

THE COUNSELOR

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Stephen Rossi, M.A., L.P.C.

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HEALTHY PARENTING

We all want happy, well adjusted children, kids who thrive and grow into loving, capable, adults. How do we equip our children for life? What are the best conditions for raising healthy children? What is healthy parenting? This newsletter examines healthy parenting and offers suggestions for raising emotionally healthy children. Parenting is an awesome privilege and responsibility. We dedicate this newsletter to you wonderful, courageous people who are, or will be parents.



Parenting is not for the squeamish! As a professional counselor and parent, myself, I can relate to the difficult questions children ask, the hard decisions we make, and the painful predicaments children and parents encounter daily. We should

strive to facilitate maximum growth in our children. Healthy parenting cultivates a warm, loving, nurturing, environment for all family members. This environment recognizes and respects each individual. Healthy parenting creates an atmosphere which helps children thrive physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Parents are called to provide, protect, nurture, and equip their children for life. Our first assignment is to become the person we want our children be like. We constantly need to work on ourselves. This process takes time, these things don't come over night.

Healthy parenting begins with healthy parents, fallible people committed to growth. As a group, these parents are stronger, and come from all walks of life. Healthy parents are focused, they have a sense of purpose. They are not easily defeated by life. Healthy parents have bad days, hardships, and their share of struggles, but they persevere. The more adaptive and effective parents are, the healthier their children will be.

Healthy Parents:

- Admit their feelings, mistakes, and shortcomings to their children.
- Recognize their problems.
- Seek professional help.
- Have a clear sense of who they are and where they are going - a vision.
- Know that they don't have all the answers, that there is Someone greater than themselves. They know and rely on God for strength.
- Are balanced physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Forgive those who hurt them.
- Handle their anger well.
- Are compassionate and loving.
- Respect others.
- Are patient, kind, and gentle.
- Handle conflict well.
- Persevere under trials.
- Are faithful to family and friends.
- Have strong marriages.
- Are single parents with solid friends.
- Are self-confident and flexible.
- Are teachable.
- Are open to criticism.
- Work through their problems.
- Pursue answers, are knowledgeable.
- Are good problem solvers.
- Prioritize their lives.
- Are process oriented.
- See the big picture, are realistic.
- Are other rather than self-centered.
- Are proactive not reactive.
- Are good followers and leaders.
- Are stable - self-controlled.
- Are not threatened by change.
- Have courage to face adversity.

Few parents possess all the qualities listed. Those who strive to obtain them make a huge difference in their children's lives!



Healthy Children:

- Are happy and well adjusted overall.
- Respond positively to challenges.
- Have very few emotional difficulties.
- Are balanced emotionally and spiritually. They enjoy life.
- Are confident in their abilities.
- Behave within normal limits.
- Handle crises and tragedies better.
- Handle stress and changes better.
- Rebound from setbacks and failure.
- Have very few fears.
- Have strong positive relationships with family and friends.
- Are socially adept.
- Are motivated to achieve in school and extracurricular activities.
- Have good problem solving skills.
- Are good leaders and wise followers.
- Are independent and responsible.
- Resist negative influence from peers.
- Are loving, caring and affectionate.

Developmental Stages

The more we understand our children the better we can parent them. Children move through developmental stages marked by issues and tasks as they progress through life. Their level of success determines their preparedness for the next stage. Unresolved issues block their emotional growth and development. Make an effort to learn the different issues your preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high school, and college student faces.



The Challenges

Parents and children face a myriad of challenges in their quest for healthy living. They are challenged by the following:

- overcoming past failures.
- high pressure to achieve.
- conflicting opinions, values, advice.
- easy access to drugs and alcohol.
- teenage pregnancy.
- sex and violence on the television.
- suicide.
- gangs, violence, and crime.
- school shootings.
- Internet access to pornography.
- fallen leaders and heroes.
- high divorce rate.
- permissive society, anything goes.
- lack of structure and discipline.
- absent fathers.
- hardened children.
- strained family relationships.
- peer pressure.
- dual-career families.
- physical and sexual abuse.
- natural disasters and catastrophes.
- financial pressure
- single parenting.
- marriage problems.
- learning disabilities.

Helpful Suggestions for Parents:

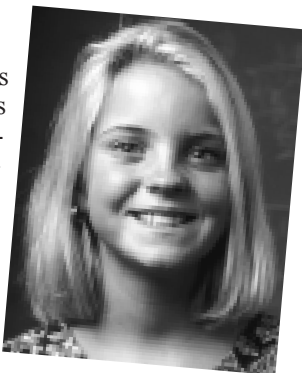
View challenges as opportunities instead of insurmountable problems.

Take responsibilities for your part of the relationship with your child.

Children equate love with quantity of time spent. Connect with your children. Build relationships over all activities, games, etc.

Provide a warm nurturing environment that offers firm limits, structure, and consistency for your children. Do everything in a loving manner.

Foster spiritual growth.



Acknowledge your children's accomplishments and come along side them when they fail. Tell them you love them. Allow your children to progress from one life stage to the next with your blessing. Don't hold on too tightly or let go too soon. Celebrate their rites of passage with them.

Maintain healthy boundaries.

Look at yourself. Admit your mistakes. Commit to change. Get help.

Stand firm on your values. Be honest.

Promote positive peer relationships.

Help your children evaluate their friends.

Lead by example. Children do as you do.

Listen to your children. Talk plainly with them.

Teach good problem solving skills.

Get involved with your children's school, church, and youth programs.

Monitor TV, reading materials, music, Internet access.



Take classes on parenting, step parenting, and single parenting when offered. Join or develop support groups. Learn stress management for yourselves and your family. Relax, have fun, take trips.

This life promises all kinds of trials and tribulations. We are commissioned as parents to train up our children in the way they should go, so that when they are old they will not depart from it. Healthy parenting is not measured by our greatness, material things, or how comfortable we make our children. We should allow our children to struggle through some problems so they can develop stamina. We run the risk of crippling them emotionally when we repeatedly rescue them from trials. Healthy parents love their children into loving others, which occurs through their affection, affirmation, consistency, firmness, and connecting. Use adversity to bring you victory. See your children for who they can become. Encourage them to press forward, to fulfill their vision despite internal and external opposition. Acknowledge your children's feelings, believe in them beyond their faults and fears. Guide them in love. Sometimes we feel inadequate as parents. We fall down,

we get up. When we connect with our children and do these things, we equip them for healthy living.



F.Y.I.

At Christian Counselors of Houston, we are committed to serving the Church Community and people of Houston. We provide a wide range of counseling services for children, adolescents, and adults. We are here for you. Feel free to copy our newsletters for others. I would be glad to discuss this month's topic with you in more detail. I welcome your questions and feedback. Call (713) 984-1314.

Steve Rossi, M.A., L.P.C.

CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS OF HOUSTON

9055 Katy Freeway, Suite 300
Houston, Texas 77024
(713) 984-1314 (Main Office)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CALL FOR INFO: 713.984.1314

"Parenting in Troubled Times" 11-14-98
@ Spring Branch Church of the Nazarene

"Comforted: Receiving God's Comfort"
11-15-98 @ Second Baptist Transformers

"The Blended Family" 12-1-98
@ CCH Office 9055 Katy Fwy, # 300

"Youth Pastors Forum" 12-1-98
@ Spring Branch Church of the Nazarene