

Encouraging Your Wellness

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Positive Parenting— Recent Research on What Makes A Good Parent

Would you be surprised to hear that there are approximately 40,000 books on the subject of parenting? Dieting books, which seem to saturate the shelves at local bookstores, only come in around 16,000. We are a society that, in general, has great intentions about parenting our children well. I imagine, if one wished to experiment, that each piece of advice given in one of those parenting books would be contradicted in other books. In infancy: soothe your child—don't soothe your child, you'll "spoil" them. In toddler-land: Don't allow your child to get away with "no!" - Allow your child to have a voice to say "no!". How about in the elementary years: Your child needs as much support and guidance with homework as possible - You must allow your child to develop their own responsibility by not hovering and rescuing with homework. Don't even get me started on the contradicting advice professionals give to parents of teens. No wonder there is such divisiveness in the subject of parenting!

My personal and professional belief is that there are some basic rules to good parenting, and after that, we must rely on our own style so that we are comfortable in our parenting role. If I were to make a short list of those basic rules, it would include: Doing what you say you are going to do at least 98% of the time—relating to trust, consistency and follow through. Consistently demonstrating love, affection and respect toward your child and other members of the household. Loving your child enough to set limits, offer



Caffeine Can Be Trouble—if You're Dealing with Depression or Anxiety

Like 90% of Americans, you may be getting your daily caffeine fix from coffee, tea or other sources including all the new energy drinks on the market. Caffeine can wake you up, improve your disposition, enhance your performance, even cure a headache, at least for awhile. It is the most popular behavior-altering drug. For most people, two to three cups of coffee, or the equivalent, aren't a problem. Four or more can cause restlessness, irritability, insomnia, headaches, stomach problems, even abnormal heart rhythms. But for people who are living with depression and/or anxiety, even a little caffeine is too much, and care should be taken to avoid it as much as possible. Why? Caffeine

Dear Readers



Happy Holidays to all my loyal readers. I hope this issue of **Encouraging Your Wellness** finds you happy and staying healthy as well as remembering to enjoy this time of year and find ways to avoid the dreaded holiday stress. 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.

I was recently having a conversation with a friend about the Holidays. We were discussing how some people absolutely *love* the holidays, and others feel very sad and depressed around them. This led me to question the difference. Have the people who love the holidays been especially lucky to avoid stress, tragedy and loss around this time of year? Do they “bounce back” more quickly? Or is there another factor that can account for the difference? I am sure that there are many factors that go into someone’s joy or lack thereof, around the holidays. But there is one factor I wonder most about. Adaptability. When we suffer grief and loss, do we get stuck in the thinking, “things will never be the same again, and therefore, will never be good again,” or do we try to evolve to “things will never be the same again, but they *will* be good again.” I hope all of you will allow yourself joy this season, and to focus on what can be. Happy Reading!

Did you know that stress management is one of the most important factors that supports positive parenting outcomes? Read more in **What Makes a Good Parent**.

What Makes a Good Parent...Cont'd from page 1

choices within those limits, and provide consequences when necessary to help your child learn that all actions have consequences—both positive and negative.

And finally to avoid physical discipline—for many reasons I will not go into here.

A recent article in *Scientific American Mind* November/December 2010 published the results of a recent research study conducted at the University of California, San Diego on **What Makes a Good Parent?** They analyzed data from over 2000 parents and concluded that 10 parenting competencies predicted the most positive parenting outcomes. These seem consistent with what I teach and my short list. Here are the 10:

1. Love and Affection: You support and accept the child, are physically affectionate and spend quality one on one time together.
2. Stress Management: You take steps to reduce stress for yourself and your child, practice relaxation techniques and promote positive interpretations of events.

Caffeine Can Be Trouble... Cont'd from page 1

works by stimulating the central nervous system. It can aggravate the symptoms of existing anxiety disorders and can trigger panic attacks according to the National Institute of Mental Health. “Caffeine produces the same physiological arousal response that is triggered when you are subjected to stress—increased sympathetic nervous system activity and a release of adrenalin,” writes Edmund J. Bourne, Ph.D. in the *Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*. It keeps you in a chronically tense, aroused condition, leaving you more vulnerable to generalized anxiety and panic attacks. Caffeine is also known to cause a depletion of vitamin B1 thiamine, one of the so-called anti-stress vitamins. For those who suffer from depression, it can be tempting to get the “lift” that caffeine can provide. However, as that lift wears off, it can actually produce the opposite effect—a drop in energy, mood swings and increased anxiety. Even the smallest amounts of caffeine can interfere with a good

Couple's Corner—Does Marriage Counseling Work?

I'll admit that when I first became a therapist, I did not enjoy counseling couples the way I do now. It seemed that the couples that were coming in were often way past saving their marriage. Possibly one partner wanted to save the marriage, and the other partner had no interest and was just going through the motions to prove that divorce was necessary. Occasionally there had been years and years of pain and resentment. Over the years, I became better at screening the couples that I would work with, and found that I could really enjoy couple's counseling when the circumstances were better. Research supports that marriage/couples counseling is most effective for the following types of couples:

Young to middle age couples

Non-Sexist couples

Couples who are still in love and

Couples who are open to therapy and change, and will try new suggestions to save their marriage.

Ideally, in couples counseling, you will learn the following skills:

- How to resolve conflict in a healthy manner.
- How to really listen to your partner, and feel heard in return.
- How to identify your needs and state them clearly without resentment or anger.
- How to assert yourself without violating your partner's worth or being demanding.
- How to re-establish trust and/or emotional safety in the relationship.
- How to improve your sexual relationship and
- How to process and work through unresolved issues.

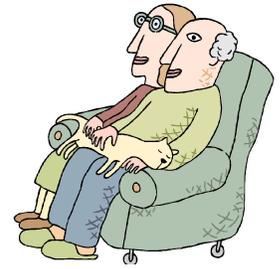
If you wait too long to seek marriage counseling, the odds are against you. But, I have seen couples who have made dramatic turn arounds when they didn't think it possible. If your marriage is in trouble, seek help before seeking divorce. At the very least, you'll know for sure you did everything you could and be able to leave the marriage without regret, and hopefully with some skills needed for future relationships. Sometimes the best relationships are that way because of the time and attention that go into them. We

What Makes a Good Parent –continued from page 2

3. Relationship Skills: You maintain a healthy relationship with your spouse or co-parent and model effective relationship skills with other people.
4. Autonomy and Independence: You treat your child with respect and encourage him or her to become self-sufficient and self-reliant.
5. Education and Learning: You promote and model learning and provide educational opportunities for your child.
6. Life Skills: You provide for your child, have a steady income and plan for the future.
7. Behavior Management: You make extensive use of positive reinforcement and punish only when other methods of managing behavior have failed.
8. Health: You model a healthy lifestyle and good habits such as regular exercise and proper nutrition.
9. Religion: You support spiritual or religious development and participate in spiritual or religious activities.
10. Safety: You take precautions to protect your child and maintain awareness of activities and friends.

Caffeine...–Cont'd from page 2

sleep, which is known as both a symptom and a contributing factor to both depression and anxiety. For those parents who have a child who is struggling with anxiety or depression, it may be time to carefully consider the amounts of caffeine they are getting that could be negatively contributing to their overall functioning. I have seen more and more middle and high school students that regularly drinking Red Bull or Monster type drinks to help them maintain a “stay up late—get up early” type schedule. We often correlate teenage moodiness with hormones, but stress, lack of sleep and caffeine can be likely culprits as well. An average cup of coffee contains about 100 mg of caffeine, while energy drinks can pack a whopping 300 mg per serving. Pain relievers can have up to 130 mg of caffeine, while chocolate comes in around 8 mg for a 1.5 ounce bar. Try avoiding caffeine for a week to see how it affects yours or your child's mood. It may be the lack of edge you need.



*Skill #4:
You treat your
child with
respect and
encourage him
or her to become
self-sufficient
and self-reliant.*



Pamela Boaz, LCSW

I HAVE MOVED!
2095 W. 6th Ave. Suite 212
Broomfield, CO 80020

Phone: 303-906-8992
Fax: 303-460-7850
Email: pamelaboazlcsw@cs.com
Web: pamelaboaz.com

I'm on the Web! Visit me
at pamelaboaz.com

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,

My husband and I argue over whether or not we should let our seven year old son win each time we play a game with him. What are your thoughts? - Marjorie

We have a saying in our house that has been around since my girls were first playing board games: "If you're big enough to play, you're big enough to win OR lose." I play a lot of games both at home and in my therapy work with kids. I really emphasize that I have no interest in who wins or who loses, just in having fun with the person I am playing the game with. Some kids will go to great lengths to make sure they win—changing the rules, cheating, etc. I encourage playing the game fairly, and I agree to play as long as it is fun. My answer, in short, is NO—we do not allow kids to always win when we play with them. First of all, they will catch on in no time that they are always beating us. Second, it takes the challenge out of trying hard in the game. And finally, and most importantly, we need to teach our kids to lose in a good natured way. Anyone recall a few years ago, Tom Brady, quarterback for the New England Patriots, losing the Super Bowl and literally leaving the field before the game ended and refusing to congratulate the other team? I swear, no one ever taught him to lose while maintaining his composure. "Sore Loser" is what he was called for weeks to come. If we want our kids to know how to lose in a good natured way, we must role model it for them when we lose, and allow them to practice when they lose. My family played a game the other night, and when my older daughter won, she got up and put her hands in the air and declared, "I am the winner!" My younger daughter, in similar spirit, got up, put her hands in the air and started singing, "I am the loser!" while she danced around. We all got a great laugh and it made no difference who won because we all had fun playing!

