

NOVEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Hi all,

Can you believe that it's not even two months to go before Christmas is upon us? This year has been an exciting year with more and more satisfied parents emerging after completion of the **Parenting 911** programme. Demand for the manual has been good and it is now available directly from my website.

M.J. Langeveld, a well-known Dutch educational Psychologist has made very important contributions to the field of educational psychology. His approach to the child and its development was from a phenomenological point of view. He gave the following two definitions of the child:

“A child can only become an adult with the help of an adult.”

“A child is someone who wants to become someone.”

In other words, every child has potential but because it has to be brought up and educated by adults, this potential is never realized.

Who then are these adults who are so vital to helping a child become a self-actualising and whole person? The obvious answer is their parents and teachers. However, there are cases where the child, through circumstances, is brought up by an adult other than their parent. If this or these adults possess the right tools, there is no reason why that child should not grow up to be a confident, high achieving person who is control of his/her life.

For whatever reason, God allowed animals to bring up their offspring instinctively. The aim of this was survival and how to handle the jungle out there. Unfortunately, we humans were not given this privilege and this is where our parenting problems begin.

We were brought up by parents, who, in most cases did their best. They themselves had their own 'hang-ups' caused by their upbringing. They then married someone who was also scarred to a greater or lesser extent by their upbringing. They then decide to bring children into the world with only the experiences of their childhood and relationship with their parents to go on, plus all the guilt that goes with this. The problem for us adults is that very few parents take responsibility for the mistakes they made in bringing us up. In most cases we have to hear how hard it was and the sacrifices they made in order to educate us etc. The problem is that we did not ask to be born and it was our parent's responsibility to look at where they went wrong when

they observed certain hang-ups that were developing, including poor self-esteem, lack of confidence and underachievement at school.

I find it strange how so many children are sent off for some therapy or other, while their parents are not enlightened at all as to where they are going wrong and the main contribution that they make towards their child's problems. As we know, there are many poor teachers at schools, sending a child off for therapy is the same as sending a class off to therapy as a result of their response to a poor teacher.

We, as parents, are educators, and have the most important role to play in our child's healthy development. As a consequence of our upbringing, we only have our own relationship with our parents as a guideline to work on. Virtually all parents parent from a comfort zone and this is why so many books and publications on parenting don't help. When a parent is told to be firm and set boundaries, unless there is a clear cut example of what this means, parents just get confused. What seems to be lacking in virtually all the literature that I have researched, is a practical and clear-cut way of parenting that parents can put into practice without necessarily moving from their comfort zone. Hopefully this book will provide for you practical tips on parenting that address, in a holistic way, all problems encountered in the raising of a child.

We need to understand that a family is a system that has to be managed. If we can remove ourselves from the mindset that parenting is smothering and overprotecting, to the fact that the main aim should be preparing our children to become independent and confident human beings so that they can handle the jungle, which is the bigger world out there.

Kahlil Gibran, in his book 'The Prophet' beautifully sums up the aim of parenting and raising children:

'And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backwards nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.'

Adolescence

For most families, problems encountered with their adolescent children are generally short-lived, but at the same time can prove to be extremely stressful to all concerned. For the other, not so lucky parents, when their child starts developing disturbing behaviour e.g. smoking, loss of interest in schoolwork, inappropriate friends, anti-authority attitude, lack of motivation or energy to be involved with extra-mural activities etc., may form part of a continuing pattern for years and years moving from crisis to crisis and culminating in them evolving into self-centred and angry adults. Parents are at their wits end in knowing how to deal with their problem adolescent, often running out of ideas and giving up or taking over their child's problem by nagging, lecturing, grounding. These actions just don't work.

Problems with adolescence manifest themselves early on and are often a result of over-protective parenting, over-controlling parenting, and parenting with no boundaries, rules or consistent consequences. More often than not the child has grown up without any real responsibilities where he/she has taken the consequences for the bad choices that they make. In many cases they have learned to become helpless and will not take on a challenge without somebody helping them. They're scared to risk and as they reach adolescence, lack self-discipline and/or the determination to want to study.

Parents need to understand that the average teenager does not enjoy going for therapy, and it amazes me how many parents insist that their child sees a psychologist sometimes for months on end. When your teenager becomes uncooperative and angry, he is upset with you, his parents, and they end up cutting off their nose to spite their face as a weird way of getting back at you. Whenever I see a family with an opting out, uncooperative teenager who has an irresponsible attitude to his studies and other things, all I request from the teenager is their cooperation, the win for them is that I'll get their 'mom off their back' and stop the nagging. I then mediate a family session whereby all rules and consequences are negotiated and where the teenager is made very aware that he/she is being given responsibility and the outcome of their choices will determine the consequences which they will have agreed to. In other words, parents regain their rightful place as the authority figures in their home where they're able to regain their child's respect and cooperation and parent in a consistent, credible and calm manner.

PARENTING 911 WORKSHOPS

Many parents feel that it's the end of the year and that they'll wait for next year before doing a workshop. Holidays are coming up and the tools given to you in the workshop are ideally suited to ensuring a hassle-free holiday. I've also introduced a two hour one session workshop for parents who find difficulty in making the dates set for the normal workshop. This is a one-on-one session for individual families and the cost is R1500 which is also claimable from your medical aid. Contact Bianca at info@kensway.co.za for dates and times of workshops in JHB, and Steph at steph@kensway.co.za for dates and times of workshops in CT. If you have any queries regarding your parenting feel free to contact me ken@kensway.co.za and I'll respond to you individually...

'Til next time, enjoy your parenting

Ken