the stresses and strains of modern life.

Yet we all want satisfying relationships. How can we have them and how can we make them work? They don’t happen by

chance. On the contrary, they're the direct result of the way we view and treat others. In this chapter, we'll look at some basic guidelines that can lead us to real success in this important area of our lives.

TOPICS

Will Families Exist in the Future?
 Help! I'm Out of Tranquillizers!
 What Is this Thing Called Love?
 A Survival Guide for Parents
 The Essential Bond

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to:
 —Improve your home life.
 —Relate successfully to your children.
 —Build satisfying friendships.

WILL FAMILIES EXIST IN THE FUTURE?

Focal Point 1. *Consider the value of the family in society.*

Going Bigger?

In recent times, there have been efforts to modify the role of the family. Lenin envisioned state-run nurseries for Russian children where they would be cared for day and night. These would be the “germ cells” of the new Communist society. However, the nurseries were discontinued after only a brief existence.

The agricultural *kibbutz* of the modern state of Israel offers an alternative type of household. Children are raised within the community by trained nurses and teachers. Meanwhile, the parents work together in farming the land. Many observers think that the *kibbutz* is actually a type of extended family, since families spend time together and the basic family unit remains intact. Life on the *kibbutz* appeals to some. There is a danger, however, that it prepares people for *kibbutz* living, but not for life in an industrialized, urban setting.

In some Western societies, such as the United States, people have experimented with various types of communal living. Groups have been formed by individuals who share a certain political, religious, or artistic philosophy. For the most part, these groups have been unstable and short-lived, seldom lasting more than one generation.

Going Smaller?

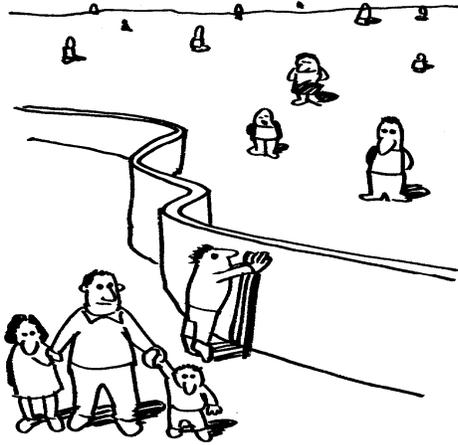
But these larger family-type groups are actually exceptions to the overall picture. For many people, the exact opposite is taking place. High rates of divorce have fragmented the family. Instead of both parents and their children living together, children live with either their mother or their father. The parent who has left the family may live alone. And the fragmentation doesn't stop there. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles live far away, some of them alone as well.

Merging Temporarily?

Then there is another trend — the rise of the “blended” family. Many divorced people remarry. As a result, there may be “his” children, “her” children, and perhaps “their children” all living together. People who live in these kinds of families can be torn by conflicting loyalties and demands which are almost impossible to meet. These conflicts can make families very unstable, like the communes we described earlier.

Controlled by the State?

Some think the family will change drastically as we enter the 21st century. They say that the state or public authority will assume more control over the family. Unfit people will be barred from parenthood. Only one-third of the marriages will produce children, and these children will be raised in model homes by individuals who are trained and licensed as parents.



*Grandparents, aunts and uncles
live far away, some of them alone
as well.*



1 YOUR OPINION PLEASE!

Imagine that you are part of a TV talk show audience. The subject is the future of the family, and a panel of guests are discussing it. At one point, the host says that he wants an opinion from someone in the audience. He comes down the aisle toward your row, then stops and asks you this question: "Do you think that people will be living in families 100 years from now?" After a moment, you give your answer. He then says, "Why?" and points the microphone back at you. How would you support your opinion?

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But in spite of all the uncertainties and pressures, people's needs haven't really changed. Most of us still want the things a good family provides — a place we can call "home," a circle of intimacy where we feel loved and needed, a haven where we can be who we are and express our cherished dreams and hopes without fear. Why does it seem so hard to create such a place these days?

HELP! I'M OUT OF TRANQUILLIZERS!

Focal Point 2. *Identify the specific pressures on your family.*

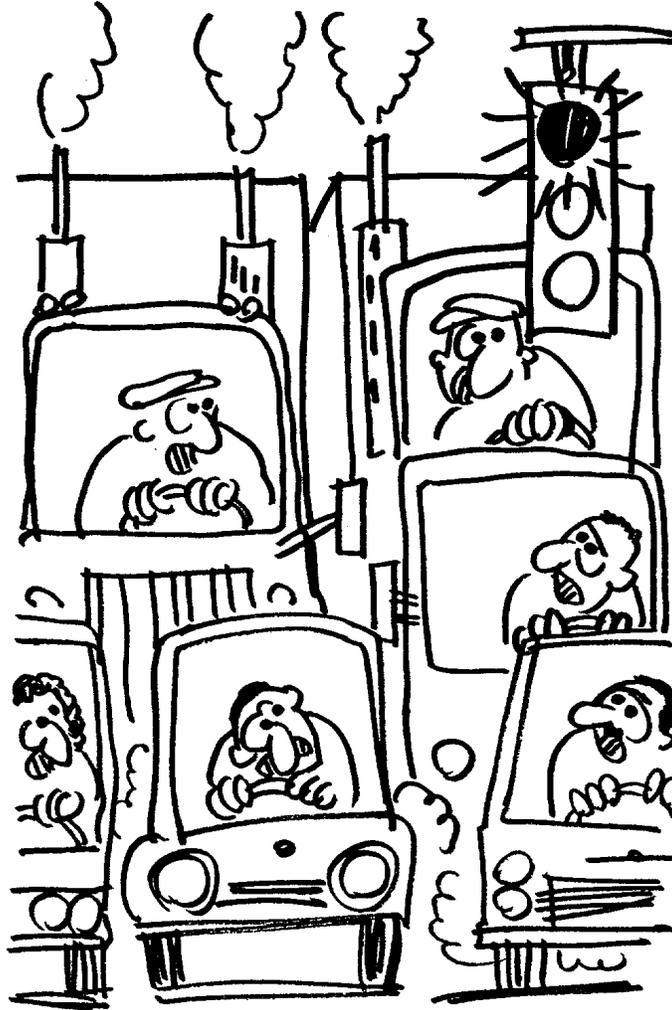
To begin with, many of us are trying very hard to keep up with our fast-moving society, and our personal lives are suffering as a result. One counsellor said that quite often his first task in helping his clients is just getting them to slow down.

Caution! Approaching Time Zero!

How fast are *you* going? Too fast to notice what is going on in your life? Perhaps you need to check your personal speedometer.

I honk my horn or flash my lights at the vehicle in front of me:

- a) within 4 seconds after the traffic light turns green. (2 points)
- b) as soon as the traffic light turns green. (3 points)
- c) when the opposing traffic light turns yellow. (5 points)
- d) in the car wash! (10 points)



*At time zero, all of life converges
to the vanishing point.*

At Time Zero, all of life converges to the vanishing point. The pauses disappear. Everything is *now*. Why wait any longer? You can have instant credit! You can take it home today! Your photos will be developed within minutes! Your cleaning will be

done in an hour! You can be divorced over the weekend! Here's the fast-breaking news story . . . the instant replay . . . the condensed version for busy people . . . the three, streamlined, easy steps . . . the latest look . . . the state-of-the-art design . . .

What do we do with all that time we "save"? Simple. We pack it full of more activities. Life becomes a mad rush to have it all and do it all. It's no secret that competition in the business world can be keen. Deadlines, appointments, meetings — all demand our attention. No matter if weeks have gone by since we have been with the family for more than a few moments snatched here and there between other commitments. They can wait.

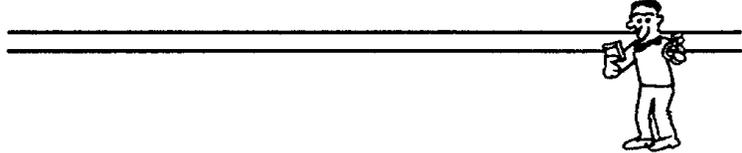
Or can they? In personal relationships, *there is no substitute for time*. The quick fix will not do. Token appearances at birthdays and anniversaries can't make up for months or years of neglect. If we expect to have relationships that are rewarding, we must give them the time and energy they require. None of us has more than twenty-four hours a day, though. We need to make certain trade-offs if we want certain results. That is, we cannot work overtime and weekends month after month and expect to have a good family life as well. After you have weighed all the factors involved, you may discover that you need to make some adjustments in your standard of living (in terms of materialistic goals) in order to improve the quality of your home life. But what will bring the most real happiness to you in the end? "Success" as society defines it, or the love of the people who are important to you?

Time is one of our most valuable resources. It speaks a strong language of acceptance — or rejection. Is so and-so "worth" my attention? If so, for how long? A whole afternoon just for my son? A weekend with my wife? How will that help me get ahead?

BOSS: OK, Smith, you've got five minutes.

SMITH: But it Will take longer than that! You gave Jones ten whole minutes. I timed it.

BOSS: Look, Smith, he's the third vice-president and you're just a lowly junior clerk. Now start talking. You should be glad you got five! Barnes only got three.



2 TIME FLOW ANALYSIS

What do *you* actually do with your time? Are you investing what you should in your important relationships?

Write in your responses. Be honest!

- a If I spent less time.....
I would have more time for
- b The one thing that would help the most and I could change is
.....
.....



Besides the time squeeze, what else makes it hard to have satisfying relationships with the people that matter to us? Modern families live under pressures and tensions that were unknown in the past. The home used to be the place where the family worked together to support itself, usually by fanning the land or making things to sell or trade. Few families do those things today.

Instead, most are dependent on outside employment and are subject to the ups and downs of an uncertain job market. Some have to move every few years to survive. Among executives competition is fierce and heads roll. Many struggle with huge debts. And in the workforce employees can be caught up in strikes which drastically reduce their income. Worst of all is the problem of long term unemployment.

To add to these kinds of economic pressures, there is confusion about how people should relate to each other. Does anybody know what the rules are anymore? Are parents supposed to be simply “friends” to their children? Does a wife have a right to get an abortion even if her husband opposes it? Does the marriage where each spouse is “free” to have other partners really provide a solution to marital unhappiness?

These are not easy questions to answer. And the advances in medical technology have made some human problems even harder to solve. Which is more important, the “quality” of life or the “sanctity” of life? Is euthanasia immoral? The traditional replies given by the Church and other authorities no longer satisfy many people. Today’s society often looks like a desert of shifting sand dunes blown about by the latest wind of public opinion.

Of course, not all families who have problems end up as divorce statistics. Some people try to compensate for an unsatisfying home life by turning to extra-marital affairs. Others try to escape it by burying themselves in their work. There are those who fill all their leisure time with endless activities like sports, travel, and hobbies. For some, alcohol and drugs is their way of dulling the pain of anxiety, neglect and rejection.



3 IS YOUR FAMILY UNDER PRESSURE?

Following are listed several life-events which can cause family stress. Mark each one that has happened in your family during the last year. (Note: any person who lives or has come to live in your home on a permanent basis should be considered a member of your family.)

- **a** Husband and wife have been divorced or have separated.
- **b** Husband or wife has remarried.

- **c** Husband has become unemployed.
 - **d** A family member has had serious problems related to alcohol or drug abuse.
 - **e** A family member has been added to the home.
 - **f** Unwise decisions and overspending have caused financial problems.
 - **g** Disagreements about family roles and relationships have increased markedly.
 - **h** A family member has left the home.
 - **i** Wife has either become employed or unemployed.
 - **j** The family has moved to another community.
-
-

Yet families have always had problems. They have had to face war, famine, poverty, natural disasters, racial prejudice and religious persecution. Some have emerged stronger than ever. And there are families who are strong today. What is their secret? How can husbands and wives and parents cope successfully with the pressures of modern living? Let's look at some guidelines that many have found to be helpful. The first ones are about keeping love alive in that very important relationship you have with the man or woman you live with.

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE?

Focal Point 3. *Discover ways of improving your marriage.*

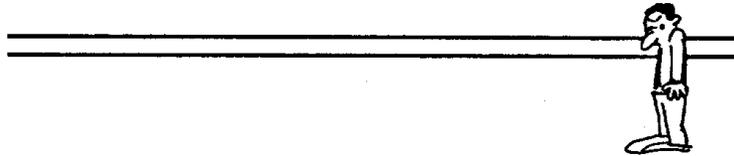
Getting married isn't too hard for most people. But staying married, *happily married* — that's certainly another story! Elizabeth Taylor, as everyone knows, has been married numerous times. None of her marriages has lasted longer than a few years. What is the problem? According to one psychologist, Elizabeth can't stay married for very long because she is unable to develop a genuine, in-depth relationship with the man she marries. What she craves is the first thrill of romance. Once the initial excitement fades, she becomes dissatisfied. She begins to feel that she is no longer the star of the show, and she starts looking for someone new to put her back in the spotlight.

Elizabeth Taylor isn't the only one who has a problem. Relationships between men and women are complex things, full of strong emotions and powerful cross-currents of needs and desires. They can bring exhilaration or depression, wonderful delight or bitter disappointment. They often require adjustments that aren't easy to make. In today's throwaway society, many people think divorce is the answer to their unhappiness. You love as long as love lasts, and when it is gone (whatever it is) you move on.

Yet marriage has never been more popular. The majority of divorced people seek remarriage. This is a revealing fact about modern life. It shows that what people want deep in their emotions is at odds with the independent chic or macho lifestyle that fills today's TV programmes, films, and glossy magazines. Most of us don't really want a series of casual affairs. We want an intimate relationship that is lasting and fulfilling. Is such a thing possible? Yes, it is. But it takes commitment and effort. There are three strategies that can help you make your marriage work, and keep working.

1. *Treat Your Marriage Partner with Full Respect and Dignity.*

You didn't marry a cook or someone to pay the bills! You married a human being. His or her point of view is as valid and worthwhile as your own; regard it as such. Never demean or belittle the person you married either in public or in private. Take his or her needs seriously. Appreciate his or her strengths. Instead of demanding your way or trying to maneuver your partner into doing what *you* want, learn how to negotiate as true equals. In your marriage, do you behave as a decent human being? Are basic courtesies a part of your relationship?



4 PARTNERSHIP PROBE

A person usually has two main kinds of family experiences in his life: those he had in the family he was

brought up in, and those he has in the relationships he forms as an adult. Here is a list stating qualities of personal interaction. Column A is for you to identify those which marked the relationship between your parents. Column B is for you to evaluate the way you relate to your spouse now. Add up the numbers to get your totals, then check the feedback to find an interpretation.

1 = almost never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes,
 4 = often, 5 = usually

Quality	A. Parent's Relationship					B. Your Relationship				
Respect	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Cooperation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Courtesy	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Generosity	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Trust	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Loyalty	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
TOTALS				

2. Commit yourself fully to your partnership.

As you can see, this strategy grows out of the first one. Equality means equal commitment by both parties. In practical terms, this commitment must include every level of your relationship. A genuine commitment will give your partnership the foundation it needs.



*A person usually has two main kinds
of family experiences in his life...*

Men and women who give themselves fully to their partnership put themselves in a very advantageous position. They can experience not only the passion of love but also its patience. Then can know not just the pleasure of fulfilled desire, but also the deep joys of companionship, loyalty, and sacrifice.

And those who are sexually faithful to each other pay and receive the highest tribute of all. By their behavior they say to their mate: "You are a person of such worth to me that I will give you my exclusive, undivided attention." In real life, this kind of love produces treasures that are like rare fruits in sheltered gardens. They are unavailable to nomads and wanderers who will not build the walls or cultivate the soil.

Commitment sets the stage for complete, positive sexual expression. We could say that sexual energy is like an explosive force. When it is linked with marriage, it is like the power that can thrust a huge spacecraft through the barrier of earth's gravity and send it speeding toward the stars. Outside of marriage, though, it is like a fire raging out of control, burning everything in its pathway. Outside of marriage, too, it degenerates into a series of fleeting, ultimately meaningless experiences that build nothing and go nowhere. The modern media have succeeded in devaluing the currency of sexual love until whole stacks of it amount to hardly anything at all. Don't become a victim of this kind of dehumanizing inflation.

3. Give top priority to your partnership.

This principle follows the previous two. A healthy partnership is based on mutual respect in a framework of commitment. When those are in place, a true consensus can be achieved, one which both partners can support and work toward. In practical terms, what this means is that you need to learn how to balance your goals as individuals with your goals as a couple.

Your marriage is a unique combination. Talk to each other about your ambitions and agree on the things you want to achieve as a team. These are the goals which should have priority. Yet within that context, each partner needs room to develop personal skills and potential. For example, some wives want to devote their full energy to helping their husbands. Others want to pursue separate career paths. A husband may need to make some changes so his wife can have a chance to move towards some of her aims. He should not assume that his goals are the only ones that matter.

As some have said, marriage should not be a 50-50 proposition, but a 100-100 proposition. If each of you is truly

concerned for the other, both of you will benefit. Do not be confined by narrow ideas of “woman’s work” and “man’s work.” Instead, give your particular strengths to each other and do whatever is needed to make your mutual enterprise a success. Above all, value your partnership — and your partner — more than the things you can buy or the self-centred goals you can win. If your private ambitions as a person are destroying your marriage, take a good, hard look at them and ask yourself if they are really worth what you think they are. If you insist on them, you may find that you have forfeited something of far greater value.



5 GOALS WORKSHEET

At this point, take some time to think about your goals as a couple and your goals as individuals. Evaluate them in view of the fact that your partnership needs to have priority. (Note: focus especially on goals for your relationship and your family but include some of your personal dreams and ambitions too.)

Goals	Evaluation
<i>Couple</i>	
Partnership/Relationship	☞ More attention? ☞ Less?
Family development	☞ More attention? ☞ Less?
Other?	Action needed:.....
.....
<i>Husband</i>	
Career	☞ More attention? ☞ Less?
Personal growth	☞ More attention? ☞ Less?
Other?	Action needed:.....
.....
<i>Wife</i>	
Career	☞ More attention? ☞ Less?

Personal growth	More attention? Less?
Other?.....	Action needed:



6 MARRIAGE QUIZ

a Circle the one or two words that best describe your marriage now:

Satisfying	Peaceful	Exciting
Fulfilling	Comfortable	Boring
Strained	Unhappy	Troubled
Painful	Failing	

b Think about the three strategies that have been mentioned. Mark the one you could follow that would improve your marriage the most.

- ... 1) Treating your partner with respect and dignity
 ... 2) Making a full commitment to your partnership
 ... 3) Giving top priority to your partnership

If you are unsure about these strategies, try them anyway. They work! And the important thing about them is that you can start on your own, and you can start now. Remember that apathy is the greatest enemy of a good relationship. Very few troubled marriages are beyond help if at least one partner is willing to make the changes that are needed. And even good marriages need constant upkeep if they are to survive the wear and tear of modern living. Is the trouble worth it? See for yourself!

For most of us, a husband or wife isn't the only person around the house. There are those little tornadoes of energy whirling through the kitchen on muddy feet, or perhaps those

surly teenagers snarling at us from across the room . . .
Somebody help us! We're parents!

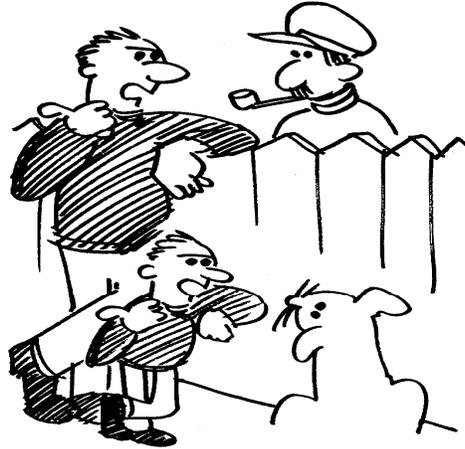
“The crime problem is the boy problem, and the finest prisons in the world are only monuments to neglected youth.” —James A. Johnson, former warden of Alcatraz Prison ,California, USA

A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Focal Point 4. *Cope more effectively as a parent.*

“Babies are an inestimable blessing and bother,” said one wit. Few statements could be nearer the truth! Our children keep us sleepless by night and worn Out by day. They amuse us, amaze us, provoke us, and frustrate us. They ask us “Why?” when we’d rather not explain. They mirror our oddities and repeat our opinions, and we are at once horrified and flattered. Yet they allow us to experience the world through new eyes and ears, and we can’t help being enchanted and delighted. They’re the next generation, our statement that somehow, in spite of it all, we want to believe in the future.

Being a parent in today’s world is a tough job, though. The forces that influence our lives as adults have an even greater impact on our children. Some of these forces are sinister indeed. Violence in society has increased to a point where children are becoming its victims, inside the home as well as outside it. The rise of drug and alcohol abuse has taken its toll on many young lives. The lack of strong moral values has left a vacuum that many young people have tried to fill with cults and strange, bizzare religions. flow can we prevent our children from being affected by these things? And how can we turn the situation around if our children’s lives are at risk for one reason or another?



*...they mirror our oddities and
repeat our opinions...*

One young drug addict said, “Neither of my parents ever cared about me or showed me any love. I had nobody.” This young man left school, started to spend his time with youths involved in crime, and became addicted to drugs. Whether the family is rich or poor doesn’t seem to matter. If there is no real love at home, children may try negative ways to get the attention of their parents. Many social workers and psychologists are convinced that anti-social and self-destructive behavior is a child’s way of crying, “Look at me! Notice what I’m doing! Show that you care what happens to me!”

Tragically, all too often these kinds of pleas go unheeded. Sometimes the behavior is dismissed as childish pranks or youthful experimentation. Of course, not all children from homes without love become delinquents. They simply grow up to become adults who cannot express love. So the cycle repeats itself.

How can we bring up our children successfully in today’s society? How can we give them the kind of love they need? Here are four tested guidelines to help you survive as a parent *and* build healthier parent/child relationships. Whether you are

rearing your children alone or with your partner, these can help you create an atmosphere in which they can grow into mature, responsible adults.

1. *Treat Your Children as Individuals of Worth and Value.*

In a very real sense, your children are “yours” only for a short time. Before you know it, they are out on their own, having to make their own way in the world. This means that you must not exploit them while they are with you by taking advantage of their natural desire to please you. They must not be forced to earn your approval by pursuing your unfulfilled dreams. Instead, you must give them the freedom and help they need to develop the unique set of abilities and talents that they have.

In some cultures, sons are highly prized while daughters are viewed as burdens. No secret is made of the fact that female children are not welcomed into the family. But even where these forms of rejection are not practised, subtle kinds of discrimination can exist that are just as destructive. The competitive society we live in rewards those who meet its superficial ideals of beauty, strength, physical ability, and pleasing personality. Those who meet these standards are considered superior to those who do not. Parents should not apply such measurements to their children. Instead, they should praise and reward them when they demonstrate inner qualities like integrity and self-discipline.

Of course, placing equal value on all of your children does not mean they should all be treated in exactly the same way. They are individuals, and no two are alike. But it does mean that you should not show favouritism to one child at the expense of the others, or continually compare him or her with someone else. All of your children are entitled to your full love and acceptance. Their worth comes not from what they can do or accomplish, but from the fact that they are human beings like yourself.



7 CHECK FOR DISTORTIONS

Have you been seeing your children from the wrong viewpoint? Think about the kinds of messages you have been giving each one.

Here’s a chart to help you plan the corrective action you should take.

Child’s Name:	Find specific ways to . . .
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o show that he/she is a person of worth and value o reward behavior that shows positive inner qualities Or?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o show that he/she is a person of worth and value o reward behavior that shows positive inner qualities Or?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o show that he/she is a person of worth and value o reward behavior that shows positive inner qualities Or?

2. Present a United Front as Parents.

Many new parents find — to their dismay — that the arrival of children causes conflicts to surface between them as a couple: they discover that they have different ideas about discipline in the home. Children are quick to sense this lack of agreement. As they grow older, they use it to play one parent off against the other: “But *Mother* said I could. . . .”

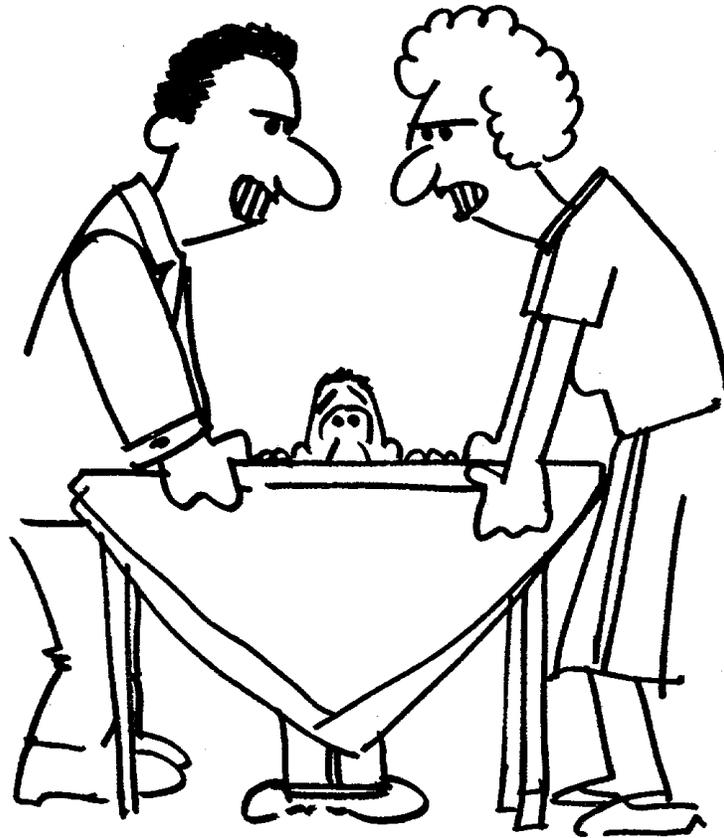
Children who grow up in a home where there is constant disagreement between their parents feel insecure and anxious. If you and your spouse continually argue about what to do in front of them and one of you behaves one way and the other behaves another, you add to their confusion and perplexity. This is why you should make a determined effort to resolve your differences about discipline *before* the problems arise. If you haven't been able to anticipate a certain kind of situation that has come up, you may need to let your husband or wife go ahead and handle it. Do not oppose your partner openly if you disagree, but discuss the matter as soon as you can and decide what you will do the next time.



8 WHAT IS YOUR CONFLICT PROFILE?

Take time to mark or write in your answer. When dealing with our children, my husband/wife and I

- a) *agree* most about . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |
- b) *disagree* most about . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |
- c) usually avoid discussing . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |
- d) need to resolve differences about . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |



*Children who grow up in a home where
there is constant disagreement...
feel insecure and anxious.*

“Wait a minute,” you may be saying. “I’m married to a person who does not accept the goals I have for family living.” If you are in such a position, approach your situation with great sensitivity and awareness. Don’t spend a lot of energy trying to

convince your spouse that you are right. Just go ahead and love your children without arguing about it. Eventually, your husband or wife may be won over when they see the positive results that follow.

Single Parent Problems

If you are a single parent, your position is also a challenging one. Be careful to keep any problems you have as an adult from becoming serious burdens to your children. If you have been divorced, you will find that it is tempting to express your personal anger toward your ex-wife or ex-husband by demeaning them in front of your children. But if you do this, you will make the situation even worse. You may turn your children into emotional cripples by forcing them to carry not only their own insecurities, but also your hostility towards your former mate. Instead, allow them the freedom to love both their parents. For yourself, try to form positive friendships with other adults who share the kind of goals you have for your family. Those friendships are the place to talk about your experiences and reactions.

3. *Model the Behavior You Want.*

As a parent, you are in a powerful position with respect to your children. Your example — good or bad — will influence them in lasting ways. This means that the most effective method of helping them become responsible, caring adults is to be one yourself. If you want your son or daughter to listen to you when you talk, give him or her the same courtesy. If you want them to respect the property of others, treat their possessions with care.

From a very early age, children absorb attitudes and ways of looking at life and its problems. If you say one thing and do another, they are much more likely to imitate your behavior than to follow your instructions. So make a real effort to have a healthy lifestyle that matches the directions you give them. This does not mean that you have to be perfect. *But you do have to be honest.* When you make a poor decision, say so. You will discover that your children can handle your mistakes much more

easily than your hypocrisy. If you are willing to admit to your failings, they will be able to do the same.

4. *Work for Your Children's Best Interests.*

In practical terms, working for your child's best interest means wanting the very best for him or her. But what is the very best? Some would say it is financial prosperity or happiness. Yet those things are superficial. A far more valuable goal is to help them become people who have the right kind of attitude, both toward themselves and others.

Do not allow them to keep doing something that is harmful even if they become angry with you and are unhappy for a while. Be firm and consistent, and they will respond. It is important for you to set — and enforce — reasonable limits on their behavior. This will give them a feeling of security because they will know what you want from them. It will also help them develop the ability to control their actions. Keep a balanced approach. Notice, reward, reinforce, and praise their good behavior, and exercise firm but appropriate discipline when they disobey.

On the positive side, take time to teach your children how to do things so they can develop their skills. They have a powerful, inborn drive to be part of what is going on around them. If you prevent them from helping you because it is inconvenient, they will feel unimportant and useless. But if you help them to improve their skills, they will understand that they are needed and valuable. As they get older, recognize the fact that they will want to become more independent and self-directed. This is a legitimate desire. Don't create unnecessary tension by misreading their motives and accusing them of being obstinate or disobedient.

If you have helped your children develop good values from the time they are small, you should be able to let them have a greater say in the affairs that concern them as they grow up. In order to do this, you must allow them to experience the consequences of their decisions. But do not withdraw your influence. If they propose a certain plan of action, help them to visualize the outcome that will probably result.



9 TAKE AN INVENTORY OF YOUR PARENTAL SKILLS

Here's a survey to help you see areas where improvement may be needed.

1 = Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Sometimes
4 = Frequently 5 = Nearly always

- | | | | | | | |
|----------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | I treat my children with respect and dignity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b | I encourage my children to develop their unique talents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c | My wife (or husband) and I take time to resolve our differences about discipline. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d | I am an example of the kind of behavior that I want my children to show to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e | I am honest with my children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f | I notice and praise my children when they behave well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g | I discipline my children in a consistent and fair way when they do what is wrong. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h | I take time to help my children learn how to do things so they can contribute to the household. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i | I look for signs of growing maturity in my children and increase their freedom as they are ready for it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Total:

Surviving as a parent means learning how to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. You have a relationship with your children that is unique and significant. If you have not been successful up to this point, don't allow your past to imprison you.

Start now to follow the guidelines that will help you meet their long-term needs. Day by day, keep working toward your goals. You will be rewarded as you see them develop into adults who can be a positive force for good in society.

“Without friends no one would choose to live, even if he had all other goods.”

— Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

THE ESSENTIAL BOND

Focal Point 5. *Consider the focus true friendship needs.*

It had been a day like most others—ordinary and uneventful. Nothing forewarned me of the curious experience I was to have that night.

I turned out the lights as usual, and drifted off to sleep. And then it happened. I still don't know if what I am about to tell you really took place, or if it was only a dream. But anyhow, here it is, just as I remember it.

As I said, I had drifted off to sleep. Then, sometime during that strange night, I heard my bedroom door open, and a Person stood there. The odd thing that strikes me now as I tell this to you is that I wasn't surprised to see him—or afraid of him. I can't quite describe his appearance, though. If I were to say that his entire body glowed with an unearthly, incandescent light, you might be able to imagine what he looked like. But how he looked wasn't the important part. What he showed me was. He beckoned me to follow him, and I got up at once. It seemed the logical thing to do. As I went after him through the door, I suddenly found that I was somewhere else, walking behind him down a long hallway.

After we had walked some distance down the corridor, he paused in front of a door. “You wanted to see what Hell is like?” he said softly. “Here, take a look. “As he opened the door, a wave of deafening curses and harsh words assaulted my ears. I saw a large table surrounded by many people. They behaved like wild animals, pushing and elbowing each other while they tried to eat from the bowls that were set in front of them. When I looked more

closely, I discovered the reason why there was such chaos: the handles of all their spoons were too long, making it impossible for them to feed themselves properly. It was an ugly, disturbing sight. After my Guide shut the door and we continued our way down the corridor, the tableau replayed itself in my mind.

“Now I will show you what Heaven is like,” he said, taking hold of my arm and stopping before another door. He opened it, and inside I saw the same kind of table, the same kind of bowls, and the same kind of spoons. This table was also surrounded by



Then, sometime during the night, I
heard my bedroom door open, and
a Person stood there.

many people. But there were no curses or angry remarks — just the lively conversation of good friends eating together. I looked intently at the scene, trying to understand the mystery that now faced me. Then I suddenly realized that each person was feeding someone else with his or her long handled spoon. Everyone was occupied helping someone, and everyone was being fed. My Guide closed the door. Deep in thought over what I had just seen, I followed him down the hallway.

We walked on a little further. He opened another door, and motioned me to go on through. As I looked back at him that time, I saw that he had started to fade. I know that sounds weird, but that 's just what happened. He started to fade. The next thing I knew, the door slammed shut behind me with a terrific bang and I fell forward onto my bedroom floor with a thud. For a split second, I had the sensation that I had just been catapulted onto a fast-moving train. I laid there for a few minutes until my head stopped spinning. Then I grabbed the nearest chair and slowly pulled myself to my feet. After a few more minutes, the floor stopped swaying. I made my way unsteadily across the room and collapsed onto my bed where I awoke when I heard my alarm go off several hours later.

So, was it just a dream? First thing, I'd probably say it was crazy, wouldn't you? But then again, *I'm not sure.*

For now, let's keep moving along. Let's shift the focus away from ourselves and look outward again. The world around us is full of information. Many philosophies compete for our allegiance. Which ideas should we keep, and which should we throw out? Are there some that are actually destructive? And what about our schools? What problems are they having, and how should we respond to them? These are some of the subjects of our next chapter.



SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS ...

- 1 Your opinion. How do you think your grandparents would have responded to this question as young people?
- 2 Your answer. Did you discover some persistent time wasters? Some steps you can take to redirect your energy?
- 3 The events have been listed in descending order of stress level. Here are the values they have been assigned on a scale of 1-100; the higher the value, the greater the stress. (Note: death of a spouse, which we have not listed, is rated at 100.)

a 70	d 44	g 35	i 26
b 50	e 39	h 29	j 20
c 47	f 38		

Of course, many other life-events could be named. If three or more of these changes have occurred recently, though, your family may be experiencing a high degree of stress.

- 4 How did you rate? Of course, the higher the score in each column (of a possible 40), the more satisfying the relationships are. A score below 28 would probably indicate that there are some serious difficulties. If you rated both relationships, did you notice any patterns that have repeated themselves?
- 5 This is not an easy exercise, as you have probably found out! However, I hope it has helped you discover ways of dealing with the needs of your marriage in a more realistic manner.
- 6 Your replies. Words like “boring” and “strained” might not seem to indicate that your marriage is in trouble. However, they are early warning signs. You may need to take a closer look at the way you treat your husband or wife. Have you started to develop some destructive patterns that you need to abandon?
- 7 Your descriptions. Besides the standards of society, there may be some other influences that have shaped your ideas about your children. Reflect on the way your parents treated you and the others in your family. Are you repeating any negative patterns that were part of your childhood?
- 8 There may be some serious problems here, especially if your home life was quite different from that of your husband or wife. Take time to discuss your childhood experiences and

feelings openly with each other. This will make it easier for you to move beyond your differences and decide how to deal with your children as a team.

- 9** If your total is between 36 and 45, you are certainly a model parent! A total of between 27 and 35 means that you have room for improvement. If your total is below 27, obviously you need to give more attention to your children. Again, remember that it is never too late to start. An honest effort to change will bring results.