

The
ONE-MINUTE
COUNSELOR™
for Parents

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HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

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Copyright © 2015 H. Norman Wright

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-6104-2 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6105-9 (eBook)

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Printed in the United States of America

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 / BP-JH / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Acceptance

Showing Approval

“What can I do to help my children accept who they are? How can I help my kids avoid feelings of unworthiness?”

In my book *Raising Emotionally Healthy Kids* (written with Gary J. Oliver), we offer these guidelines:

1. Ask God to help you be aware of how you feel about yourself. Many parents are hard on their kids because of their own unidentified and unresolved issues.
2. Ask God to help you appreciate the uniqueness of each one of your children and to be aware of their real needs.
3. Tell your children that you love them daily. Nothing defends against the attacks of shame or unworthiness like the security a child receives from the love and acceptance of his or her parents.
4. Affirm your children several times a day. Let them know that they are of infinite worth and value and are precious to you.
5. Give them quality time. This can be especially powerful after they have made a mistake or done something wrong.¹

Accountability

Two-Way Street?

“Someone suggested that I need to be accountable to my son. Is this correct?”

When we change and grow, we show our children that it is all right for them to change and grow. In fact, one of the best ways we can restructure our relationship with them as they mature is to build two-way accountability.

In two-way accountability, a dad would be willing to go to his teenage son and say, “Son, I’m working on not being anxious and, instead, committing everything to God in prayer. I’d like to report my progress to you each evening, and I’d like you to ask me occasionally how I’m doing. I’d also like you to suggest ways I can learn faster. And when you notice me getting anxious about something, please remind me to commit it to the Lord right away. Okay?”

When a parent initiates two-way accountability, he or she sets the stage for several things to happen: 1) teenagers will have a model for change that will help make change and growth easier to accomplish; 2) teenagers will have a model for voluntary accountability; 3) parent-teen communication will become more “adult to adult” rather than “adult to child.”

Anger

When Everyone Gets Angry

"I get angry. My children get angry. Can you help?"

Every child gets angry. So does every parent. But children aren't born with control over their anger. They have to learn it.

Teach your children the cause of their anger. Usually anger is a secondary emotion caused by fear, hurt, or frustration. Ask your children why they're angry, and help them figure it out. Get them to talk about their anger in a positive way. If one of your children doesn't talk about his or her anger, you could say, "I can see you're upset. Would you like to talk about it?"

Help your children accept responsibility for their anger. God's Word says, "In your anger, do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26). Give your children options for anger responses:

- "You can tell three of your friends how angry you are."
- "You can set a timer for 30 minutes, go to your room, and kick and yell until the buzzer sounds."
- "You can write a letter to God and tell Him how you feel."

Adjustment Needed in Child

“My son defies me constantly. It’s not just that he disobeys—that I understand. His attitude really gets to me.”

“Defiance is disobedience with an attitude.” This adage is true, and defiance usually pushes parental buttons. Consider these questions and comments:

- Is this a constant behavior or now and then? If constant, change *your* way of communicating with your child until you find a way that works.
- Is your child reacting to the current problem or something else?
- You could say, “It sounds like something else is bothering you.” Take time to think about what you really want to say, how you could say it, what you would like to hear from me, and then we’ll get together.
- This is a good time to model how to express being upset or angry in a positive manner. Remember it works better to lower your voice and tone rather than increase them.²

Keeping Kids Out of Trouble

“How can I help my adolescent children stay out of trouble without controlling them?”

Consider these suggestions:

1. Establish family discussion times. Keep them upbeat but meaningful.
2. Let your children know you want to hear what they have to say. There will be times when you *will not share* the same opinion or expertise on a subject. That's okay. To develop his thinking ability, he needs to explore ideas and beliefs. You may not agree with what he says; you can explain your opposing viewpoint.
3. Set limits on behavior but not on opinions.
4. Your teenager needs to be responsible for what he does. Don't let him blame others. He needs to accept the consequences for what he does.
5. Let your teenager make choices. Many conflicts can be defused if you approach your child with several options for a situation.

Bonding

Creating a Cohesive Family

“I’d like to have our family get together regularly to share thoughts and ideas. We seem to go in so many directions that we’re like strangers. Can something like this work?”

It can definitely work, but it will take effort on everyone’s part. Some families hold meetings on a regular basis (once or twice a month). It will help to have a set time. Make your meetings 15 minutes to 45 minutes long. Let members know the estimated time length ahead of time. Future events or present concerns can be discussed.

Here are some guidelines for the meeting that will help make it go smoothly:

- Let each person know participation is important.
- Make sure everyone has opportunities to share and isn’t cut off.
- Have each person share: “What’s the best thing that’s happened to you this week?” “What’s the worst thing?”
- This is also a good time for a five-minute devotion, prayer requests, and a brief prayer.