

PARENTING MATTERS

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Newsletter

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Happy New Year and I truly wish all families the patience to weather through some of our country's difficult times. And if you live near the mountains like I do, you are still negotiating the narrow snow packed streets!

I, like many others, am trying to tackle some organizational issues that I have lumped into calling my New Year Resolutions. I realize that to maximize my family time, and to actually accomplish sorting personal and business storage places, I am going to have to schedule in the day and the hour to do it or I will easily be distracted by what I call "putzing." "Putzing" is when I see a project lying around for months and all of a sudden I feel like doing it, meanwhile, I still have not organized my business receipts for the daunting task of tax preparation. I have listened to web casts on how to sort and organize an office and so I cannot delay any longer. Who knows, I may even be able to complete a room before the gardening season starts!

I continue to be marvelled and challenged by my children as they dig their heels in to highlight to me their strong willed personalities. I am now sensing that my days of "keeping a few steps ahead of them" are slowly coming to an end as they are getting wiser with age. So new adjustment lie ahead for me!

Finding Hope

Over the holidays I received many emails, either in poetry or image forms, from friends regarding the highs and the lows of life. The message I take from these excerpts is that with all our "gifts" in life, there is also hardship in the lives of ordinary people. And being a counsellor for 16 years, I can truly attest to "hearing it all". So in the face of adversity, such as a mother of two young child being diagnosed with cancer, or your teen being in a horrific car accident, where does one turn? For young children, when they learn that their family is breaking up or that their best friend is moving away, how do you guide them? Most parents reassure their children that everything will work out just fine. Children don't always believe it, especially if, they have some "hidden worries" that their parents haven't uncovered yet. Teens can be suspicious of this advice, as their hurt is experienced intensely and in the moment. It is in these low periods of everyday life that parents can build their children's resiliency by remaining empathic to their loss and

frustration. But I believe another element is also important, something that is harder to talk about with many adults, something that is not seen or heard, but must be felt at a very deep level, and that is the need to pass on an understanding or feeling that “this too will pass”. My clients of all ages who do not have a belief system seem to be more skeptical about their “recovery” or ability to fully enjoy life.

Developing a belief system or worldview that life is good and fulfilling doesn't happen over night. For a belief system to flourish, a person needs to trust that life will send them healthy opportunities to improve their circumstance. I don't know exactly how this happen, but to me, a belief system needs faith. Faith in the universal message rather than in a specific religious context. How does one teach that?

If you follow a religion sect and have exposed your children early on to your faith, your children have learned to embrace faith and believe in those certain teachings. When they are older, they have the foundational underpinning to apply these teaching in many incidences. If they reject these teachings, at a young age, they are at the very least enlightened and may come to a place in their life where they can modify or revisit a belief system that better suits who they are. However, when people do not have this early faith based learning, how do they deal with the deep hurt in life? We have only to read the paper or hang around high schools to hear many teens decide to drink or smoke away their problems. Poor problem solving skills can be partly to blame as well as their need for immediate gratification. To move beyond self-destructive behaviours requires something from within to be the compass for hope to set in. There are many books that write about his very topic with a variety of names denoting the same concept: positive affirmations, the higher power, sending positive energy into the universe, meditation and the power of the healing light. Faith in our destiny may only come with maturation or enlightenment, and therefore preset itself more in adulthood. In any case, the occasional discussion with your teen about what their beliefs are or how they view humanity is a staring place. We as parents need to offer something greater than ourselves to aid in our children's healing for their use out in the real world. The Healing Wheel, used by many tribal cultures, highlights the four areas in a human life that I have found helpful as a

point of reference for “healthy living”. These four points are: intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual. This formula is missing in our society’s search for balance in our lives. In conclusion, if we as parents have a worldview of hopefulness, faith and trust connected to human existence, it will go a long way in helping our children and eventually our adult children weather life’s disappointments in a safe manner.

PS

I was very moved by an email from a friend who sent me the “Words on Women and Strength” by Kelly Corrigan. Check it out on youtube

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