

CENTER ON FATHERING

Fathering is For Life

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Center on Fathering Monthly Newsletter---May 2021

When Good Parents Have Difficult Children: It's Not Your Fault by Kim Abraham, LMSW and Marney Studaker-Cordner, LMSW, Empoweringparents.com



“My son got sent home from school again for fighting on the playground. I just can’t help feeling like if I was a better parent – if I hadn’t yelled so much when he was little, if I’d spent more time with him, if I’d been more consistent with consequences – that he wouldn’t be having these problems. I feel like it’s my fault and it makes me sick with guilt.”

Parenting in the Guilt Zone

It’s virtually impossible to reach the parenting finish line in today’s world without some feelings of guilt: guilt for yelling; guilt for not providing things we want to give our child or for spoiling by giving too much; guilt for being too hard on our child; guilt for being too easy. Guilt can serve a valuable purpose in life: it tunes us in to the fact that we’ve done something or behaved in a way that we’re not okay with, morally or spiritually. We regret something we’ve done, and guilt allows us to remember we don’t want to do it again. Guilt is like a prison sentence. Many parents are quick to be their own judge and jury and sometimes we end up serving a life sentence for a misdemeanor.

We all have emotional baggage that we carry around. But before you pick up that luggage set of guilt, stop for a minute, and evaluate:

1. Is that suitcase of guilt really mine to carry? Many times, we take on guilt that’s not ours to shoulder. “I left my child’s father because he was verbally abusive. Now when my daughter visits him, I feel guilty that I’m not there to protect her from his behavior.” This mom is taking responsibility for her ex’s behavior and beating herself up for making a choice that was positive for herself – and her daughter – in many ways. Feeling guilty for causing another person to act in a certain way – even if it’s your child – is taking on responsibility for someone else’s behavior. In

effect, you're giving yourself a lot of power over someone else that you really don't have. Remember: we are all responsible for our own choices. Period. If you've given in to your child ninety-nine times and let him play video games when he's grounded, then on the one hundredth time you say no, and he chooses to throw the game across the room – who is responsible? Is it your fault that he threw the game because he expected you to give in again and became frustrated when you didn't? No. Could you do things differently by staying consistent in your discipline? Certainly. But he still chooses how he will react and behave.

2. What purpose is my guilt serving? In the above example, there was absolutely nothing that mom could do about her ex's behavior toward her child. It wasn't verbally abusive to the point that the authorities could be called. He was just often irritable and impatient. Not pleasant, but not enough to restrict his parental rights. So, what could mom do? Sitting around all weekend worrying about her daughter and feeling guilty for leaving the man served no purpose and didn't help her daughter one bit. In the second example- where mom felt guilty about giving in so much to her son that it affected his behavior – there was the opportunity for her to do something different. Every situation offers the chance to improve our parenting. But feeling guilty and blaming yourself for a child's negative behavior can often backfire. It can lead us to be even less consistent in following through with consequences, for fear of making our child's behavior worse. And it really is a disservice to our child: it sends the message that he doesn't really have the capability to control his own behavior and make positive choices for himself.

3. Is my energy better spent elsewhere? In other words, are there things you can do instead of focusing on feelings of guilt for things done in the past? In the above example, mom found it was much more productive –and she felt much better – to spend time teaching her daughter the necessary skills in order to set boundaries and cope in a positive manner when you encounter someone who's not so nice. Guilt is distracting – it keeps us from taking positive action toward making changes. It's a Parent Paralyzer. If you feel your child is behaving negatively – arguing, yelling, hitting, or throwing things – because of something you've done, instead of spending time beating yourself up about it, redirect your own energy. Spend that time teaching your child how to cope with emotions such as anger, disappointment, or frustration. You can never get yesterday back – but you can claim today and lay the foundation for tomorrow.

4. Has your sentence been served? Guilt is like a self-imposed prison sentence. If there's something specific you feel guilty about, ask yourself, "Is it time I was paroled?" How long should I continue to feel guilty about this? One of life's biggest challenges is often forgiveness: forgiveness for others (including our child) and forgiveness for ourselves. By forgiving yourself for mistakes you've made as a parent, you are saying, "I acknowledge I've made mistakes and I own them. I take responsibility and I am working to do things differently. I am choosing to let go of the guilty emotions that keep me stuck and tied to the past; that keep me from moving forward in my parenting and my relationship with my child." Because in the end, guilt will only erode your relationship with your child, not strengthen it. Kids are very perceptive. They pick up on our emotions. Oppositional-Defiant or Conduct-Disordered kids may even purposely use that guilt to

push your buttons. Until you move on from guilt about the past, your child cannot move forward either.

Everyone's a Critic

In today's world, blame is everywhere. Listen to conversations going on around you – on the bus, in meetings, on television, between relatives. Chances are some comment is going to be made about who is to blame about any given problem. Parents – particularly of a child who may be making poor choices or behaving negatively – are often blamed for their child's behavior. Many of us internalize that blame and feelings of shame and guilt take deep root. It's good to take responsibility for your parenting behavior. Keep in mind though– no one is perfect and there are endless opportunities for us to pick out things we've done wrong. Recognize not only your mistakes, but your successes as well: a time you did stay calm in the face of your daughter's teenage attitude; a time you did follow through with consequences; a time you did stay patient after being asked the same question a million times. Separate feeling guilty from taking responsibility. When guilt does more harm than good, it's time to let it go.

Resources for Parents of Troubled Kids:

National Runaway Hotline: 1-800-RUNAWAY or (773) 880-9860

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255 suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Raising Troubled Kids Support Group: Zoom meeting, from 4 - 6pm (Pacific), every 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month. Parents and other family members only.

Raising Troubled Kids: <https://raisingtroubledkids.com>

My Troubled Teen: <https://www.mytroubledteen.com/>

Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PAL): <http://www.ppal.net>

Horizon Family Solution: <https://www.horizonfamilysolution.com/>

Center for Parenting Education: <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/resource-directory/>

Rescue Youth: <https://www.rescueyouth.com/>

Troubled Teen Search: <http://www.troubledteensearch.com/Help-for-Parents-of-Troubled-Teens/Colorado-Springs-Colorado-CO/>

Alliance for Kids: <https://www.allianceforkids.org/>

MONTHLY ACTIVITIES (free)



Pet Parade: May 1, 2021, 10:30 at the Living Hope Church, 640 Manitou Blvd., Colorado Springs. Join us for games, vendor booths, unique door prizes, food trucks, and music! Bring your family and your pet to our first annual Pet Parade at Living Hope Church just west of Downtown Colorado Springs! This event is open to the public & all donations will go towards Action for Healthy Kids! Come enjoy this event with your family, show off your pets, and support local

businesses! Registration is optional at the "Official Website" link:

<https://valleychristianacademy.school/pet-parade-registration/>



Little Learners: May 19, 2021 at 10:30 am - 10:45 am and at 10:45 am - 11:30 am, at the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, 215 S. Tejon Street, Colorado Springs. 2021 is Colorado Springs' 150th birthday! Throughout the year we invite Little Learners (preschool) to celebrate local history. Families are invited to come back each month for fun and educational learning experiences. We'll learn and play with games, crafts, songs, and history challenges. These programs are designed to help young learners explore concepts such as community, transportation, art, and even their own unique place in history. There are two programs

limited to 10 individuals each (adults and children included) to promote social distancing and create a personalized experience. An RSVP is required at the "Official Website" at:

<https://www.cspm.org/event/little-learners/>



RMPBS Kids Club Drive-In Tour: May 14, 2021 at 8:00 pm at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum, 200 S. Sierra Madre St., Colorado Springs. Join RMPBS KIDS for a special drive-in screening, celebrating children and families. The socially distanced event is free (registration required), and will feature episodes of Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood, Peg+Cat, and Odd Squad. FM audio will be available in

English and in Spanish. Don't miss your chance to come share a memorable outdoor learning experience with your neighbors – and to see Daniel Tiger himself! Space is limited, and registration is first-come, first-served. All families will receive swag bags full of goodies from our generous sponsors! Be prepared with a mask in case you need to leave your vehicle.

WHAT'S NEW?

We're Still Looking for Gardeners!



The Center has purchased a nice 20' X 40' plot through the Bear Creek Garden Association. Gardeners must sign a notarized release, practice social distancing and wear mask. We are holding bi-weekly meetings on Tuesday at 4:00 pm and are always looking for more dads who want to garden with their kids. Call Gary at (719) 649-5825 if interested.

Center on Fathering Class Reunion BBQ



The Center on Fathering is hosting a reunion for all class graduates. Bring your kids and come and meet other dads and their family. We'll have a cornhole game & karaoke machine. There's a playground and volleyball net on site. We'll be BBQing hot dogs and serving side dishes. Due to social distancing we are limiting our attendance to 10 dads and their family members. All attendees will be required to wear a protective mask. Call early to confirm!!

Where: Bear Creek Park East Pavilion 5, 21st St and Rio Grande. From the intersection of West Rio Grande Street and 21st Street, go east on West Rio Grande and turn right at the first intersection, which is Creek Crossing. Parking and pavilions will be on your right before the Administration Building.

When: Saturday, May 29, 11:00-3:00 PM

Ideas Needed for the Newsletter!



I'm looking for new ideas for our newsletter. Do you have a topic that you would like covered? Or maybe a new section like bad dad jokes or a dad's corner? I want to hear from you. Send your suggestions to me at garygrambort@elpasoco.com

DAD'S TIPS

YOUR RIGHTS AS THE PARENT OF A TEEN WITH A MENTAL DISORDER

by Margaret Puckette, author, "Raising Troubled Kids"



What if your teen refuses treatment? They get worse. Over months and years, if your child experiences serious symptoms of the disorder, such as schizophrenia, depression, or bipolar disorder, their brain loses cognitive function just as in Alzheimer's disease. Breaks in treatment means loss of brain function, and they become more vulnerable to multiple hospitalizations. A troubled teenager can refuse treatment for any reason and explaining the mental health risks to

a person clouded by anxiety, depression, mania, or paranoia goes nowhere.

If a teenager had any other illness besides a behavioral disorder, refusing or withholding treatment would be considered child abuse and grounds for removing the child from the home.

What if you're teen becomes involved in crime?

- For safety and health reasons, you have the right to search your teen's room and remove or lock-up risky items like drugs, weapons, razors, pornography, or anything negatively affecting health. Be careful: this can destroy trust if done inappropriately. Inform your teen only if you find and remove unsafe items but otherwise leave everything else alone!
- You can set any curfew time you think appropriate, and you do not have to adhere to curfew times used by law enforcement. Suggestion: compare with other parents' curfews. Your teen will more likely follow rules that his or her peers follow.
- You can monitor everything in your home, and on your computer and phone. You can limit cell phone services and get GPS tracking on the phone and in the car. Prevention is more effective if your teen is informed about this, and it prevents others from taking advantage of your child, too.
- You can report your concerns to anyone: teachers, other parents, and the local police precinct.
- You can search for your child by calling other parents or businesses, or visiting their friends' homes, or searching public places where your child might be.
- You can and should call the police if your child runs away, or if your child is being harbored by someone who wants to 'protect' them. It is illegal to harbor runaways and those who do are subject to criminal charges.

- You can and should notify anyone who encourages your teen to run away or who takes your teen with them without your permission, that this is custodial interference and subject to criminal charges.

What if your child's mental health provider doesn't share information you should know as the parent?

- You have the right to contact any mental health professional directly, and provide information relevant to your child, your family (e.g. marital conflict), and your family's needs (e.g. bullied siblings). The professional can legally receive and document this information but may not be able to discuss it with you.
- You have the right to communicate freely and openly with a practitioner or teacher about anything you both already know—no confidentiality exists.
- You have the right to a second opinion. And you have the right to change treatment or refuse treatment based on that second opinion.
- You have the right to participate fully in medical decisions about your child. For example, you have the right to ask a doctor to stop or change medication or treatment that is creating behavior problems or side effects, which harm your ability to manage your teen.
- You have the right to “information about the treatment plan, the safety plan, and progress toward goals of treatment.”

Minor Consent and Confidentiality in Colorado:

- In Colorado, a minor who is 15 or older may consent to receive mental health services for treatment for drug or alcohol use or addiction to be rendered by a facility or professional person
- When a minor consents for his or her own health care, the HIPAA regulations state that a parent or guardian's right to inspect the related medical records is determined by state and federal law, not HIPAA. The federal and Colorado state laws that specifically limit or grant parental access to a child's “minor consent” records are discussed in the answer to the following question.
- If there is nothing in any other law, including case law, specifying whether or not a parent may have access to the information, the HIPAA regulations state that a health care provider may decide to provide or deny access to a parent or guardian as long as that decision is consistent with state or local law, and the decision is made by a licensed health care professional exercising his or her professional judgment. Providers should consult legal counsel for more information about application of this rule.
- When a minor consents to his or her own mental health services, the “professional person rendering mental health services to a minor may, with or without consent of the minor, advise the parent or legal guardian of the minor of the services given or needed.
- With the minor's consent, a physician “may examine, prescribe for, and treat such minor patient for addiction to or use of drugs without the consent of or notification to the parent,

parents, or legal guardian of such minor patient, or to any other person having custody or decision-making responsibility with respect to the medical care of such minor patient.”

- “Minors may voluntarily apply for admission to alcohol/other treatment for addiction to or use of drugs, drug abuse treatment, regardless of their age, with or without parental or legal guardian consent providing the treatment.

