

CONNECTING

Healthy Information from the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  September/October 2002

Launching Young Adults

Humans remain dependent on parents and take longer to “grow up” than any other mammal. There is a common assumption that parenting responsibilities end when a child reaches 18. While this is true in a legal sense, it is generally not the reality. Most 18-year-olds are not yet ready to be completely “on their own,” though parents hope they will successfully make this transition during the upcoming year or two or ten! During the process of launching young adults, parents often struggle with their own changing roles and responsibilities. **How can parents be of help rather than a hindrance during this critical time?**

The years following high school are very difficult for young adults. During this time, they must make important educational, career, and relational decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. While some young adults do not want to talk about these issues with their parents, many do. They generally *don't* want parents to tell them what to do, but they often *do* need someone to listen and ask interested questions so they can figure out which direction they want to go. Sharing an experience of your own that relates to what your child is going through can also be helpful in providing perspective.

Many books have been written on the importance of parental affirmation and encouragement in the formation of healthy self-esteem in children. Parental comments that reflect on a son's or daughter's worth and competence continue to be beneficial in the young adult years. As young people struggle with doubts and decisions, parents can continue to convey

their love for them and their confidence in them and their abilities. Giving honest and respectful feedback when asked and when there is cause for real concern is also important.

If the earlier years have been rocky for the parent-child relationship, the young adult years can be a time of healing as parent and child form a more mutual relationship. Sometimes this involves one or both parties seeking professional help to work through past wounds. I often tell parents that any therapeutic work they do on themselves will indirectly benefit their children—including adult children.

Throughout our lives, we try to regulate the desire for togetherness with the opposing need for separation. We move back and forth between times of dependence and times of greater independence. The push toward independence is particularly strong during the “terrible two's,” the teen years, and the young adult years. While this push toward independence is widely recognized, the continued desire and need for dependence and connection is less appreciated. A two-year-old temper tantrum is an assertion of independence, but the child still needs the parent and wants times of closeness. A rebellious teenager wants more freedom, but does not want to lose the love and support of the parent. Similarly, a young adult wants to “be herself” but generally does not want this to result in loss of relationship with the ones she loves. Parents can inadvertently push their adult child away if they practice a kind of “tough love” that ignores needs and longings for connection, understanding, and acceptance.

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Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center – in 2002!

The past two issues of Connecting have included historical information about the Center. This article describes the Center as it is today. The Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center is staffed by 9 full-time counselors and 11 part-time counselors. Our clinical staff includes licensed clinical psychologists, pediatric psychologists, social workers, pastoral counselors, mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, a career counselor, a chemical dependency counselor, an art therapist, a holistic nurse, a gerontology counselor, and a counselor specializing in the treatment of human sexuality problems. The Center's staff also includes an office manager, an insurance and billing coordinator, an administrative assistant, and a development/marketing director.

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At the same time, being clear about limits and setting appropriate boundaries with adult children is also important. For example, if you do not want them stopping by with their friends at midnight because it hinders your ability to function the next day at work, let them know that. If you are not willing to be the “back up” babysitter whenever their sitter cancels, explain that kindly, and stick to your decision, even if they are upset. This also works in the other direction. For example, if your son does not want to come home for the holidays as has been the family tradition, it is important to respect his wishes and not to say things designed to make him feel guilty for taking this step of independence. Being considerate of each other as you would be to a friend will prevent many hassles. Being overly controlling or overly protective in order to decrease a parent’s own anxiety will backfire by negatively affecting the child’s maturity and the parent-child relationship.

Young adults often need financial assistance from parents (for college, cars, housing, medical insurance coverage, etc.) until they can become self-supporting. Expectations and responsibilities in the area of finances must be negotiated and clearly defined. This is especially important if young adults are still living at home, or moving back home temporarily. Arrangements will vary depending on the age and circumstance of the adult child. For example, while it would generally not be reasonable to charge rent to a 19-year-old home for the summer from college, it would be appropriate, in most cases, to expect a 25-year-old living with parents to contribute toward household expenses. It is important to

keep the long range goal in mind and for parents to ask themselves if the current financial decision or arrangement is helping their son or daughter achieve greater fiscal responsibility or hindering this process.

Parents can be a valuable resource during a child’s late teens and twenties. Moms and dads may be called on for advice regarding practical matters not generally taught in school, such as, how to buy a house, get car insurance, manage finances, file taxes, get a loan, make house repairs, cook mom’s favorite pot roast dinner, etc. Parents sometimes make the mistake of thinking young people—even successful college students—learn everything they need to know to “make it as an adult” in school. This is far from the reality in our complex world. Young adult children often begin to appreciate the wide range of knowledge and life experience their parents have. And parents have the joy and satisfaction of passing on their wisdom to the next generation.

Susan Pierce, M.S., M.S.W.
Pastoral Psychotherapist

Books for further reading:

DiGeronimo, Theresa. *How to Talk to your Adult Children about Really Important Things*. Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Jones, Susan & Nissenson, Marilyn. *Friends for Life*. Harcourt, 1998.

Pasick, Patricia. *Almost Grown: Launching your Child from High School to College*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center Foundation

We encourage you to “leave a legacy” by including a gift to the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center in your estate plan.

What does it mean to leave a legacy? Think of leaving a legacy as a means of transferring your values to the next generation. By making a gift in your will, you can shape the future of an organization in a meaningful way while earning for yourself a special kind of immortality.

(From the Leave a Legacy of Iowa web site:
www.leavealegacyiowa.com)

C.O.O.L. Corner

C.O.O.L. Corner is written by the pediatric psychologists of the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center.

Keeping Kids Out of the Middle

Sometimes children are placed, get caught, or put themselves in the middle of parents who are divorcing. The difficulty is that the marriage unit is dissolving but the parental unit must remain intact. Here are some ways to help your children adjust to this change:

- Become willing to look at your own issues separate from the children.
- Refrain from negative comments about the other parent to or in front of the children.
- Support the children’s needs to have contact with and affection for the other parent.
- Develop ways to communicate (e.g., notebook, e-mail) that do not involve the children but respect the emotional needs of the parents.
- Allow children to freely share (or not) their experiences with the other parent without quizzing.

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Our main office is located at 39th and Ingersoll in Des Moines, and we have an office at the corner of Woodland and Valley West Drive in West Des Moines. In addition, we have satellite offices in Altoona and Ankeny. In 2001, the Center served 1,470 clients, including over 350 children and adolescents!

Our mission is to provide counseling and educational services for the purpose of enhancing emotional, spiritual, and relationship health. Our counselors respect the complex integration of mind, body, and spirit that exists within all persons. The Center is committed to providing services to persons from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

For more information about the Center today, visit the Center's website www.dmpcc.org.

New Staff at the Center



Laura Fefchak, M.S.W., recently joined our staff as a licensed independent social worker. She will provide counseling to adolescents and adults, as well as some couples, beginning in September. Laura's professional experience includes six years in the Des Moines Public Schools as a school social worker and as coordinator of an adolescent

pregnancy prevention program. She also has experience as a therapist and group facilitator at Children and Families of Iowa. Laura earned her master of social work at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada.



Elaina Riley, M.S.W., recently joined our children's department, C.O.O.L., as a licensed independent social worker. She will provide counseling to children and adolescents beginning in October. Prior to coming to the Center, Elaina was a clinical social worker at Clinical Assessment & Treatment Services, P.C., and at Des Moines Child &

Adolescent Guidance Center. Elaina earned her master of social work at the University of Iowa.

Speakers Bureau

Below is a list of presentations offered by the counselors of the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center. If your service organization, church group, breakfast club or business is looking for a speaker on one of the following topics, contact Eileen Burtle at (515) 274-4006 for information about scheduling and cost.

Parenting

- Building Self-Esteem in Children
- Beyond Time Out
- A Father's Role in Child Development
- Early Childhood Development
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Grief In Children
- Proactive Parenting
- Developmental Disabilities
- Identification and Treatment of Attention Deficit Disorders
- Caring For Aging Parents
- Understanding and Communicating With Your Teen

Relationships

- De-Mystifying Extramarital Affairs
- How to Enrich, Nurture, and Sustain Your Marriage
- Understanding Male and Female Communication Styles
- Chemical Dependency: A Family Disease
- Traits of a Healthy Family

Communication

- Improving Basic Skills: How to Talk/How to Listen
- Mediation: Resolving Disputes Peacefully
- Fathers Communicating With Sons
- Fathers Communicating With Daughters

Emotional Health

- The Nature and Practice of Helping Others
- Adjusting to a Significant Loss
- Keeping the Balance
- "What's a Man To Do?"
- Making Sense of Life's Changes (Transitions)
- Work and Worth: What happens when you lose your job?

Spiritual Health

- Exercises for Spiritual Health
- A Closer Look at Evil

Sexual Abuse Survivors Group

A weekly support group for women who are survivors of sexual abuse will begin meeting on September 9, 2002. The group will meet from 7:00-8:45 p.m. on Monday nights for 16 weeks. Call Debbie Reed at (515) 274-4006 for more information.

Manifest Weekends – September and October

Manifest weekends provide opportunity for men to discuss their journey as men, while creating a sense of community. Retreats are held in a rustic, outdoor setting that provides a sense of connection with nature. They begin Friday evening and conclude Sunday noon on scheduled weekends. The next two Manifest weekends are scheduled for September 20-22, 2002, and October 18-20, 2002.

► For details, visit the Manifest website at www.manifest.themenscenter.com or call Lowell Houts or Mike Sears at (515) 274-4006.

Connecting Available Through Email

Please let us know if you would like to receive this newsletter through email rather than having a paper copy sent to you. To be added to our newsletter email list, email skuhn@dmpcc.org and indicate in your message that you would like to receive *Connecting* by email. Make sure to include the name and street address to which we have been mailing the newsletter so that we can remove your name from our newsletter postal list.

www.dmpcc.org

Visit the Center’s website for information on Center counseling services, Center staff members, support and interest groups offered by the Center, special events taking place in the coming months, and classes the Center offers to mental health clinicians and clergy.

CONNECTING

is a publication of the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, an independent, interfaith, not-for-profit organization. For nearly 30 years, the Center has been providing counseling and educational services to individuals, couples, and families for the purpose of enhancing emotional, spiritual, and relationship health. The Center has satellite offices in West Des Moines, Altoona, and Ankeny.

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Des Moines Pastoral

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