

# Encouraging Your Wellness

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- **Couple's Corner**

Tips on keeping your relationship strong.

## Positive Parenting— *Doing What You Say—It's Worth Re-Visiting*

My daughter recently turned 10, and she decided to have a sleep-over for her birthday. She has had a core group of friends for a long time, and I know several of the parents pretty well. One parent approached me and told me that she was telling her daughter that the only way she could come to the party was to show responsibility during the week. Sounded reasonable to me. But then she lowered her voice and told me that her daughter would be coming to the party regardless if she showed responsibility during the week or not; she was just telling her daughter that to “motivate her.” I didn’t want my daughter to know this, so I just told her that her friend could come if she showed responsibility. The next day at school, my daughter’s friend told her she would be at her party. My daughter inquired, “Don’t you have to show responsibility this week in order to come?” Her friend laughed, rolled her eyes and responded, “Oh, please, my mom will let me come!” Turns out, the only one being fooled here was the mom!

One of my favorite parts of working with parents is helping them increase the tools in their parenting toolbox. But the tools do not matter if your kids know them better than you do and especially when they know you will not use them. Unfortunately, this mom was setting herself up to have her daughter not trust her or take her seriously. Her daughter already knew that her mom did not mean what she said. I am going to guess that she did not make many efforts to show more responsibility that week...Cont'd pg 2



## Volunteering is Good for Your Mental Health

Parade Magazine calls it a “Compassion Boom.” Disney is offering a free day at their parks for volunteering in your community. People interviewed in a New York Times article indicate that they responded to the President’s National Call to Serve. Economists believe that the downturn in the economy led to people committing to making their communities better places. Whatever the reason, Americans are volunteering in record numbers and studies are showing that the benefits of doing so are not only good for the community, but equally good for the physical and mental health of the volunteers. Take, for example, that 79% of volunteers interviewed said that volunteering had helped them with their interpersonal skills, including understanding people better and dealing with difficult situations. Volunteers reported other benefits too, including increased levels of self-esteem, happiness, physical health, sense of control over life and general life satisfaction.

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## Dear Readers



I hope this issue of Encouraging Your Wellness finds you happy and staying healthy as well as looking forward to the newness that Spring brings. And, as always, I hope you find this newsletter informative as well as inspirational in helping you be the person, parent, and partner you want to be.

Spring is one of my favorite times of the year. I get very restless once football season has ended, and want to be able to garden and be outdoors. It is also one of my favorites because I love April Fool's Day. It brings out the kid in me! Last year, my daughters and I super-glued a quarter to the sidewalk in front of our house and sat watching how many people tried to pick it up. We laughed ourselves silly, and my kids can't wait to see what I have up my sleeve this year. Laughing and being silly with my kids keeps me young and builds memories of a lifetime. It also helps me burn off the stress of everyday life. I hope you are all finding moments to laugh, be silly, and go slow enough to enjoy those tender moments that come when you're not looking for them. Happy Spring to all of you and of course, Happy Reading!

*“All parenting toolboxes should include trust. Our kids need to trust us—they need to count on what we say. Without it, the other parenting tools in our toolbox will likely falter.”*

### Doing What You Say—Worth Revisiting...Cont'd from page 1

I know this mom, and she loves her kids and wants what is best for them. Most likely, she is unaware that she has behaved in this way enough to have her kids not take her seriously. All parenting toolboxes should include trust. Our kids need to trust us—they need to count on what we say. Without it, the other parenting tools in our toolbox will likely falter.

In my opinion, trust is established in two straightforward ways.

- 1) We do what we say we are going to do.
- 2) We speak the truth.

Even when the situation is uncomfortable or causes our children anguish, we must do what we said if we want to maintain our children's trust. (cont'd on page 3)

### Volunteering—continued from page 1

better physical health. Their beliefs that they were truly needed and valued increased their sense of pride, satisfaction and sense of accomplishment in their lives. Other benefits cited by volunteers included making new friends and being less isolated (being isolated is a risk factor for depression) as well as advancing their careers and feelings of fulfillment. One particular study found that volunteers had lower mortality rates as they were much less likely to suffer heart disease or depression. Several additional studies have pointed to the direct link between volunteering and a reduction in feelings of depression.

These benefits are hard to argue with. Depression is the most common mental health concern today. In my practice, I am increasingly talking with clients about the benefits of volunteering on their emotional well being. I encourage parents of teens to help their teen find volunteer opportunities as a way of feeling a sense of purpose and contribution as well as a way to decrease isolation.

## Couple's Corner– Gifts in Long Standing Relationships

I was fortunate to have grandparents who were married for over 65 years by the time my grandmother passed away. When I was about to get married fifteen plus years ago, I was wise enough to ask them for some of their secrets. It didn't seem like rocket science at the time—things like; “seeing the best in each other” and “appreciating that the other person is doing the best they can,” weren't necessarily the exact formula I was after. But, over the years, these secrets have really grown on me. Here are some secrets of other long-married couples that were recently published in *RealSimple* magazine. “We don't read newspapers at breakfast; we talk to each other.” “We tolerate and accept every part of each other's personalities.” “We don't get angry over more than one thing at a time. People jump around from one issue to another,” and finally, “Never stop courting. We always try to see each other the way we did in our early days, even though I sure look different from that girl he married!”

Thanks to these couples for their wonderful words of wisdom. Here are some other gifts to remember. Companionship: Yes, we may have some different interests, but we have a companion to wait in line with us and enter parties with us. Your different interests allow you to be exposed to things you would have missed on your own. Loyalty. Having a life partner means having someone in your corner when it seems no one else is. It is also what helps us see past each other's faults. Authenticity. In marriage, you can't look perfect—you're forced to unveil your most true self. And who is right beside you—your partner in their most true form. Relish in unmasking before an accepting audience. These are gifts that come to relationships over time. When we focus on, and truly appreciate the gifts in our relationships, we may be the next to pass on our words of marriage wisdom.

### Doing What You Say–It's Worth Revisiting –continued from page 2

Many parents share with me that they don't know what consequences to use—that nothing seems to motivate their children to make better choices. I have met a few kids over the years that were simply indifferent to any kind of consequence, but most often, we just haven't found it or stuck to it long enough to see positive results. Kids don't want parents to know that the consequence is working, so they pretend not to care. Love and Logic parenting teaches the 3 R's of consequences. Choose a consequence that is Related to the offense. For example, “If you're not responsible enough to do your homework, it tells me you're not responsible enough to go to the sleepover.” Choose a consequence that is Reasonable. Try not to use a major consequence for a minor infraction—kids will know you're just about out of ideas. Finally, deliver the consequence in a Respectful way. This will enable your child to be upset with themselves or their choice versus being angry at how you treated them. Most importantly, let **your** kids be the lucky ones who trust their parents and believe what they say!

### Volunteering–Cont'd from page 2

Several of my clients have taken these recommendations and have already started to see the rewards, both with themselves and with their children. If you have a story of how volunteering has helped you, I would love to hear it! So, if you are ready to see how volunteering can improve your emotional well being, here are some questions for you to ask yourself. Do I want to volunteer in my community, or on a larger scale? Do I want to meet people with similar interests or who are very different from me? Do I want to use my talents and interests, or try something completely new? What causes do I feel passionate about? Does my personal story have something to offer someone else who is struggling? Can I get my family involved? The risks of volunteering are minimal, and the benefits have been outlined clearly. The last question to ask yourself is Why Not?



*“Most importantly, let **your** kids be the lucky ones who trust their parents and believe what they say!”*



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*If you are in need of individual, couple or family help, call me. Together with you, I will design a treatment plan that helps you achieve your goals and gets you on the road to feeling life more fulfilled. I specialize in working with teens, adults and children who are struggling with depression, anxiety, low self-worth, past experiences of abuse, and who are believing there must be more to life than what they are currently experiencing. I look forward to speaking with you.*

**Dear Pam,**

*When I lay down to go to sleep, I feel very anxious. I have a hard time turning the thoughts of the day "off", and it interferes in my sleeping. My thoughts race and it is very unsettling—Can you help?*

What you are experiencing is common for people who struggle with anxiety, or even people with high stress levels. Some call it an "unquiet mind." My personal name for it is "ping-pong brain" because the thoughts seem to bounce quickly from one subject to another with no rhyme or reason. Start with making sure you are not eating for a couple of hours before sleeping, and watch your caffeine intake. Additionally, there are some techniques that have been shown to help. First, pay attention to how much stimulation your brain is getting prior to bed time. If you are watching television, playing video games, or other highly stimulating activities, you are not telling your brain it is time to settle in for a good night's sleep. Start to wind down prior to bed with quieter activities such as music, taking a hot bath, talking or reading. Second, practice mindful breathing (this was taught in detail in my last newsletter). This will help your muscles to relax. If your mind is detailing things that you need to remember the next day, leave a notebook by your bed and jot them down. This will allow your mind to "let go" of the need to obsess in order to remember. To the contrary, if your mind is replaying the events of the current day over and over, here's a trick. Close your eyes and choose an object with some details that you want to re-create in your mind. Say you pick a telephone—draw, in detail, in your mind the telephone. Notice and "draw" the smallest details of that object. When you focus your mind in this way, it can prevent the "free for all" thinking that your mind is engaging in. Many of my clients have reported that they are asleep before they finish drawing their object. Practice this trick together with mindful breathing for better results. Good luck and thanks for that important question!

