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An Ounce of Prevention --
Towards an Understanding of
Implications for Jewish Family Life
Education

Adam Michael Morris

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination
Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
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Referee, Professor Samuel K. Joseph

DEDICATED WITH A PRAYER FOR *SHALOM*, WHOLENESS, TO .

. .

Jeff, Sherry, Matthew, Ethan, and Noah, . . .
my family which has fashioned and nurtured me

AND

Renee, . . .
with whom I dream of fashioning and nurturing our
own family

I would like to acknowledge some people, who without their support, this endeavor would not have been such a meaningful experience for me. Firstly, Sam Joseph who in his wisdom decided to take leave this year. After being wedded to an idea that I could only pursue with the benefit of his skills and experience, he proved worthy of my labor of love. Thank you for your guidance, this thesis was my experience and you allowed that to happen while still serving me as a valuable resource, cheerleader, and Reds fan. May your year be filled with joy and promise.

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Digest

This thesis explores the need for and role of Jewish Family Life Education in the contemporary American Jewish community. It strives to examine the nature, role, and function of the Jewish family in sustaining Jewish life and suggests Jewish Family Life Education as a catalyst in that struggle for sustenance. The first chapter examines the family from perspective of Biblical and rabbinic literature. This chapter attempts to glean from these 'traditional' Jewish families valuable lessons or insights as to the nature, role, and function of the family in Jewish life.

Chapter two concentrates on the contemporary American Jewish family, discussing its components. The chapter also focuses on the stressors affecting the contemporary American Jewish family; stressors related to American society, contemporary social trends, and the human condition. It compares a traditional concept of family with today's and assesses the contemporary American Jewish family's needs.

The third chapter is a leap into theory and idealism. It outlines how a family functions from a systemic perspective and describes the conditions a healthy family. This chapter's objective is to provide an option for the contemporary American Jewish family to model.

Chapter four offers Jewish Family Life Education as a way of closing the gap between the needs of the contemporary American Jewish family described in chapter two and the

healthy model in chapter three. This chapter explains some theory behind Family Life Education as a national movement and what makes Jewish Family Life Education, 'Jewish'. It then details some current Jewish Family Life Programming available in North America. The chapter ends by explaining why Jewish Family Life Education is an appropriate method of response for the entire Jewish community.

The final chapter, five, is a model Jewish Family Life Education Program. It is a series of four workshops designed to offer parents educational opportunities in learning about the family as a system, effective communication skills, establishing meaningful rituals, and building self-esteem in children.

The thesis examines the status and process of the most influential institution in Jewish life in the spirit of enabling it to continue its productive and creative formation of a vibrant Jewish community.

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Introduction

From the beginning of Jewish history the family has been seen as a powerful instrument for Jewish survival. In the Bible and in the Talmud considerable attention was given to the functioning of the ideal family. As Judaism progressed through history a model of the Jewish family developed, upon which the Jewish world was centered.¹ Qualifications of its members and their roles were defined and idealized as a goal to achieve.

The actuality of the family in Jewish history, especially in recent times, is a study in the gap between theory and practice, between ideal and real. While certain standards were created by Jewish tradition, political, economic, and cultural factors detained the family from reaching its goals as set forth by tradition. The family in Jewish history did not always follow these guidelines.² The actual life and behavior of the family causes us to wonder if the theory was attainable or was even worth attaining.

Today we are witness to an unprecedented state of Jewish family affairs in the United States. Late marriage, high mobility, intermarriage, divorce, single parent homes, drugs, AIDS are among the factors which contribute to the situation of today's Jewish family.³ The gap between traditional family ideals and the contemporary family is larger than ever.

¹ Kroemer, David, ed., p. 179.

² Ibid, p.179-180.

³ Alper, Janice P., p.300.

Today's Jewish family is challenged to find a new means of strength and survival. They are not set up to survive in the traditional mode; not because they reject the inherent worth of traditional family values, but because in facing the unique challenges of being American and Jewish in the late twentieth century some of these traditional values fall by the wayside.

The Jewish community must now find and cultivate a way to support the new Jewish family, imbue it with Jewish ideals and help it to function in a Jewish manner. Our Jewish community, as traditional communities once did, must give Jewish families Jewish tools by which to promote Jewish survival. One of the potential methods of accomplishing this goal is Jewish Family Life Education(JFLE). Jewish Family Life Education offers opportunities for the Jewish community to respond in a Jewish manner to the unique needs of the families in our society.⁴

The American Jewish family in continuing the Jewish spiritual legacy must be trained to cope and to teach methods of coping with the issues of contemporary society and of existing as a human being. Jewish Family Life Education has the potential to serve as medium in the religious and spiritual growth of the contemporary American Jewish family and community.

⁴ Ibid, p.308.

Chapter 1

A Traditional Jewish Concept of Family in Light of Biblical and Traditional Sources

Why examine a traditional Jewish concept of family?

How Jewish heritage manifests itself today

Initially, this thesis presents a profile of family from Biblical and rabbinic sources. These sources provide a traditional perspective of the family in Jewish history. It begins here, because any study of the contemporary Jewish family would be inadequate without examination of its religious, cultural, and emotional ancestry. Reform Judaism understands Judaism as a vibrant, living organism which grows and develops from its roots; the Jewish family follows this pattern. Accordingly, this chapter looks at 'the' traditional Jewish family as portrayed in Biblical and rabbinic sources.

Asking the Appropriate Questions

This chapter seeks to analyze the functions and role of the Jewish family in 'traditional' Jewish cultures. The analysis will provide an opportunity to understand the contemporary structure, functions, and values of the family by examining their point of origination. To achieve a helpful image these questions will be asked:

(1) What did 'the' traditional Jewish family look like? A look at some of the basics of a traditional Jewish family; who was included in it, the purpose of the unit, and what elements were important for it.

(2) What were the roles & responsibilities of 'the' traditional Jewish family within its community? Every family exists within the context of a relationship within the

larger community. It creates certain classes of members for the community and at times contributes to the strength of the community, while at the same time receiving significant support from it. Part of a Jewish family's relationship with its community is creating a Jewish identity within its members, so we ponder the nature of the religious commitment of a traditional family.

(3) What were the roles & responsibilities of the individual members of 'the' traditional Jewish family?

The interplay of roles and relationships of individual members directs the family. Each member and each relationship within a traditional Jewish family had certain expectations and responsibilities to fulfill. These expectations varied from educational goals to supplying physical needs.

(4) What were the strengths/weaknesses of the biblical/rabbinic family concept? After interpreting the nature of a traditional Jewish family, it must be seen in context of the thesis' overall objective. Jewish tradition instilled in the family invaluable strengths and weaknesses that plague it today. Traditional Jewish families have some valuable lessons from which their contemporary counterparts can learn.

The details in this chapter originate from Biblical and rabbinic sources. No explicit narrative tells of the "Biblical family" or the "rabbinic family". The picture derives from limited narrative in Biblical literature on family relations; Biblical and rabbinic laws regarding family interaction,

marriage, and child rearing; commentary on ethics and values; and historical experience of 'traditional' Jewish communities. "The" traditional Jewish family does not exist, many family patterns have existed throughout Jewish history as a result of local socioeconomic development, prevailing customs, and the economic role, level of acculturation, social class, and legal status of each Jewish community.⁵ This chapter serves more as an archeological exploration of the family, than as an exhaustive survey of Jewish familial history. It is a search for artifacts, in the form of values and structure, that can help teach us about our present Jewish familial experience.

The structure and function of 'the' traditional Jewish family

Family Structure/Goals/Values

The make-up and goals of the families described in Biblical and rabbinic literature differ in their orientation and size. The Biblical family positioned itself within a tribal framework, which determined all of its functions. The rabbinic family had more freedom in its communal context. The more autonomous structure of the rabbinic family allowed for more influence and authority within the community, as long as it still committed itself to the strict regulations of Jewish law.

5 Cohen, Steven M. and Paula Hyman. The Jewish Family, Myths and Reality.

The Biblical family was only as significant as a part of its clan or tribe. The Biblical family was not a separate entity from its tribe, so to speak of the Biblical 'family' we must speak of the tribe as well.⁶ The family's responsibility in Biblical culture was to its clan. Its identity, direction, and resources were derived from the clan or tribe. The clan consisted of those united by blood and common dwelling place; children, spouses, servants, and resident aliens.⁷

A smaller family unit did exist in Biblical society, most of the book of Genesis is dedicated to the narrative of Abraham's family development. The Bible does outline specific guidelines for forbidden degrees of relationships⁸, brief outline for divorce⁹, and for levirate marriage¹⁰; however many other basic themes are neglected.¹¹ The Biblical family can be characterized as simultaneously endogamous, patrilineal, patrilocal, extended, polygonous, and patriarchal.¹² Each familial unit centered around the patriarchal figure, the wives, the children, and the servants. The father held ultimate power, even the right to life and death.

⁶ DeVaux, Roland, Ancient Israel, p.4-6

⁷ Ibid, p.20

⁸ Leviticus 18, 20

⁹ Deuteronomy 24:14

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 25:5-10

¹¹ from article entitled "Family" in Encyclopedia Judaica, p.1165

¹² Patai, R., Family, Love, and Sex in the Bible, 17-18

The Biblical family served as the fundamental unit of social order which determined right and wrong, administered justice, made laws, and maintained divine worship.¹³

The ultimate value in this society lies in membership in the clan. The family and the individual was meaningless without the clan ties.

"Just as a limb, such as an arm or leg, has value only in relation to the body as a whole, is useful only as it is attached to the body and serves its needs, so a member of the family is valuable and useful only as long as he subordinates his own interests to those of the family, as long as he faithfully serves the family and obeys its commands, as expressed by its head. And just as a limb becomes useless when it is cut off from its body, a family member, too, loses his value once he severs the ties between himself and the body."¹⁴

An individual was not perceived without her/his family background or connections. The individual was eternally bound to her/his family ties and the family maintained responsibility for any actions of the individual.¹⁵

The traditional family found in rabbinic literature grounded itself in the Jewish values inherent in halacha; in some ways its ties to the community were not as absorbing as found in Biblical society, but more encompassing in other ways. Traditional Jewish family in part resembles a nuclear family, with two parents and children -- but the roles of each member and the multi-generational influence in a traditional

¹³ Brav, Stanley, Jewish Family Solidarity, p.6

¹⁴ Patai, p. 113

¹⁵ Exodus 20:5

family differ from those of the nuclear family. The rabbinic family was patriarchal; it enjoyed multi-generational influences; it was encompassed by all aspects of life; its life was shaped by the Jewish calendar; and the ideal of non-goal oriented perennial learning was paramount to its existence.¹⁶

With the help of the Jewish legal code the family (in theory) was a well-defined social institution. It was a strongly knit organization with well defined social, religious, economic, and educational functions.¹⁷ This institution held a definite and important place in its culture.

"In Jewish social life and tradition the family constitutes perhaps the most closely knit unit in any society. All members of the family, husband and wife, parents and children are bound by mutual ties and responsibility the family was regarded as the social unit through which the culture and religious heritage of Judaism can be transmitted."¹⁸

Family was accepted as a powerful instrument for communal security and development.

The family depended heavily on its individual members for growth and survival. Each member had a role and responsibility, and the rabbis saw the importance of each.

"Family is like a heap of stones, remove one and the whole structure collapses."¹⁹

¹⁶ Monson, Rela Geffen, "The Jewish Family in America Today", p. 276

¹⁷ Brav, p.10

¹⁸ "Family" in Encyclopedia Judaica, p.1171

¹⁹ Genesis Rabbah 100:7

The individual, although enjoying more freedom outside the family structure than in Biblical society, was still perceived as primarily being a member of a larger entity.

Familial Roles and Responsibility

'The' Traditional Family's Relationship With the Community and its Religious Values

As Biblical society viewed its members by tribal units, the family's responsibilities to the tribe defined its relationship to the community. The family was expected to vitalize and support the tribe through bearing children and adherence to tribal principles. An extremely high value was placed on bearing male children, as witnessed by accounts of the inability to conceive by three of the four matriarchs in Genesis. Their frustrations showed the emphasis on bearing children, regardless of individual status.

The family also supported the tribe by following the ideals of collective responsibility. A major responsibility of the group duty was to protect weak and oppressed members.²⁰ It was inconceivable in Biblical society that an individual desire to or be able to survive on her/his own. So the tribes or families often went to extremes to care for wronged or isolated individuals. Customs of blood revenge were enacted internally and externally in Biblical society.²¹ The go'el or redeemer was designated to protect special interests of

²⁰ Patai, p. 111

²¹ "Family" in Encuclopedia Judaica, p.1166. There are many cases of blood revenge within the Bible, perhaps one of the more noted ones being Jacob's sons' revenge for the rape of their sister Dinah, found in Genesis 34.

family members²², as witnessed in the book of Ruth by the character Boaz. The law of hospitality or asylum also exhibits this commitment.²³ This value rated even higher than preserving the chastity of a father's own daughters.²⁴

The Biblical family was not committed to the "Jewish" way of life as we know it today. They maintained a commitment to their particular type of religious existence. The Bible imparts the responsibility of teaching religious truths and the history of the Israelite people and its relationship with Adonai upon the parents of the community.²⁵ The Biblical community also practiced rites surrounding life cycle events, particularly around death.²⁶ The concern for teaching about relationship with a deity and the existence of grieving customs indicate that the prescribed Biblical family was a religious one.

In the rabbinic concept of community, the community was only as strong as its weakest link; the family was the link that created the communal chain. The Jewish community maintained a sophisticated network of educational, legal, and social welfare services. The community and the family nourished each other by actively affirming and enforcing common goals.²⁷ Family and community participated in an

²² Leviticus 25:47-9

²³ DeVaux, p.10

²⁴ Genesis 19:1-8

²⁵ Exodus 10:2, 10:26; Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7, 46

²⁶ DeVaux, p. 59-60

²⁷ Bubis, Gerald, Saving the Jewish Family, p.5

intimate relationship, both independent and interdependent on one another.

Religious and ritual observance provided one of the strongest networks for rabbinic concept of family. The end result of the system of observance appears to have been connected with the home, making the home the place for religious experience.²⁸ Many of the holidays' observance patterns were designed not around the synagogue, but around the home. In a community where religion was linked with survival, the home or family was regarded with reverent significance. The strict laws and customs of religious practice were the glue that held the community together, and family served as the catalyst in their religious experience.

Individual Roles and Responsibilities in 'the' Traditional Family

Marriage in 'the' Traditional Family

In the Biblical and rabbinic family, fathers, mothers, parents, children, siblings, and extended family members have responsibilities to fulfill in order to promote the family and the community in which they live. Biblical family members followed the model set by a patriarchal, tribal community. The roles in rabbinic families are determined by a more descriptive and inscriptive legal system.

In understanding the Biblical and rabbinic conceptions' of family the familial starting point is marriage. The Biblical family began with the union of two people and their endeavor to

²⁸ Goodsell, Willystine, History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution, p.53

bear children. The marriages in Biblical families were commonly products of unions between first degree relatives. These marriages fell into disuse by the end of the Hebrew monarchy, but legitimate economic, cultural, and social concerns supported their existence. A union between relatives would keep property within the family, strengthen kinship ties, offer more opportunity for stability based on familiarity, occur between individuals of equal social status, and avoid the problem of a bride adjusting into a groom's family.²⁹

Marriages, and families for that matter, were not formed for the benefit or the enrichment of the individual but for the betterment of the tribe.³⁰ All considerations in matchmaking and family making understood the manner in which the tribe would benefit; increasing size and strength, making legal bonds tighter, or increasing the wealth and standing of the family. Marriage functioned as the foundation of the family; it served as a significant incident which propagated the species, fulfilled human needs, and perpetuated religious life.

Evidence on the marital relationship supports the patriarchal structure of the family and the entire society. The wife, or bride to be, was a possession of the husband, or a commodity to be sold or for which the husband was required to work.³¹ The emphasis on the marriage was procreation and companionship; however if a marriage was infertile the

²⁹ Patai, p.20

³⁰ Brav, p.6

³¹ DeVaux, 26-8

burden was upon the wife and not the husband. Nonetheless, marriage appears to be a valued institution for what it can bring to the society. Divorce laws are outlined in the Bible, but as far as we know not many took advantage of this right.³² Fidelity was promoted, and divorce was frowned upon in effort to protect marital bonds.³³

The rabbis clearly saw marriage as a factor in a strong family and in human fulfillment. Marriage definitely helped to fulfill the requirement for procreation, but also fulfills one as a person. Or, more technically put, marriage can make a man a better man.

"Rabbi Jacob said: He who has no wife lives without good, or help, or joy, or blessing, or atonement. R. Joshua of Sikhnin, in the name of Rabbi Levi, added that he is also without life. R. Chiyya b. Gammada said that he is not really a complete man, and some say that he diminishes the divine likeness."³⁴

Marriage was a truly mercurial institution which the rabbis used to symbolize other perfect relationships in other texts, like those between God and Israel, Israel and Torah, and Israel and the Sabbath.

Marriage is discussed at length in the Talmud and Midrashic literature. The impression left from these discussions shows marriage as a complex, but rewarding institution which serves as the basis for family life. The husband has a myriad of obligations to his wife, among these

³² Ibid, 34-6

³³ Proverbs 5:15-19; Malachi 2:14-16

³⁴ Genesis Rabbah 17:2

are: providing sustenance, cohabitation, posthumous support for her and any daughter, and a son to inherit her ketubah.³⁵ The wife was obligated to keep the house and provide for that aspect of a man's life.³⁶

Marriage is called kiddushin, literally meaning 'sanctified.' They saw the institution not as a sanctified institution, but as a sanctifying one. This institution was at the core of any healthy family and any healthy individual.³⁷ Sometimes the marriage was perceived as a partnership³⁸ and at other times it was recognized that the husband should be the ruler of his wife³⁹, and still yet stating that the husband should give more to his wife than she gives to him.⁴⁰ These apparently incompatible statements suggest that the rabbis held very different opinions or understood marriage as a very complex undertaking.

Role of the Father/Male in 'the' Traditional Family

The power of the father in the Biblical family was absolute; the family revolved around his wishes and desires. This power was protected within the family structure by law in The Decalogue and by the threat of punishment. A son could be put to death because of mere disobedience.⁴¹ As described in the Bible the patriarch of a family could offer the

³⁵ from the article entitled "Husband and Wife" in Encyclopedia Judaica, p.1120

³⁶ Kraemer, David, The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory, p. 15

³⁷ Kiddushin 70a

³⁸ Baba Metzia 59a

³⁹ Eruvin 41b

⁴⁰ Chulin 84b

⁴¹ Patai, 114-121

lives of his kin as if they were his own; Reuben offered his sons to Joseph for Benjamin's life, Abraham's binding of Isaac had no regard for Isaac's perspective, Lot had the authority to offer his daughter's sexual favors for the lives of the angels, and Jephthah offered his daughter's life as security for a vow.⁴²

With this power came responsibility, in education, in well-being of the rest of the family, and as representative of all family deeds and stature. Being the head of the family, everything that the patriarch did reflected upon the family, and everything that he did must have been done in the family's best interests. His intelligence, his faith, and his morality affected the family in a way that no other family member was able.

Rabbinic culture was also patriarchal in nature, so the father had a great deal of power and responsibility. The brunt of his responsibility lay in his role as educator and facilitator of all religious observances. The patriarch served as the priest of the elaborate religious observances which became intimately connected with the home.⁴³ Holiday, life cycle, and kashrut observance called upon both parents, specifically the father to be a central part of the family process. The Halacha designates the father's prominent role in this aspect of family life.

Role of the Mother/Female in 'the' Traditional Family

⁴² Genesis, 22, 19:5; Judges 11:29-40

⁴³ Goodsell, p.53

A woman in a Biblical family is intrinsically tied to her ability to bare male children. Examine the frustration and emphasis upon three out of the four matriarchs in the Genesis narrative, their worth is tied to their fertility. The Decalogue calls for respect for mothers, not for women. They were not on the level of their husbands, no matter how many boys they bore, but they were above the status accorded to slaves.⁴⁴

The Bible does describe the attributes of the ideal wife at the end of the Book of Proverbs. She is one worthy of a husband's trust, is handy at home running the entire household, runs the business, has time for the needy, enables her husband's ascent to prominence, and fears Adonai.⁴⁵ It is a fuller description of a Biblical female than we receive from the earlier narratives, but also important is to wonder whether this describes an unrealistic ideal or normative communal expectations.

Women, wives, mothers fulfilled second class roles in a patriarchal society, but still were considered cornerstones of the rabbinic community. In rabbinic society the sphere of activity for women was different from their male counterparts, but no less significant. Women were even considered to excel past men in faith and trust in God, but the only way that they were able to achieve merit was through their husbands and children.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ DeVaux, p.39

⁴⁵ Proverbs 31:10-31

⁴⁶ Montiflore, Rabbinic Anthology, p.310

They possessed a great deal of power within family, according to the rabbis. Women had the power to make a wicked man righteous.⁴⁷ Whether the rabbis' perspective was genuine or that they were attempting to placate the lesser, but powerful sex remains to be seen. Nonetheless, women were not powerless in this culture by any measure.

Parenting in 'the' Traditional Family

The type of parenting styles which emerged from Biblical society mirror its patriarchal and tribal nature. The Decalogue and passages in Leviticus call upon children to respect and fear their parents. This relationship allowed for parents to convey to their children the necessities of Biblical society. Parents were responsible for moral, religious, and general education.⁴⁸ The children in these families needed to learn obedience, fear and respect of elders, and devotion to the clan.⁴⁹ Most methods were acceptable to accomplish this goal, even corporal punishment.⁵⁰

Fathers were specifically called upon to teach their religious historical experience in terms of their relationship with Adonai.

"When in time to come, your children ask you, 'What mean the decrees, laws, and the rules that Adonai our God has enjoined upon us?', you shall say to your children, 'We were slaves to Pharoah in Egypt . . .'"⁵¹

⁴⁷ Genesis Rabbah 17:8

⁴⁸ Proverbs 1:8, 6:20; Exodus 10:2, 123:26; Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7, 32:7

⁴⁹ Exodus 20; Leviticus 19:3

⁵⁰ Proverbs 22:15, 13:24, 29:17

⁵¹ Exodus

Parental responsibility to educate was primary to the development of the community.

Rabbinic culture offers guidelines and expectations of parents, following traditional family models. Parents in the familial scheme, symbolized God, tradition and history, and authority figures.⁵² Parents were able to transmit the values of the rabbinic community by personifying these values. They were also better able to balance the honor and fear transcribed by Torah and rabbinic culture.

"Judaism makes paradoxical demands of approach and withdrawal on the child and his relationship to his parents. This relationship model bears resemblance to other relationships . . . the child then learns the fundamental of human relationships in the context of family."⁵³

Rabbinic culture valued *midat hadin* (justice) tempered by *midat harachamim* (compassion).

The rabbis held the privilege and responsibility of parenting to high standards. Three partners participate in the creation of each child, the mother, the father, and God; with the responsibility for forming the child upon the parents.⁵⁴ Parenting was considered a god-like task, and a very serious life altering endeavor. The rabbis remind parents how to do it: do not show favoritism⁵⁵, push away with the left hand while drawing nearer with the right, and reminding that

⁵² Shalom Hartman Institute, Authority and Independence in Jewish Family Relations, p.5

⁵³ Ibid, p.14-15

⁵⁴ Berachot 64a

⁵⁵ Shabbat 10b

parents are always modeling in everything that they do.⁵⁶ These guidelines are helpful by today's standards, but they were the theory and not necessarily the practice.

Obligation also extended to religious education. The responsibilities of parents ran the gamut from religion, to practical living, to learning a trade. As the rabbis remark; a man must teach his son religion, a trade, and how to swim.⁵⁷ The family was the medium in which children gained or began to gain all knowledge of living.

In this culture the parent's universe centers around the children. The only true source of goodwill in the world (nachas) can be derived from children. This arrangement places a great deal of power in the hands of the children⁵⁸, for a parents worth is often valued only through the accomplishments of her/his children. The obligation that this community held as parents to its children is obvious, and affects us today.

Children in 'the' Traditional Family

To have children is an imperative from the beginning of the Bible, to have many children is a blessing throughout the Bible, to be a child in the Bible was not necessarily a blessing or an honor. Children were strictly guided by the needs of the tribal/patriarchal structure.

⁵⁶ Sukkot 46b

⁵⁷ Kiddushin 40b

⁵⁸ Twerski, Abraham, "The Pivotal Role of Family in Judaism", p.277

"The child is taught to respect and fear its elders . . . what the growing child must learn is to subordinate his wishes to those of the father, to reach a state where he can actually identify psychologically with those of the father and the rest of the family . . . only when he learns that interests of the family come first has he reached a stage of development . . . only when he can govern his actions with the family point of view in mind can he hope to achieve a status of recognition and possibly even of leadership."⁵⁹

Most of what is known about the experience of being a child in a Biblical family is through their relation to the adults who raise them.

Rabbinic culture recognized the development of children and their definite role in familial structure. The child grew from a spoiled 'king' at one year old to a two-three year old who is dirty from play, to a youth ready for formal education, to an age of nine where sex is legally significant, to early teens where a child begins puberty, and eventually to puberty.⁶⁰ More significant than the rabbis' differentiation of childhood is the fact that they recognized a developmental process. If they possessed this insight, then perhaps, they understood how different children with different needs fit into family function.

Children held a special responsibility, that of honoring and fearing both parents. The fear seemed to be designed to enable parents to teach the unique halachic culture to their children. The honor they owed to their parents was even more than the honor they owed to God. This honor was

⁵⁹ Patai, p.189-92

⁶⁰ Kraemer, p.70-1

carried on throughout their lives. It included taking care of parents and always honoring their wishes.⁶¹ An account is told of rabbi Tarphon who upon seeing that his mother was barefoot, placed his hands under her feet as she walked.⁶² The rabbis relate extreme instances of honor like this one to further emphasize the importance of honor and fear in the parent-child relationship.

What can be gleaned from 'the' traditional Jewish families?

When we view 'the' traditional Jewish family we view a family with different contextual considerations than ours. They lived in a extremely different society, which contributed to different family formations and values. Nonetheless, their struggle for meaning and survival has significance for us. After an examination of a traditional Jewish family we can understand more of its legacy to our families today. 'The' traditional Jewish family included some negative factors which we no longer possess, or are in the process of discarding; it contained both positive and negative aspects that we continue to hold on to; it held insights or perspectives which we do not possess, but might serve to improve upon.

In traditional concepts of Jewish family rigidity of roles were limiting and restrictive, specifically those of the women. These roles seemed to be a necessary component of those cultures, but did not allow for much freedom for its individual

⁶¹ Kiddushin 31b-32a

⁶² Montifiore, p.302-3

members. The institution most affected by this was marriage. From our sources we see that marriage was not an equal union, despite the rabbis lauding of the role of a woman in a man's life or the description of the ideal wife in proverbs. Marriage definitely matched the symbolism of the kiddushin ceremony, which centered around the needs of the man.

The rigid roles and male dominated society did not permit any freedom for women (married or not) in society. A woman's worth in these cultures was tied to her family; which short term made for a strong family unit, but long term inhibited types of personal growth for the woman.

Family, group, and communal needs outweighed the needs of the individual. The individual was not nurtured and developed for her/his own sake, but for the sake of the tribe or the family. This attitude encouraged devotion to the point of detriment to the self. The rabbis' account of serving as a parent's sandals or Lot giving up his daughter's dignity to protect the angels for the sake of family name send a clear message as to where the power rested in those cultures.

This attitude of community or family first promoted communal survival, but it instructed members that their only meaning was in others' existence. Granted this evaluation comes from an existential contemporary perspective, but even if we accept the fact that this attitude was needed in those cultures it did not allow for self-improvement or growth. The consequence being that whatever sickness or insecurities individuals did possess were merely passed on to the next

generation. Individuals were not supported in any attempt to improve themselves if it did not immediately benefit the family.

However, the inability to view the individual as separate from her/his family or community is an insightful component of these cultures. The image of the family as a heap of stones in rabbinic literature teaches us something that rings true today in family and individual function. An individual is a product of her/his family and cannot be seen otherwise.

The communal or tribal aspect of these communities bids us to recapture our larger communities and extended families. The extended family was not separated from the parents and children. Its influence, support, and heartache served as a prominent influence in everyone's life. The tie to the community never allowed these families to lose meaning or direction. Families sacrificed some freedom, but they possessed identity and a sense of wholeness inherent within the larger community.

Some aspects of the traditional marriages were not admirable, but other attitudes are desirable for today. The rabbis viewed a healthy marriage as the basis of the a healthy family. As patriarchal and sexist as their conception is in our context today, they viewed it as a joyful institution in which one mate could grow and benefit from the other. They were not open to other familial or marital options, and perhaps their error was in their emphasis on it as the end-all be-all; not in their perspective of it as a meaning filled institution.

The most telling aspect of a traditional Jewish family in the context of this thesis is its perspective on the family as a place for learning. Everything was taught within the framework of this institution, how to live, love, study, and even to swim. The family was considered the appropriate place for this to happen. The family was held liable for the education of its members. Within this role lied a great deal of responsibility, and a great deal of power to influence and change. Today, in a society where traditional functions of the family are performed by various institutions, we should observe this lesson to remind us of the power of our families.

As we turn to the contemporary American Jewish family and examine its components and crafters, we really do not make such a huge leap. The society of 'the' traditional Jewish family differs greatly from today, but appropriately, its concerns do not. They must protect and nurture their children, determine male and female roles and determine the nature of the marital bond, cultivate a relationship with an extended family, meet individual needs, and infuse themselves with a vibrant and meaningful religious spirit. Jewish families, in the Bible, in rabbinic literature, in medieval France, in Palestine, and in the contemporary United States all face the same significant factors in their struggle to survive and to thrive.

Chapter 2

The Contemporary American Jewish Family

Status of the Contemporary American Jewish Family

Today's Jewish families are entrenched in a struggle; a struggle to survive as Jews, as a families, and as individuals. The interplay of these three struggles would appear unprecedented in Jewish history. The significant factors which include children, marriage, the individual, and religion have not changed. They are unprecedented in the sense that people creating Jewish families have never confronted this society, its attitude toward family, and its attitude toward religion. The structure, purpose, and values of this family represent these struggles. Gerald Bubis comments upon the potential for growth resulting from these struggles.

"The Jewish family can draw upon 120 generations which nourish its present responses to life. The resulting amalgamation is always Jewish, yet changing as each generation contributes its own approaches to childbearing, child rearing, and intergenerational relationships, . . . the Jewish family's existence today is predicated on an act of will -- the will to be different from general society where Jews live."⁶³

The question remains how this struggle is progressing and how successfully this family is responding to life.

This chapter's goal is to assess the situation of the contemporary Jewish family. This goal will be accomplished by evaluating the general perceptions of the Jewish family and specific, but common, factors in American society that affect the family. So many variable Jewish family structures and

⁶³ Bubis, Saving the Jewish Family, p.86

values exist in our society that isolating one and labeling it demonstrative of the contemporary Jewish family situation would not be constructive. Similar forces in American society and within the Jewish community affect these many different family types, and although the end result may be different, the stress of these forces and the family's reaction processes are indeed similar. In examining the contemporary Jewish family some generalizations must occur, but they are made from the perspective of seeing a Jewish community full of viable family structures.

The Structure/Values/Goals of the Contemporary American Jewish Family

We are fortunate that a great deal of time has been spent attempting to grasp the nature of the current Jewish community. Much of the time and effort has been through surveys and studies which leave us statistical pictures of Jewish life, and Jewish family life. Again, these statistics paint a general picture, they do not always consider the fringes of the Jewish population. As we examine the statistics and the generalities, we accept them as insightful and not as authoritative. Statistics tell us that members of today's Jewish community attain middle class status⁶⁴ -- but Jewish poor do exist. Contemporary Jews have attained significant levels of education and concentration in professional fields. Jewish families place a high premium on college attendance, nearly four-fifths of Jewish college aged students are enrolled in

⁶⁴ Monson, Rela Geffen, p.278

college. These contemporary Jewish families are small units and they show a high level of participation in organizational life.⁶⁵ The Jewish family of our society is a small, directed organism with sufficient material means and mobility.

A picture could not be so simple, for this small but directed organism exists in many other forms. These forms are determined by a few factors: (1) Jewish people are marrying later in their life span than they ever have.⁶⁶ This phenomena contributes to a lower birth rate (they have less time to have children) and the small family units. Late marriage also affects communal affiliation, as people are more likely to affiliate when they have children.⁶⁷

(2) Nearly one quarter of the married people are divorced by the time they are aged 35-39.⁶⁸ One fifth of the Jewish population has never married.⁶⁹ These two factors attest to the variant structure of 'normal' contemporary Jewish family -- there are no normalities. The American Jewish community possesses nuclear-type families, non-traditional multi-parent families, single-parent families, remarried/blended families, and single adults who have familial concerns and needs.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.278

⁶⁶ Cohen, Steven, Alternative Families in the Jewish Community, p.18

⁶⁷ Bayme, Steven, "The Changing Jewish Family in the 1990's: Implications for the Synagogue", p.1-3

⁶⁸ Cohen, Steven, Alternative Families in the Jewish Community, p.18

⁶⁹ Fishman, Sylvia B., Jewish Households, Jewish Homes: Serving American Jews in the 1990's, p.46

(3) Jews in the contemporary United States enjoy a high degree of geographic mobility.⁷⁰ The elderly are the fastest growing segment of the community and children under 18 are a smaller part of the population than 15 years ago.⁷¹ These elements greatly affect the support system of the Jewish family; who is providing the support and who is receiving the support. A more elderly population in varied locations has changed the way that extended family has customarily supported the family unit. The elderly and youth now compete for the dollars and the time of the community. The family has been pressured to find new modes of support within the community and to re-evaluate what type of support it provides.

American Jews regard family with a high value. This value aids the Jewish family as it struggles to redefine and survive in American society.⁷² The issues for which it fights are typical of the society and connected to Jewish history. The tension between these sometimes conflicting goals serves as a dialectic in family progress. Jewish families are pulled in many directions attempting to reconcile opposing concerns: family solidarity and individual independence; integration into society and Jewish survival; and familialism and extra-familial orientation.⁷³

⁷⁰ Berger, Peter and Brigitte Berger, War Over the Family, p.301

⁷¹ Fishman, Sylvia B., "The Changing Jewish American Family in the 1980's", p.26-7

⁷² Brodbar-Nemzer, Jay, "Marital Relations and Self-esteem: How Jewish Families are Different", p.95

⁷³ Berner, G., "The Adaptable American Jewish Family", p.9

The Role of the Contemporary American Jewish Family Within
the Community

Unlike traditional societies, contemporary American society centers around the individual and her/his freedom. Jewish families are designed to produce individuals who possess qualities necessary for economic success with a stress on individuality and freedom both within and from the family unit.⁷⁴ Although a value of the family is producing these individuals, the family also possesses values which are antithetical to this goal, like close-knitness and focus on the family over the individual.⁷⁵ American society, which provides unprecedented opportunity, also fosters some of the discrimination and prejudice that has limited Jews for centuries. The contemporary Jewish family is an institution attempting to create individuals with tools to cope with both sides of that spectrum.

The contemporary American Jewish family also strives to remain Jewish. For the most part, the American Jewish community does not possess a religious observance structure to regulate and support family function. Religion and particular religious observance are not a dominant part of the American Jewish experience. Secular concerns often conflict with a traditional observance pattern. However, Jewish families still struggle to derive some type of Jewish lifestyle, mainly through life cycle and holidays.⁷⁶ The religious

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.5

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.6

⁷⁶ Cohen, Steven, Content or Continuity? Alternative Bases For Jewish Commitment. The 1989 National survey of American Jews, p.14-15

component exists within the American Jewish family, but in an evolving form unfamiliar to Jewish experience.

Today's family pursues what occasionally are conflicting values and goals, to be American and Jewish. It is set up to create individuals who are primed to benefit from American society and cope with the challenges of being a minority in a sometimes intolerant society. Steven Bayme explains this tension between providing for individual and communal needs.

" . . . Judaism has historically posited a triad of individual - family - society. If we believe that strong individuals will build strong families and strong families will build strong communities, then it's the business of the community to be strengthening the family. To be sure, this triad flies in the face of American individualism. American society in many ways nurtures an enlightenment society of individual opportunity. That value system has been marvelous on terms of enhancing Jewish opportunities in American society and is reflected in the degree of Jewish success in America. However, our message as Jews is that individualism alone is insufficient. We believe in the interconnectedness between individual rights and family responsibilities."⁷⁷

With these goals in mind, the contemporary American Jewish family also attempts to face stressors inherent in American society. Its response reflects the family's growth and development.

At times the Jewish family's training of its members leaves the community behind. The more individually centered society has dealt a blow to the Jewish community. Jewish community still exists, but not on the same scale of other

⁷⁷ Bayme, Steven, "Changing Jewish Family in the 1990's", p.7

communities in Jewish history. The community today is associative and a rationally developed type of social relationship characterized by impersonally contracted associations between people; it is not a more productive spontaneous set of relationships characterized by reciprocal bonds of sentiment and kinship.⁷⁸ The American Jewish community is an undermined resource, waiting to be tapped into further. Without continued excavation, however, the well might run dry. One of the institutions hurt most by this state of affairs is the family.

The relationship between the family and community is not always clear. American society provides a new and strange context for this alliance. The specialization by the government into social services changed the nature of the family/community relationship. American society has also created a culture of youth that is separate and sometimes as powerful as the family and communal complex.⁷⁹ By taking on responsibility for functions that the family and the community have traditionally held, society has left the family and community in a vacuum trying to forge new roles. Their measure of success is part of what this thesis is about.

The Role of the Individual within the Contemporary American Jewish Family and the Community

For better or for worse the marital relationship still serves as a cornerstone of family function. How these two individuals interact and how they bear and raise their children

⁷⁸ Bubis, Gerald, Saving the Jewish Family, p.10-11

⁷⁹ Berger, Peter and Brigitte Berger, p.159

have the most profound impact on family formation. The emphasis on this relationship and the openness to other types of foundational relationships within the family are constantly changing. Marriage is still a positive value for young people; our society is decidedly pro-marriage.⁸⁰ The resulting separations, divorces, and family structures are what challenges the community.

With the emergence of individualism in our society, the roles of males and females have changed (and still are changing) dramatically. The women's movement, riding the coattails of the emergence of individualism, has challenged all patriarchal institutions inherited from history. Massive societal changes have come even slower within the confines of family life.⁸¹ The rules were rewritten leaving men and women, husbands and wives, and mothers and fathers engaging in things that historically and socially were new and unfamiliar.

Parenting styles reflect this struggle as well. Traditional parenting relies heavily on the value of hard work, religion, service to others, and marriage. While the 'new breed' of younger and better educated parents tend toward a more permissive approach and being more concerned with: the psychic and physical care of the child, the child's autonomy, personal freedom, and freedom of choice.⁸²

⁸⁰ American Jewish Committee, Spotlight on the Family, p.2

⁸¹ Ackelsburg, Martha, "Families and the Jewish Community: Jewish Perspective", p.10

⁸² Bubis Gerald, Saving the Jewish Family, p.8

Stressors on the Contemporary American Jewish Family

"Suffice it to say that the picture of sitting down to dinner with mommy, daddy, brother, sister is a false one for a very significant portion of American Jews. yet . . . the explosion of this mythic image is part of an overall fantasy surrender that is the first stage of creative Jewish survival. Other, myths include the idea that all healthy 'normal' Jews are absolutely heterosexual, or that we can ignore intermarriage or the non-Jewish spouses of our children, brothers, sisters, and they will disappear. Sure we would like to close our eyes and dream. Dream our way back, but back to when? To 1965? 1955? 1935? 1881? 1789? 1648? 1492? 70? Sinai? Whenever it was clear and uncomplicated."⁸³

Indeed the American Jewish community must wake-up from its dream and face a sometimes nightmarish reality. The stressors inherent in contemporary American society inhibit the healthy functioning of the family. These stressors and their ramifications for the contemporary Jewish family will now be examined.

The perils of American society in 1993

Many of the stressors facing the contemporary American Jewish family center around similar concerns of traditional Jewish families; marriage, male and female roles, childhood issues, individual needs, extended family, and religion. These 'normal' challenges have been given a new twist by American society. Earlier, we discussed some of the demographic structural changes of the family, but now is the time to examine those changes from a qualitative perspective.

⁸³ Weinberg, Shalom P., "The Jewish Single Parent Family", p.78

American society offers family a set of unprecedented circumstances in terms of world history. Jews generally live in a highly urbanized society in which families have a different role than in previous rural societies. In the rural society the family served as a viable economic unit, while today an individual is the basic economic unit.⁸⁴ Instead of being an economic necessity, the family, as a unit, struggles to survive on an economic level. They struggle in the context of a society which continually values material wealth over human capital.

"The heart of the difference between the modern world and the traditional one is that in traditional societies people are a valuable resource and the interrelations between them are carefully tended; in modern society things are the values and people are all too often treated as disposable."⁸⁵

Children were once an economic asset, today they are an expensive liability.

As the family struggles to survive financially tensions emerge over marital fidelity, childbearing, and family growth. Two-thirds of women with children in the Jewish community of surveyed cities hold full or part time jobs.⁸⁶ It appears that the norm in the Jewish community is that among married couples both spouses are working (To say nothing of the situation in single parent homes). This situation creates conflicting time responsibilities between home and work, a

⁸⁴ Rosenman, Yehuda, "Jewish Family: Lights and Shadows", 149-50

⁸⁵ Maybury-Lewis, David, "The Importance of Being Tribal", p.68

⁸⁶ Fishman, Sylvia B., Jewish Households, Jewish Homes p.13 These statistics were taken from surveys completed in cities with significant Jewish populations; Baltimore, Boston, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Worcester.

daily time crunch to find time together, and in some cases insufficient economic resources despite both incomes.⁸⁷ One of the end results is a parental time deficit. The parental time deficit detracts from quality relationship time between parent and child and/or husband and wife.⁸⁸

Work has emerged as the central force in many families for financial and for ideological reasons. Economically some families need the money to survive. Their needs continue while conditions in society worsen, and the attitude and action of government and society do not change. The nation's economy demands increased devotion from its workers, but employment institutions operate as if the pressures this devotion creates for families does not exist.⁸⁹ Our society is not built to support healthy families.⁹⁰ The costs of bearing children remain private while the public sector reaps the benefits of the parent's creation of human capital.⁹¹ Another example is the government's refusal (until recently) to protect parental leave from places of employment, so

" . . . many American parents in the work force are being deprived of their right to parent in the first week and months of their children's lives, or denied the time to care for sick children or other family members."⁹²

⁸⁷ Schulweis, Malkah, "Heroism and Shame in the Family", p.93

⁸⁸ Hewlitt, Sylvia, When the Bough Breaks, p.71

⁸⁹ Louv, Richard, Childhood's Future, p.216

⁹⁰ "Healthy families" as used here suggests a family which functions to full capacity in performing all of its functions. The concept will be examined and defined in greater detail the next chapter.

⁹¹ Hewlitt, Sylvia, p.27

⁹² Friedman, Ruth Pinkerson, "Child Care in Jewish Family Policy", p.1

Time and energy are demanded by society and by employers upon parents, single and married, leaving little for the energy and time draining task of maintaining a family.

Aside from the economic stress of maintaining a family, the emotional stress takes its toll as well. The emotional attitude needed at home is much different than the one needed to succeed in the work place. A career requires long hours, mobility, commitment to one's self, efficiency, controlling attitude, a drive for high performance, an orientation towards the future, goal oriented, and time pressures; while family and children require family time, stability, selflessness, tolerance of chaos, ability to let go, an acceptance of differences and failure, an appreciation of the moment, and the patience to re-do many tasks.⁹³ Many parents find the transition difficult and confusing, and at times they are not successful. The entire family gets caught in the middle and emerges the big loser.

Another aspect of the work obsession relates to the ideological situation and not as much to the financial obligations. Our society is very career oriented, falling in line with the individualism of our age. It is problematic when the career orientation of individuals drains the resources of family life. Especially in the Jewish community, where so much emphasis has been placed upon achieving enough capital and social status to protect itself from discrimination. The reasons for achieving may differ as a result of a more tolerant society,

⁹³ Hewlitt, Sylvia, p.85

but the Jewish community remains highly career oriented.⁹⁴ When the only goal is this type of success, family becomes merely a leisure time activity and family merits more than that type of effort.⁹⁵ Families require a great deal of energy and time to survive and thrive.

What happens in this time and energy crunch created by the economic and ideological demands of our society? The amount of time spent with family has decreased significantly in the last 25 years.⁹⁶ The family's ability to consistently maintain the physical and emotional health of its members is inhibited. This inability takes away precious family time and rituals like dinners or outings, removing the consistent everyday relating of parents, children, siblings, and/or spouses.

This inability also manifests itself through more hours of child care or child self care (latch key kids).⁹⁷ Child care is a necessity in our day, it is not an evil or a wrong but a product of our reality. Noting increased child care as a result of the parental time crunch only supports the idea that parents should have as much time as possible with their children and that our society does not always follow the paths that would allow the realization of this idea.

⁹⁴ Mirsky, Norman, Beating the Odds: Family Role Change and Career in American Jewish Life, p.33-39

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 33-39

⁹⁶ Louv, Richard, p.14 The family research council reports that time is a decreasing natural resource for parents and children. The average work week of a professional person is 52.2 hours and a small business owner is 57.3 hours. The time parents spend with children in the last 25 years has dropped 40%.

⁹⁷ Hewlitt, Sylvia, p.83

The technology in American society might offer potential to bridge this time gap. If the time spent doing menial things could be reduced with the help of technology, then more time would be left for relating and living. The technology fills the gap in a more negative manner. Technology and its gadgets become the medium for bridging the gap rather than just an enabler. Kids' time is filled with television, video games, and other technology so that the lack of parental involvement is tempered, but not truly replaced.⁹⁸

Children are not spared the career oriented need to achieve possessed by parents. In many cases it is the kids in the community who do not have time for parents. Parents have less control of their own physical, emotional, and economic environment so they try to control their time. Children live in a programmed generation as every aspect and activity of their day is assessed and planned.⁹⁹ Play time and family time together becomes a casualty of the fear of falling behind the competition.

America has been land of greatest opportunity for Jews, and along with opportunity it has brought the challenges of contemporary thinking. The economic needs, personal fulfillment needs, and the time gap that these needs have spawned force families to react. These stressors have significantly affected our families' ability to provide basic needs to its members.

⁹⁸ Louv, Richard, p.16

⁹⁹ Louv, Richard, p.109

Family Break-up: Divorce, Separation, Death

Divorce and its ramifications may be one of the most far reaching forces upon the American Jewish family. Numerous Jewish families are touched by divorce, single parent homes, and/or remarried/blended families. One-third of American children born in the 1980's will live with a step-parent before the age of 18¹⁰⁰ and between twenty to thirty percent of Jewish children live in single parent or blended homes.¹⁰¹ The emotional trauma of the divorce itself affects family function, as does the ways families respond in form of single-parent arrangements and remarried/blended families.

A divorce changes internal and external family functioning. On an internal level families who divorce face the stages of divorce; indecision and attendant anxiety, decision and actual separation, legal process and consequences, renewed anxiety of living alone, and finally, emotional divorce.¹⁰² Looking at divorce from this perspective helps to view it as a process within larger family processes, instead of an undesirable result of misguided decisions.

The process of divorce is something which affects its family members for the rest of their lives.¹⁰³ Accepting the viability of all family structures, it is still possible to see affects of divorce when compared to members from intact families.

¹⁰⁰ American Jewish Family Center National Newsletter, summer/fall 1991, p.1-3

¹⁰¹ Fishman, Sylvia Barack, Jewish Households, Jewish Homes, p.21

¹⁰² Levine, Marilyn, "New Family Structures: Challenges To Family Casework", p.239-240

¹⁰³ Hewlitt, Sylvia, p.89-93

In non-intact families teen suicide is more common, as is the likelihood low-achievement in school.¹⁰⁴

On an external level, divorce definitively affects the family's relationship with the community, specifically the Jewish community. This relationship generally has taken a negative turn until recently. Jewish tradition places a heavy emphasis on being married, and 'failing' at that endeavor was an undesirable label.¹⁰⁵ Where the Jewish community could be counted upon for support at painful life cycle events, divorce was not viewed as a loss to be grieved as in a death. The lack of support from the Jewish community coupled with association of Judaism with the divorce could often spoil family members' ties to Judaism.

The lives of individuals in single-parent families develop according to how they face new family structure and the challenges inherent within those structures, how they face the grief issues of losing the previous family structure, and how their individual composition is changed by the new family. Concerns facing a single parent family are financial constraints, housing, child care, transportation, and home maintenance.¹⁰⁶ These concerns can dramatically change members' lives through moving or not being able to afford membership in a synagogue.

¹⁰⁴ Hewlitt, Sylvia, p.89-93

¹⁰⁵ Schlesinger, Benjamin, "Jewish Mother-Headed One-Parent Families: Impressions from a Canadian Study", p.178; 7a, p.23

¹⁰⁶ Schlesinger, Benjamin, "Jewish One-Parent Families", p.93

Developing New Family Modes: One-parent, blended, intermarried, gender equality, reduction of the extended family, financial constraints, and same-sex-parent families

The loss of family structure can be as powerful, if not more, than experiencing a death. The loss represents a loss of structure, tradition, comfort, and sense of inclusion.¹⁰⁷ The readjustment to everyday life and communal life for divorced family members, unless recognized as a viable grief, could possibly be attained but would not be an enduring adjustment.

The challenge of being a single parent frightens many individuals. A single parent is forced to face issues in abundance and in greater significance.

"In addition to tremendous stress caused by financial difficulties, single parents are burdened with the responsibilities of developing a career, reestablishing a home, and managing the physical and emotional needs of their children. These all-encompassing responsibilities leave single parents feeling inadequate and overwhelmed."¹⁰⁸

They face the daunting task of taking care of themselves and of others simultaneously.

Parenting alone has both its advantages and disadvantages. Usually in this type of home there is peace; no conflict with a spouse on child rearing techniques, and it allows parents a closer relationship with their children.¹⁰⁹ But, in these families low self-esteem is prevalent and affects

¹⁰⁷ Cumbler, Judith, "Personal Realities in New Family Modes", p.27

¹⁰⁸ Brichter, Nancy S., "Our Non-Traditional Jewish Families", p.25

¹⁰⁹ Fishman, Sylvia B., Jewish Households, Jewish Homes, p.23; Schlesinger, Benjamin, "Jewish One-Parent Families", p.93

coping mechanisms of all members. The parent cannot effectively model an enduring relationship or the opposite sex role, and the closeness between parent and child can develop into overdependence.¹¹⁰ Parents find pitfalls in this situation not found in dual parent families, and all too often no peripheral support is available to help single parents in facing them.

Children seem almost more helpless in this situation. They know only what they have experienced, so their feelings of low-self-esteem, confusion, and rebellion are extremely common. When dealing with the loneliness and pain, the child possesses the potential to take on the shame and guilt of the two most influential adults in their lives.¹¹¹ The impact of living without one parent as result of any situation cannot be underestimated; it often happens in the formative stages of a child's coping mechanisms. The divorce can affect them for the rest of their lives.

Most remarried or blended families, (those in which at least one spouse brings a child(ren) from a previous marriage) were one-parent families at one point time. Some of the issues and concerns are similar, but the situation presents some different angles, as well.

" . . . these families find themselves engaged on a daily basis with overturning accepted sociological and psychological beliefs about kinship, parent-child roles and interpersonal relationships and allegiances. What do

¹¹⁰ Schlesinger, Benjamin, "Jewish Mother-Headed One-Parent Families", p.171-76

¹¹¹ Weinberg, Shalom P., p.81

stepparents and stepchildren owe each other? What does family loyalty mean among siblings, half-siblings, and stepsiblings? Rewriting the script even as they live it, remarried families are addressing family themes in new ways, creating a reality that is totally unlike the traditional nuclear family which it also deceptively resembles."¹¹²

As in the case of the one-parent family, the very core of these individuals existence, how they relate to others and how they feel about themselves, are intimately tied to the development of this 'new' family structure.

A remarried/blended family offers its members new challenges. They are confronted with a new couple and a new group at the same time, two sets of pillars for each child, incorporation of new family members into of family structure, and a new extended family.¹¹³ These concerns manifest themselves as 'simcha stress' -- during life cycle events and holidays and in recreation of everyday rituals.

Both one parent and remarried/blended families color the family life of the American Jewish community. They change individuals' self-perception, financial mobility, and religious orientation. Their prominence calls the community to recognize how their formation affects the objectives of the American Jewish family.

The increased mobility of the Jewish community has almost erased the extended family as it was once known. Jewish families, parents and children, live significant distances

¹¹² American Jewish Family Center Newsletter, summer/fall 1991, p.1

¹¹³ Levine, Marilyn, p.241

from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. This new type of extended family has forced the family to look for other methods of support, in some cases they have not been very successful. With grandparents moving away to retire and children displacing themselves all over the world grandchildren have been deprived of the emotional support and the link between old and new that grandparents can naturally offer. It is not clear what will fill the vacuum left by the Jewish community's mobility.

An issue that the Jewish community must face is the role of homosexual parents in Jewish families. Homosexual households are becoming visible in the Jewish community, homosexual congregations exist and there are significant homosexual populations on college campuses. No exact statistics exist¹¹⁴, but these potential families possess concerns inherent in their unique structure. As these families are considered viable by the Jewish community, it must strive to understand how they contribute to its members growth and communal formation.

The Struggle for Creating Committed Jews

The Jewish family strives to form committed Jewish individuals and in American society, the family labors to accomplish this objective. Intermarriage and the challenges of our secular society are major factors in reaching this objective. Intermarriage, like divorce, is a reality of the

¹¹⁴ Fishman, Sylvia B., "The Changing American Jewish Family in the 1980's," p.7

American situation. The task of qualifying or quantifying the 'evils of intermarriage' is another topic for another thesis; intermarriage must be examined and understood as to how it affects the functioning of American Jewish families. Most notably it affects the Jewish family's ability to create committed Jewish individuals. This statement is not overstating the obvious, for it says that intermarriage 'affects', it does not say that it 'inhibits'. Not all intermarriages render the transmission of Judaism impotent, but for the most part intermarriage severely changes how the Jewish family functions.

The stress and tension which surround religious tensions in these families can be manifested in unhealthy ways. Children often serve as a blank screen upon which parents enact their religious and cultural differences.¹¹⁵ Unless handled sensitively, the influence on children could be damaging. The parents or spouses struggle to maintain ethnic loyalty to their heritage and fall under the pressure of more than one set of standards.¹¹⁶ The tensions of settling religious and cultural issues have a ripple effect into critical emotional and relational areas of family function.

The struggle to create committed Jews even surfaces in the cases of in-married families. Statistics tell us that all declines in Jewish involvement can be attributed to the rise of alternative families between 1975 and 1975.¹¹⁷ Even if this

¹¹⁵ JJCS vol66, no3, sp1990, p. 245-6

¹¹⁶ Bubis, Gerald, Saving the Jewish Family, p.37

¹¹⁷ Cohen, Steven, Alternative Families in the Jewish Community, p.1-2

interpretation were true, the members of the 'alternative' families originated from non-alternative families -- something critical can happen in any family. Some of the challenge lay in affiliation -- some families observe holidays but are not affiliated, their commitment is to Jewish culture or the like.¹¹⁸ Non-affiliation detracts from the vibrancy of the Jewish community. Somehow families do not instill a need for this type of community in their members. If families do not instill this value, it is not a drastic conclusion to draw that other Jewish 'values' are not being successfully transmitted -- values which instill within a person an attachment to the Jewish way of facing life.

The Struggle for Creating Healthy Human Beings

In mentioning stressors we cannot overlook the 'stressors' of being human. Life proves challenging enough without the lists of 'stressors' discussed above. These are the everyday needs and obstacles that Jews and all human beings encounter; sickness, death, and growth within relationships. It is by dealing with these concerns that the American Jewish family meets its greatest tasks. The family copes with all other stressors in concert with the way it faces these concerns.

These concerns manifest themselves in the course of different interactions on different levels: the family deals with one member when she/he encounters change from the

¹¹⁸ Bayme, Steven, "Outreach to the Unaffiliated", p. 2

outside world in the form of something like job stress; the entire family deals with forces outside the family as discussed earlier in this chapter like economic strains; the family deals with transitional points in the life of the family, and these could be a divorce or the emergence of a child into adolescence; the family also confronts illness or the disability of a member. It is through the healthy manipulation of these challenges that the family creates healthy human beings.

The contemporary American Jewish family is not achieving this objective. Approximately twelve to twenty-two percent of children in this country suffer from some type of mental or emotional disorder.¹¹⁹ Neither our society, nor our Jewish community place much emphasis on the mental or emotional health of our family members. How is mental and emotional health any different than spiritual health, they are definitely not separable. In the many sources examined for this thesis on Jewish family very few were concerned with the nature of the people that Jewish families were producing. The concern lay in only that the family was producing Jewish people.

The inability of the family to produce members with healthy coping mechanisms can be seen by some of its results. Alcoholism, other addictions, and the dis-eases which accompany them can be attributed to the family's internalization of destructive values.¹²⁰ It also could be

¹¹⁹ Louv, Richard, p.165-6

¹²⁰ Shalom Hartman Institute, p.2-3

argued that this shortcoming can be attributed to the relationships which end in divorce and the disappointing attempts to cope with it.

Comparing the Values and Structure of 'the' Traditional Jewish Family with Those of the Contemporary American Jewish Family

So many examinations of contemporary Jewish life come to a conclusion that traditional life held clearer views, greater faith, and stronger families. That perspective of family life in Jewish history insults our rightful place as a community in Jewish history. We may find aspects of both our cultures, traditional and contemporary loathsome and we may find aspects in both which are quite redeemable. The fact of the matter being that a traditional Jewish family is not here to benefit from our experience or our culture; only we are left to draw on their experience to benefit our future. In a sense this examination and borrowing is *Torah* ; experiencing a spiritual part of our past and drawing upon it for our future. It is in this spirit that the traditional and contemporary families portrayed in this thesis are compared.

As mentioned earlier, our generation of Jews has encountered an unprecedented era in Jewish history. No Jewish community has matched the size, freedom, and creativity of the American Jewish community. The advances that Jewish individuals have made and the efficiency of Jewish families in preparing Jews for such success is impressive.

Aspects of traditional Jewish family life bear reviewing in the context of contemporary American Jewish life for benefit of the contemporary Jewish family:

(1) We grow with our times. A marriage centered, patriarchal family would be short lived in contemporary society. This growth serves us well as our family members learn to fit into new roles. The civil rights movement and the women's movement have rightfully reminded us that everyone deserves equal treatment. Drawing from our traditional familial roots, perhaps we need keep one group a little bit more equal than the rest -- our children. The rabbinic family centered around the bearing and raising of children, this was a primary goal. Children were indeed a prize, a gift. Our children are not consistently looked upon as gifts, and the inconsistency harms them, and in the long run it harms the Jewish community.

Undoubtedly, children in traditional Jewish families were abused, hurt, and abandoned -- but the overall attitude displayed by the rabbis makes them central, valued, and cornerstones family life, regardless of the actions or conditions of society.

(2) From the rabbis' account and the accounts in the Bible these families were successful in producing viable individuals for their society. They knew the necessary laws and customs, and understood the hierarchy to which they had to abide. For years the individuals created by the Jewish family were perfectly suited to take their place in American

society; independent, resourceful, intelligent and creative. The question being asked here regards the nature of the individuals growing up today. They may still be well suited to succeed in the professional world, but do they possess the tools to survive and thrive in a new interpersonal world? The sense here is the answer to this question is negative.

(3) Traditional Jewish family values should not be considered answers for today's ills. They should serve us as a guidepost as to what was given us on account of their successes or failures. The most striking guidepost of traditional Jewish families seemed to be their religious connection. Their entire religious system differed from the Reform Judaism or Conservative Judaism or unaffiliated Judaism of today. The system of halacha is not the guidepost, the way it played a role in their lives is the guidepost. 'The' traditional family's level of religious observance is not necessarily a guidepost either, but how those observances served them is one. They had a religious aspect of their lives, which ordered them and allowed them connection to a powerful support network. Today's family has a religion, but in most cases it is a religion which does not help them to approach life's questions or challenges. The religious aspect of the traditional Jewish family answered spiritual needs, it offered *shalem*, 'completeness.'¹²¹ The religion of today's families does not attend to the yearnings of the soul that are present today. What we must learn from our ancestors is the

¹²¹ Weinberg, Shalom P., p.79

lesson of discovering a way to allow religion to attend to our souls the way it was ordered for some traditional Jewish families.

These comparisons should serve as an effective springboard into reviewing and assessing the needs of the contemporary American Jewish family.

The Needs of the Contemporary American Jewish Family

"No family will ever again be the family of a hundred years ago which still remains our model. It is possible, however, that as American Jews no longer hung up on trying to seem like others, find some way to extract from their heritage that which will affect their current behavior, it will also affect their family lives. And if this happens, there may also emerge a new kind of Jewish family which is not merely a family of Jews."

Today's Jewish family is in a precarious place. It possesses much the same power and potential that Jewish families of the past have possessed; yet it is a very needy institution on the edge of much adversity. The family must find what it lacks and must turn outward to the community and inward to itself to meet those needs.

"Judaism holds out a message of individual, family, and community as closely interrelated . . . Innovative Jewish communal service policies to strengthen today's families will communicate a powerful and necessary message to American society that the health of the family and the health of society are closely interrelated, and that it is the responsibility of one to strengthen the other."¹²²

¹²² American Jewish Committee National Family Center Newsletter, spring 1989, p.5

The family is in need of support from the community in the form of recognition, finances, time management, as a representative of familial concerns, and as a provider of education. The family needs to be recognized in all its forms by the community and its institutions. A narrow definition of family only excludes and leaves needful families out in the cold. All families need to be seen by themselves, and the community, as viable and legitimate.

Economic and time management support must be accorded to the family. Most obviously this could come in the form of child care and other programs which would decrease the time gap in family life. The community can offer more than programmatic leadership in this area, by modeling and supporting a community in which family is primary above professional concerns and that the valued resource is people.

Families and the Jewish community need to work together to represent their concerns to the public and appropriate governmental agencies. The stressors on the Jewish family must be fought on many fronts; on the familial level, on the communal level, and on a political level. Whether it be through legislation or delegation of funds, the community should be a forceful representative of one of its most valuable assets.

The community must be an educational resource for Jewish families. Programs need to be provided on Jewish history and customs, but other types of education is needed as well. Educational programs which reach out to the spiritual

and emotional needs, rather than just cognitive needs are imperative -- teaching families how to be viable Jewish human beings. The community must also provide trained leaders to create and facilitate creative educational opportunities. In the process of providing these services the institutions must see themselves merely as facilitators for family growth and the parents and children as its custodians.

" . . . effectively step in with meaningful religious experiences for families communicating to children in particular that Jewish tradition has a great deal to say to them experientially in terms of stabilizing their lives."¹²³

The family must turn these macrocosmic concerns inward as well. Primarily, the family must re-focus its priorities to producing quality human capital and reclaiming spiritual fulfillment as an inherent religious right. Society does not make re-focusing priorities an easy task; it will not change its economic emphasis or career mindedness. American Jewish families must find a creative way to redesign their time and priorities -- making their marriages, themselves, and their children precede their professional concerns.

American Jewish families need to learn how to teach individuals to be content and complete persons. Contentness and completeness is akin to finding spirituality, finding a process of relating which enables one to thrive in relationships and society. From this endeavor the other stressors are not separable, and an effort in this area will go

¹²³ Bayme, Steven, "Changing Jewish Family in the 1990's", p.6

a long way in confronting the various stressors which confront the Jewish family. It is this endeavor that the remainder of this thesis will try to inspire.

Chapter 3

The Functioning of a Healthy Family: What do We Want
from the Contemporary American Jewish Family?

This examination of the American Jewish family now turns to how families function and how that functioning can result in healthy individuals, families and communities. Understanding the nuts and bolts of family functioning from a psychosocial perspective will aid us in eventually determining how Jewish family life education can strive to meet the needs of the contemporary American Jewish family.

Looking at Family from a Systems Perspective

Seeing the family function as a system, with larger systems and including smaller systems, allows us an insightful approach to family process. The family is the most profoundly formative unit in our society, regardless of its form or structure. As a unit a system strives for balance, develops a strict system of rules, and other basic elements. Considering the family as a system opens new doors for enlivening it with a Jewish soul.

Defining the Concept

The most basic way to understanding the family as a system is to compare it to a mobile. In a mobile the various parts balance and move according to the other parts; if one is pulled the others react. One part cannot be removed or added without affecting the overall balance. The family constantly pursues that balance within the context of trying to achieve its institutional goals.

A familial system functions according to some basic principles. In a system the whole is greater than the sum of

its parts. The elements which add together to create a system are not enough to create the system; the system results from the interaction of these elements.¹²⁴

"The notion of wholeness is way of expressing th deep organismic unconscious unity of any system and the blood connected system especially. The connection of blood, which is never undone, is more profound than that of friendship."¹²⁵

Within the larger system, however, smaller sub-systems can exist as well. Spousal, parental, and sibling sub-systems function in conjunction with the family system, and these systems maintain the same principles.

Relationships compose family systems. Its process directly results from the interaction of the persons within the family.¹²⁶ Each individual in the system has a unique individualistic identity as well as carrying an imprint of the whole family system.¹²⁷ From a systems perspective each individual is significant as being a unique individual and as possessing the components of her/his family system. Both of these identities is learned from the relating which occurs in the family.

The relating in family systems follows consistent patterns. A common pattern concerns emotional triangles. These triangles, consist of three persons or a combination of persons and issues. They form when any two parts of a

¹²⁴ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On the Family, p.28

¹²⁵ Ibid, p.28

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.28

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.28

system become uncomfortable with one another and those two parts focus in upon a third person or issue to stabilize that relationship.¹²⁸ Every member in the family participates in numerous triangles.

The force which pushes the family system is homeostasis. Under this principle the family always strives to maintain its emotional balance and it can never be unbalanced. The family must always act to preserve the organizing principles of its existence.¹²⁹ So, when a problem occurs the family's (consciously or unconsciously) main objective is to preserve this balance.

In order to achieve this balance each member of the family system has learned definite roles. By fulfilling these roles they achieve homeostasis. These roles take on different forms; structural ones like parent, child, spouse, or sibling; or they can be emotional roles, fulfilling family emotional needs. For example, a role of a parent is to serve as a model to be a man or a woman, to be a husband or a wife, to be a father or a mother, to be in an intimate relationship, and to be a functional human being.¹³⁰ On the emotional side, social systems have four basic needs; productivity, emotional resistance, relationship, and unity.¹³¹ Individuals take on the

¹²⁸ Friedman, Edwin, Generation to Generation, p.35-9

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.23

¹³⁰ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On the Family, p.32

¹³¹ Ibid, p.33; This information is based upon Dr. Jerome Bach's model of social systems.

responsibility for meeting these needs for the entire system.¹³²

The organizing principles belong to every system. They are also referred to as family rules. These rules dictate how the family must function to maintain homeostasis. They fall into two categories: universal rules which regulate power, hierarchy, and the complementarity of functions of the family, and idiosyncratic rules which involve years of explicit and implicit negotiation over intimate areas among family members.¹³³ These intimate areas include what may be communicated, to whom it may be said, how to disagree with the context of the system, how to question, how to express anger and deal with it, rules of affection, and rules for protecting the children.¹³⁴ When these rules suffocate or inhibit the growth of family members to achieve homeostasis they become unhealthy.

All the individuals, their roles, and the family rules attempt to meet the familial needs. Through the family's struggle to meet these needs individuals grow and develop, in fact the individual's values and needs are defined by what role she/he plays in pursuing the system's needs. It is when the family's needs and the pursuit of homeostasis harm its members that dysfunctional aspects manifest themselves.

"Families organize their members into certain patterns and, to a certain extent, it could not be otherwise. In

¹³² Ibid, p.33

¹³³ Minichin, Salvador, Families and Family Therapy, p.51

¹³⁴ Satir, Virginia, Peoplemaking, p.98-102

order to feel secure, people must be part of predictable interactions. Unfortunately, predictability may congeal into limiting models, so that the patterns become inflexible and family members use only a small range of the behaviors available to them."¹³⁵

As we look to examine how families respond when challenged, let us review the principles of family systems through the aid of the mobile model. The parts of the mobile/family would be something totally different without its interaction with the other parts; only through its interaction with the other parts and its creation of the mobile, does it reach its maximum potential. The mobile/family relies on each part performing its designated role in keeping the balance, depending on each part's size or weight. The mobile/family also depends upon rules to maintain its balance. A single part cannot be pulled too tightly or the rest of the system is harmed. The mobile/family does not exist in a vacuum . . . parts get pulled, rules get broken, pieces get lost.

Development/Indications/Consequences of Unhealthy Systems

Viewing the family from a systemic perspective allows us to approach some of its crises and challenges in a different manner. Addictions like alcoholism, gambling, and abuse are some of the societal crises which are seen differently when seen from a systemic viewpoint. Spiritual dysfunctions like low self-esteem, communal unaffiliation, and inability to maintain intimate relationships can also have different significance from

¹³⁵ Minuchin, Salvador, Family Healing, p.45

this perspective. In part, the origin of these dysfunctions can be attributed to unhealthy family process, requiring the formation of new responses to them.

A Dysfunctional System

Inherent in the make-up of a system are the myriad possibilities for types of function, functional and dysfunctional alike. These dysfunctions merely reflect inefficient functioning within the system. A dysfunction is not a value statement upon a system or members of that system. To a certain extent all systems are inherently flawed being that they are human centered. It is only natural that a system's rules or rituals become anachronistic; a healthy family system is able to endure these changes, while an unhealthy one fixates on old and sometimes harmful rules.

These families get stuck in what may be called the family trance cycle; in which these values and functions merely get handed down from generation to generation.¹³⁶ The family easily follows these patterns because family systems function through feedback loops which are cybernetic and circular. Family, itself, is an incorporation of the subcultures and culture of one's upbringing. In other words, as long as a way of functioning is accepted by a community or by a society, it is reinforced and encouraged, even when it could prove to be a long term detriment.

Remembering that a system relies on the interaction of individuals, harmful rules which suffocate the individuals lead

¹³⁶ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On the Family, p.37-8

to dysfunction. In family systems such as this, certain rules are taught, learned, and lived. Everyone in the family must control their feelings at all times; everyone must be perfect in everything; when things are wrong someone must take the blame; no discussion about the pain of the dysfunction; create myths or rationalizations to redistribute the hurt; agree never to disagree; and do not trust and one will not be disappointed.¹³⁷ These types of rules lead individuals to self-limiting and destructive behaviors in order to make up for the pain of dysfunction or following of irrational myths. These individuals eventually create families under the same guidelines.

The rituals of families represent the nature of their family process. The rituals may become **minimizing**, so that everyday things take precedence over rituals and may be an attempt to sever connections with a painful past; **interrupted** rituals may show signs of coping troubles; **rigid** rituals which do not allow newness or creativity may be protecting the family homeostasis, and **obligatory** rituals may oblige all to adhere to the entrenched family rules.¹³⁸

Minimized rituals often occur in families who want to avoid continuity with the past. They accomplish minimization by having as few rituals as possible; no daily rituals of belonging, special events like birthdays are not as important as work, or actual rituals are easily interrupted or ended.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Bradshaw, John, Healing the Shame that Binds You, p.39-40

¹³⁸ Imber-Black, Evan and Janine Roberts, Rituals for Our Times, p.58-73

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.58

Rigid rituals are those which do not and cannot change, like similar dishes at holidays or limited allowable behavior patterns in daily rituals. Obligatory rituals may include the required and painful holiday visit to relatives.¹⁴⁰

Another explanation of why dysfunctional family systems tend to maintain their dysfunction is to protect family secrets. Keeping a secret may protect the family or individuals from embarrassment and what is perceived as further pain, but when an entire system is designed to keep that skeleton in the closet, the alcoholic, the criminal, the embezzler, it is destined for dysfunction. Secrets divide the family, they create unnecessary estrangements and false companionship, they distort perceptions, they exacerbate other pathological processes, and belie the fact that the very formation of the secret is a symptom of other things plaguing the family.¹⁴¹

In a dysfunctional system one individual commonly manifests the sickness of the system. An alcoholic is not the sick one, she/he merely possesses the symptom of the family pathology.¹⁴² Alcoholism is not the only spiritual dysfunction which manifests itself in this manner, co-dependence is another. Whenever an entire system directs itself towards keeping a secret, maintaining unhealthy rules, protecting the symptomatic family member, everyone in the system becomes addicted in a sense to this myth or condition.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p.71

¹⁴¹ Friedman, Edwin, Generation to Generation, p.52-54

¹⁴² Ibid, p.19

¹⁴³ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On the Family, p.164

They are addicted in the sense that their own sense of self depends upon the maintenance of the condition which produced the symptom. A system structured along these lines gives rise to parents and individuals who embody and indoctrinate their children with these same unhealthy patterns.

Parental/Marital Dysfunction

Whether a family system is divorced, married, remarried or one-parent centered, the basis of its function was transcended from its original marital relationship.

"The marital relationship is the axis on which all other family relationships are formed. The mates are the architects of the family."¹⁴⁴

How the parents feel about themselves, how they view themselves in the context of the marital relationship, and how they relate with one another are the factors in teaching their children how to be functional human beings. Individuals bring to the marriage relationship what they learned from their parents' relationship, and their own marriage duplicates or diametrically opposes that of their parents.¹⁴⁵ From this starting point, the blueprint of a family system is formed.

A significant implication of viewing the family as a system is how the extended families play a role in family function. Since a spouse or parent is a product of her/his own family system, that former system plays a part in how the current

¹⁴⁴ Satir, Virginia, Conjoint Family Therapy, p.2

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.10-12

system works -- and if the former system is still active, then its impact is even greater.

"All families are extended families. Even in the United States where young families are often cut off from their kin, the larger family is still there, a dormant resource. But, keeping this resource from becoming a liability requires a negotiation of boundaries in the early years. Wise parents accept this boundary. When they don't, the larger family is not a resource but a source of unfinished business."¹⁴⁶

An individual never completely leaves her/his system of origin, but an unhealthy system does not allow the individual to any distance for fear of upsetting homeostasis. The pathology lives on and continues in numerous families.

As two people come into a marriage, what they are searching for in each other determines what they may return to their future family. They perceive their love as a couple and what it should do for them individually in regards to how it can fill holes left from their own family system. If they believe that love means one spouse will not act independently of the other, that one spouse will always comply with the other's demands, that one spouse will always know what the other desires even without asking; then the couple perceives the marriage as a happier extension of themselves and an attempt to find their own self-worth within the intoxicating love of the other¹⁴⁷. This perception that a marriage will bring two halves together to make a whole

¹⁴⁶ Minichin, Salvador, Family Healing, p.125

¹⁴⁷ Satir, Virginia, Conjoint Family Therapy, p.10-12

endangers the individuals. A healthy relationship must be based upon desire and not on need.¹⁴⁸

The couple in this type of relationship develops and models poor functioning. They communicate in a manner that is covert in order to protect their own selves from emotional pain in the relationship.¹⁴⁹ This indirect and multi-level communication does not allow for independent communication or for differences in communication. They do not express their actual emotions and rules begin to develop as to how to interact without this show of emotion. Without the ability to communicate effectively, the family unit will be unable to move beyond any type of dysfunction.

Virginia Satir outlines five different patterns of communication. These patterns reflect individual low self-esteem and determine how the participants understand communication and themselves. Individuals communicate on two levels (what they say and what they want to say) when they have low self-esteem, are worried about hurting the other person's feelings; are worried about rupturing the relationship, or are unconscious of anything but themselves.¹⁵⁰ When individuals communicate with these concerns they do not model their actual feelings. With this type of communication relationship partners learn incorrect

¹⁴⁸ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On the Family, p.65 John Bradshaw notes that in this equation $1/2 + 1/2$ does not add up to 1, rather the result is $1/2 \times 1/2 = 1/4$ as the individuals decrease their stature and their self-worth.

¹⁴⁹ Satir, Virginia, Conjoint Family Therapy, p.19

¹⁵⁰ Satir, Virginia, The New Peoplemaking, p.82

information about their counterparts. Systems and their rules become based on this information.

Individuals who communicate with these concerns do so by placating, blaming, computing, distracting; and the single level communicator¹⁵¹ does so by leveling.¹⁵² The placater speaks in an ingratiating way, so as not to anger or cause discomfort to the other person. The blamer positions herself/himself on the offensive so that she/he will be perceived as a strong individual. The computer does not even recognize a threat and hides behind an intellectual front to appear calm, cool, and collected. The distracter acts to make the threat irrelevant by constantly moving and directing the conversation towards safer territory. The leveler's message is complete in that her/his facial expression, voice, and body language match the message.

The child(ren) of this couple are destined to be cast in a similar role that was cast originally for the spouse. Individuals marry because they want to feel like everything to someone instead of feeling like nothing. When a child is born, she/he becomes another vehicle for self-esteem and eventually a monitor for marital conflicts.¹⁵³ A child enters into the family as a sponge, ready to absorb every detail regarding how to live as a human being. The baby can absorb only what she/he is immersed in by its parents.

¹⁵¹ The single level communicator is one who communicates the same, congruent message on all levels of communication. This person says what she/he means with verbal language, body language, and emotions.

¹⁵² Ibid, p.85-94

¹⁵³ Ibid, p.31-37

"Our families are the places where we have our source relationships. Families are where we first learn about ourselves in the mirroring eyes of our parents, where we see ourselves for the first time. In families we learn about emotional intimacy. We learn what feelings are acceptable and how to express them. Our parents model what feelings are acceptable and family authorized and what feelings are prohibited."¹⁵⁴

From a dysfunctional marriage relationship, dysfunctional children ultimately follow.

Individual Dysfunction

The result for the child in this situation penetrates her/his existence. Children are abandoned on many different levels when they unsuccessfully fulfill their parents' needs. Parents abandon their children by abandoning them physically, by not modeling their emotions, by not affirming their children's emotions, by not providing for their developmental needs, by physically, sexually, emotionally, and spiritually abusing their children, and by using their children to fulfill their own needs.¹⁵⁵ A child whose own emotions become so connected to their parents' own gratification has none of her/his own emotions. The relationship is not one of love, but fusion and enmeshment of the people involved.¹⁵⁶

Children do not have the luxury of ignoring their parents; their parents have survival significance for them -- they cannot ignore them or their messages. The children learn to

¹⁵⁴ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On the Family, p.5

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p.3

¹⁵⁶ Bradshaw, John, Healing the Shame that Binds You, p.42-52

deal with the world in the contradictory world of their parents. They turn the blame on themselves which leads to low self-esteem, and the language of disguised protest (symptomatic illness of family process).¹⁵⁷

One of the tools used in teaching children about their boundaries has been named 'shame.' Shame serves a very functional and needed role; it teaches emotional boundaries, personal needs, and even spirituality.¹⁵⁸ However, in dysfunctional systems, shame can be destructive or even toxic to the individual.¹⁵⁹

"When shame is appropriate, it can be used positively to allow behavior and moral values to be in consonance. When it is inappropriate, it can damage an individual's sense of self and the family's function as a nourishing, strengthening entity."¹⁶⁰

Any individual can either be uplifted or crippled by the role of shame in the family system.

When an individual does not appropriately gain a sense of self from the family system, her/his ability to relate to others is damaged. The familial patterns of teaching individuation follows two paths, one of enmeshment and one of disengagement. The enmeshed individual learns that she/he requires extreme yielding of autonomy to others, lacks a sense of self without attachment to others, and does not possess the skills for autonomous mastery of problems. The

¹⁵⁷ Satir, Virginia, Conjoint Family Therapy, p.46-49

¹⁵⁸ Bradshaw, John, Healing the Shame that Binds You, p.7-9

¹⁵⁹ Schulwels, Malkah, p.101

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.93

disengaged individual possesses a skewed sense of independence and lacks feelings of loyalty and belonging and a capacity for interdependence.¹⁶¹ Ideally an individual incorporates a healthy compromise between disengagement and enmeshment, but an unhealthy system teaches only one or the other as a means of survival.

The challenge in facing dysfunctional families (which basically include all family systems) lay in the fact that they are resistant to change, as change threatens their understanding of survival.¹⁶² For involvement from the Jewish community to be effective we must now understand what it is that we look for in healthy families and ways that Jewish family life educational programs can help to bridge the gap between the two.

What We Need From Our Families

We must have some goal for our families which we pursue, some ideal towards which we strive. The rationale behind this thesis believes that such an objective exists and that it is a realistic expectation. Families take many forms in our community, but viewing family process from this systemic perspective helps to perceive families beyond their forms and beyond their symptoms.

"The point is that the family's form is not the basic determinant of what happens in the family. Form presents different kinds of challenges to be met, but the

¹⁶¹ Minichin, Salvador, Families and Family Therapy, p.55

¹⁶² Friedman, Edwin, Generation to Generation, p.23

process that goes on among the family members is what, in the end, determines how well the family gets along together; how well the adults grow, separately and with one another; and how well the children develop into creative, healthy human beings. For this, self-worth, communication, rules, and the system are the chief means of making a family work."¹⁶³

The healthy family system which would nurture and promote healthy Jewish individuals would emerge from a process exhibiting nourishing rules, good communication, responsible parenting emerging from a positive marital relationship, and would strive for these goals within a functioning and meaningful religious network.

Promoting Healthy Relationships

Healthy System Function

Every system develops according to its needs and context. Along this developmental process families must learn how to keep the rules of functioning and communication fair and equitable. The realization of this goal would liberate the family to produce more well-rounded functioning individuals. A family is a place in which its members can learn that they are unique, loving, powerful, sexual, sharing, sensible, spiritual, realistic, and responsible.¹⁶⁴

Good functional rules allow a system to achieve these ends. These rules ensure the ultimate opportunity for growth within the system¹⁶⁵:

¹⁶³ Satir, Virginia, The New Peoplemaking, p.181

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.246

¹⁶⁵ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On The Family, p.54-5

- (1) **Acknowledge problems and resolve them.** The system needs to be an open one in which all members are honest and no secrets are kept.
- (2) **Promote perceiving what is, thinking what one thinks, feeling what one feels, desiring and choosing what to desire, and imagining self-actualization.** Rules which inhibit an individual from being human suffocate the soul.
- (3) **All relationships are dialogical and equal.** Every participant in family relationships has an equal claim and equal standing.
- (4) **Communication is congruent, direct, and sensory based.** Clear communication offers a direct response to problems.
- (5) **Family members get their needs met.** The system is designed for every member to pursue her/his optimal growth.
- (6) **Family members can be different.** Individuation is promoted and expected.
- (7) **Parents do what they say.** Children know what to expect and learn clear boundaries.
- (8) **Family roles are chosen and flexible.** The family is able grow and develop to meet changing needs.
- (9) **The atmosphere is fun and spontaneous.** The family is a place wherer members want to be.
- (10) **The rules require accountability.** Members learn responsibility for their actions.

(11) Violation of another's value leads to guilt.

Community is understood as a crucial value.

(12) Mistakes are forgiven and used as learning tools.

Members are seen as human, and judged not on mistakes but on the nature of response to their mistakes.

(13) Family systems exist for individuals. The family does not smother the individual while maintaining its connection with community and heritage.

An underrated, but significant key to healthy family process is effective communication. Like everything else the child learns, communication skills are overtly and covertly transmitted from birth by parents. Good communication avoids double level communication, saying one thing with the voice and another with body language or sounds. This reflects a lack of self-esteem by the communicator who is concerned about effecting the relationship with her/his true feelings.¹⁶⁶

Single level communication originates in self-esteem, but effective communication guidelines complement self-esteem. Good communication follows some of the functional family rules like confronting situations and emotions. Effective communication also entails giving good feedback, having a high sense of awareness about one's self and others, and a willingness to disclose what one feels, wants, and knows.¹⁶⁷

Healthy Parent-Child Function

¹⁶⁶ Satir, Virginia, Peoplemaking, p.60-61

¹⁶⁷ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On The Family, p.52

As a child enters a family she/he needs to obtain certain skills, primary to these needs is that upon entering a family, parents have the necessary tools to be functional human beings. They must each enter their relationship willing to accept each person's autonomy, express true feelings and ask for what they need and desire, acknowledge and take responsibility for their actions, support the other's dreams, be kind and generous to one another, be fun to be around, and be genuine and real.¹⁶⁸

"Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it impossible for each to see the other whole against the sky. A good marriage is that which each appoint the other guardian of his solitude."¹⁶⁹

The successful maintenance of this relationship enables the growth of a future family.

As they embark on familiness, parents must be aware of the educational and emotional challenge that they face. They must be aware that thrust upon them is the responsibility to teach their children about self (individuality), how it relates to others(communality), how it relates to the world (society and ecology), and how it relates with life(spirituality).

"Perhaps the greatest challenge to parents is to plant our seeds in good faith and then wait to see what kinds of plants they will become. The goal is to have no preconceptions about how a child should be. Instead,

¹⁶⁸ Satir, Virginia, The New Peoplemaking, p.332

¹⁶⁹ Bradshaw, John, Bradshaw: On The Family, p.64

parents need to accept the fact that the plant will be unique unto itself. The child will have sameness as well as differentness in relation to each parent and every other human being. This makes parents discoverers, explorers, and detectives, rather than judges and molders. Parents can use time, patience, and observation to learn about the new treasure that has come into the world."¹⁷⁰

The job possesses power and wonder, and they must be aware of the manner which both can be abused.

The marital relationship is challenged to grow by parenting, because of the new needs of the child and of the relationship. Within their bond parents must develop a mutual accommodation in many small routines, negotiate new relationships with their own families of origin, differentiate their needs and functions, and create a new boundary and social system for themselves as a couple.¹⁷¹

The child enters the relationship needing to find continuity in relationships, to learn how to influence and predict responses in others, to learn how to structure the world, and to esteem her/himself as a masterful person.¹⁷² Parent(s) must be prepared to provide an atmosphere which allows the child to meet these needs. The atmosphere is created by a healthy parent and one who comprehends these needs.

Rituals, Religion, and Meaning

¹⁷⁰ Satir, Virginia, The New Peoplemaking, p.36

¹⁷¹ Minuchin, Salvador, Families and Family Therapy, p.17

¹⁷² Satir, Virginia, Conjoint Family Therapy, p.58

In searching for an understanding of the healthy Jewish family, we must look for resources within the Jewish religion. Religion's role in life is to provide a spiritual fulfillment, a path to search for answers to life's challenges. Ideally, a family utilizes some type of religious network by which it grounds itself and can model a sense of order. Religion offers support through attachment with others and self through rituals and by relating in some way with a deity. The sense of place in community, in society, and within oneself is a hallmark of any religious system.

Families must possess a functional ritual system which validates their life passages and serves them on both a practical and spiritual level. Rituals perform basic functions in family process¹⁷³: rituals allow families to celebrate and affirm deep joy and honor life with festivity; rituals mark transition and make these transitions manageable and safe; rituals allow individuals to state their beliefs in non-verbal messages; rituals help to mark how we relate with others as families shape, express, and maintain relationships; and rituals play a significant role in healing and recovering from all kinds of losses, including betrayal, trauma, and death.

In a healthy family process rituals ally with the family rules and values to promote the process and the production of functional human beings.

" . . . in these times of rapid and dramatic change for the family, rituals can still provide us with a crucial sense

¹⁷³ Imber-Black, Evan and Janine Roberts, Rituals for Our Times, p.32-56

of personal identity as well as family connection. Besides its changing status, membership within a family is still the primary way that most people identify themselves, and rituals that both borrow from the past and are reshaped by the relationship needs of the present highlight for us an ongoing sense of continuity and even change."¹⁷⁴

These rituals may be created from the demands of a situation or they may be shared with a rich institutional religious heritage like that of Judaism. A healthy Jewish ritual would model functional system rules while connecting the family with a larger entity. The ritual and its connection would infuse family life with meaning.

Writing this document about the family from a rabbinic perspective, it is inconceivable that a healthy family system would not possess or adapt itself some type of religious system. A religious system which offers support and educational resources, but more significantly, one which assists in pursuing ultimate meaning. Ultimate meaning can have many different interpretations, but basically it translates to an understanding of an higher power which orders and prioritizes life.

Family ultimately fulfills a spiritual need for its members; it gives them the tools by which to find an inner balance. An individual with this balance is content with who she/he is and what she/he can become, and can contribute to the lives of others. The family has always been a medium for meeting this religious need, for the individual and the community. A religion, like its rituals, is accountable to family rules and

¹⁷⁴ Imber-Black, Evan and Janine Roberts in Psychology Today, p.62

promotes a spiritual pursuit that is a necessary part of healthy family process.

What Is a Healthy Family and What Can It Do?

A healthy family is the assemblage of a unit of people who together survive and grow, who provide emotional needs by balancing autonomy and dependence, who teach it members the tools of socialization, and play a role in contributing human capital to its community and society. A fair amount of the discussion in this chapter has focused on the marital bond and how it affects family function; it is the most basic and historically common family unit. However, a healthy family does not necessarily include two parents, or one parent, or two-parents of the same sex, or two parents of the same religious institutional background, or any children. Any unit which strives to survive and meet these needs can be considered a family. A family's success does not depend solely upon its form, but upon its process.

We want the contemporary American Jewish family to be able to successfully survive and grow, provide emotional needs by balancing autonomy and dependence, teach its members the tools of socialization, and play a role in contributing human capital and committed Jews to its community and society. To accomplish this mission the family should incorporate the following characteristics:

(1) A family must understand how it operates. The interaction of its members define its function, so it must be aware of its systemic tendencies. From this point of

understanding, it must also understand how roles and rules are developed, and how they can be changed within a flexible system.

(2) The rules and roles of families must promote freedom of expression and open communication. Fair rules allow each individual to be who they are and empowers them with the responsibility of doing so.

(3) The communication in a family must be clear and single level. Without the ability to communicate effectively individuals cannot express who they are or understand who others are, and that type of confusion leads to pain and loss.

(4) The family needs to develop the individuation of its members so that change is not perceived as a threat to its homeostasis. Experiencing change or challenge is not an option for human beings, but choosing different methods of response is an option. The family and its individual members are going to face painful changes, they must possess the self-esteem needed to cope with them.

(5) Whatever foundational relationship of the family may exist it must be an interaction of content individuals. These individuals must come to the relationship with realistic needs and goals; not to fill in holes left by a previous family system but to partner with someone in order to enrich one's own existence.

(5) As parents and children, family members must have fair expectations and relations with one another. Parents must maintain their role of educating their children with life-

living tools. Children must accept the authority and the humanity of their parents. Each family member must live their own life without enmeshing in the lives of others and feel connection to others without disengaging.

(6) Family members must be able to see themselves as active parts of many family systems and possess the fortitude to concentrate on the issues from the significant system. In this light the extended family must be utilized as a resource for future family growth.

(7) Families must enlist a religious system to aid in their spiritual development. Allowing for ritual and a relationship with a deity enables the family to pursue communal connection and its individuals to strive for cosmic significance.

The needs of the contemporary American Jewish family lay in the challenges it faces, but its more pressing needs are those in learning to function as a healthy system. Throughout the evolution of the Jewish family, it developed crucial survival rules, but as time has progressed some of the rules, roles, and values have become less effective in creating functional, committed, Jewish human beings. Judaism, being a religion which strives to offer resources for spiritual fulfillment, must rise to that calling and face the spiritual dysfunction of its families.

Chapter 4

Why Jewish Family Life Education?

A main aspect of this thesis is assessing the status of the Jewish family, both past and present. In many cases the Jewish family is not successfully fulfilling its duty of creating committed Jewish functional human beings. As the family is the significant institution in shaping individual lives and creating committed Jews, the Jewish community must respond to this situation. Jewish Family Life Education responds to this crisis of the Jewish community and family.

Family Life Education and Jewish Family Life Education¹⁷⁵ form an educational movement designed to confront the family as an impacting institution and as a vibrant educational medium. The potential of Jewish Family Life Education lay within our ability to modify our current perception of the role institutionalized Judaism plays in contemporary life. This chapter will concentrate on understanding what the concept of Family Life Education entails; examining how Jewish Family Life Education can confront the circumstances of the contemporary American Jewish family by analyzing the Jewish Family Life Programming which occurs today and how this programming meets the needs of the community and of the families; and envisioning the potential for Jewish Family Life

¹⁷⁵ The terms Family Life Education and Jewish Family Life Education are both used in this chapter. Family Life Education designates the broad educational field which may include many different types. Jewish Family Education is one of those types which possesses the same goals and rationale of Family Life Education and also possesses unique concerns inherent in the Jewish community.

Education which focuses on enabling families to nurture functional human beings.

Defining family Life Education and Jewish Family Life Education
Types and Theories of Family Life Education

All forms of Family Life Education strive to strengthen the family by attaining individual and family well being.¹⁷⁶ It accomplishes this goal by empowering the learner to make responsible choices regarding her/his living and relating style.¹⁷⁷ For example parenting workshops educate parents and potential parents about various parenting styles and theories which present them with options in dealing with their children. It is not to be confused with Family education, which may possess a similar goal, but concentrates on methods and benefits of educating the family about Jewish history, rituals, and values as a single unit.¹⁷⁸ All types of Family Life Education programming may choose to occasionally educate the family as a unit, but its main objective is to provide educational opportunities which teach the family how to function most efficiently as a family unit.

Both the educational objectives and educational methods are unique in the Family Life Education Field. Attaining individual and family well being includes a few categories of concentration: Programming in Family Life Education focuses on human development and sexuality,

¹⁷⁶ Thomas, Jane, " Family Life Education: an Anlysis of the Concept, p.4

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.7

¹⁷⁸ Schiff, Alvin I., "Trends and Challenges in Jewish Family Education", p.271

interpersonal relationships, family interaction, family resource management, education about parenthood, ethics, and the interaction of family and society.¹⁷⁹ Learning in these areas provide families with tools to try to live healthy lives and form functional human beings.

Family Life Education programming focuses on human development and sexuality, because it is in the family setting where human developmental needs are met. Families influence the development of identity and self-esteem and provide physical and social conditions which influence human growth and sexuality.¹⁸⁰ The family bears the responsibility for reproduction, sexual socialization, and meeting intimacy needs, so education about this area and the crucial role of the family is significant.

Interpersonal relationships, family interaction, and parental education serve as a part of the Family Life Educational objective because the survival skill of relating is taught and nurtured in family life. These areas are synonymous with the elements of family life; protection, guidance, affection, support, coping with internal stress and change, establishing authority and power, making family rituals, managing transitions, and making lifestyle changes.¹⁸¹ In order to successfully transmit these values and skills parents must have the tools and resources to know how to parent. If a parent or child learns unhealthy ways of relating

¹⁷⁹ Thomas, Jane, p.5

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.5-6

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.5-6

from their previous or current system, Family Life Education provides alternative ways to find the balance within their current or future system.

All kinds of Family Life Education provide resources in dealing with entities and institutions beyond the family unit. Programming can provide education in ethics, family/societal relations, community problem solving, and family resource management. Family serves as a microcosm for the larger society and it trains its members for a role in a larger community. Since family does not exist in a vacuum it must interact and affect/be affected by society; and this type of programming can aid the family. This area examines basic needs which range from learning how to manage resources, to survive financially in society or operate with other social systems in order to survive institutionally.

Although all forms of Family Life Educational programming focuses on different areas, the methodological approaches to them can be outlined by three paradigms; instrumental/technical, interpretive, and critical emancipatory.¹⁸² All three paradigms complete a spectrum of approaches. The instrumental/technical paradigm is the most basic, scientific scheme which attempts to convey pertinent information. It assumes that a single reality exists beyond human consciousness, that laws of human behavior can be discovered through research, and that needs can be

¹⁸² Morgaine, Carol, "Alternative Paradigms for Helping Families Change Themselves", p.13-14

satisfied by predicting cause and effect relationships.¹⁸³ This paradigm is exemplified by lecture style programming which distributes useful information.

The interpretive paradigm attempts a more experiential learning encounter based upon the unique life experience of the participants. Based on the human need to understand one's self and others, this paradigm assumes that natural scientific methods are not always appropriate, many human actions cannot be predicted or controlled and attempts to do so are unethical, knowledge is created by an individual living in an historical era, and that the catalyst for action is gaining meaning or understanding.¹⁸⁴ These type of programs give opportunity for the participants to reflect and interpret the meanings embedded in their own daily lives. For example, interpretive workshops educate about effective communication within the family through activities which allow the participants to reflect on their own communication patterns and experience more effective ones.

The critical emancipatory paradigm involves a more systematic wider lensed view of life experience. It assumes the same principles of the interpretive paradigm and that an individual's ideas result from their life experience and social condition, that individuals in self-defeating situations have disturbed perceptions, that individuals are capable of acquiring critical insight into the negative aspects of life, and

¹⁸³ Ibid, p.13

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.13

that enlightenment can translate into emancipation from their hindrances.¹⁸⁵ An example of the critical emancipatory paradigm is a continued support group for single mothers which allows them the time and security to devote to self-improvement. All three paradigms have merits in trying to accomplish the goals of Family Life Educational programming.

Jewish Family Life Education

Jewish Family Life Education as contrasted with Family Life Education differs only in the Jewish dimension brought to this type of educational philosophy. The same goal of family and individual well-being through learning about living and relating styles presides in Jewish Family Life Education. The 'Jewish' element brings a unique framework of values, skills, and community to the Family Life Educational process. Judaism has a rich heritage of values and living which serves as a resource to Jewish Family Life Educators. It brings a calendar and ritual network by which to structure some educational opportunities.¹⁸⁶ Most Jewish communities are well organized and institutionalized. This infrastructure provides Jewish Family Life Education with a conducive background for implementation.¹⁸⁷ And, as will be discussed shortly, Judaism also offers a religious component to Family Life Educational issues; issues which confront very religious needs.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p.14

¹⁸⁶ Alper, Janice, Learning Together: A Sourcebook on Jewish Family Education, p.304

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p.304-8

What to Watch out For In Jewish Family Life Educational Programming

In a field so concerned with the actuality of the family as well as its potentiality, awareness of both aspects must be high. Jewish Family Life Educators must realize the reality of today's family life, understand that no such thing as THE family exists, and know when educational intervention is not sufficient and other types of intervention are appropriate.¹⁸⁸ Simply understanding the geography of this battlefield and the capabilities of the fighting force will be challenging to those facilitating Jewish Family Life Educational programming.

As Jewish Family Life Education becomes a more viable educational resource, it faces potential traps that it must strive to avoid. In trying to perfect family life and family function, Jewish Family Life Education cannot pursue the myth of the perfect family.¹⁸⁹ This trap can take the form of labeling 'good' families as perfect families, ones that do not have problems. Another piece of this perspective is the idea that only 'bad' families would benefit from this type of education. All families are not perfect and contain some degree of dysfunction. This educational philosophy is meant for the entire community.

A perfect solution also may suggest quick or easy answers to problems. This type of approach is not appropriate in this setting. Jewish Family Life Educational

¹⁸⁸ Arcus, Margaret, "Family Life Education: Toward the Twenty-first Century", p.392

¹⁸⁹ Schurnevelt, Jay D. and Margaret Young, " Strengthening Families: New Horizons in Family Life Education", p.387

programming must utilize a step-by-step, long-term lens in approaching the elements in family living.

Another potential pitfall inherent in this form of educational environment is taking the power of change and growth away from the families.¹⁹⁰ It is easy for the educator and the program to fill a power vacuum created by family dysfunction. Jewish Family Life Education and its educators must empower and enable families to change and grow for themselves, or the growth or change will not truly endure.

The ideas and theory behind Jewish Family Life Education will develop as the field develops. This development goes hand in hand with the growth of programming and the potential for that programming in the Jewish community. Viewing this field as a viable part of the Jewish community, family services, community centers, and synagogues will play a large role in the future vibrancy of the Jewish community.

Jewish Family Life Education Today: What is happening?

Jewish Family Life Education is one of the resources that Jewish communities across North America offer their constituents. These opportunities range from workshops which teach families how to live as observant Jewish families to those which teach families how to live as functional human beings. Not to suggest that ritualized Jews and functional human beings are two mutually exclusive groups, but Family

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p.367

Life programs concentrate on these distinct areas. These programs originate from Jewish social service agencies (particularly Jewish Family Services), Jewish Community Centers, and from synagogues.

The programs offered by Community centers and social service agencies run the full gamete of opportunity. The Cleveland Jewish Family Service offers "workshops" on: abuse and violence in families for different family members; issues for children or parents of alcoholics; issues for divorced or separated family members; parenting challenges like gay children, difficult children, setting limits, and living with adolescents.¹⁹¹ The parallel agency in Baltimore, Maryland offers opportunities in: "living with your preschooler", "trying to live with adolescents", and a "parent support group" which provides the opportunity to "share feelings about family stress and pressures, exchange suggestions with other parents, and provide support to one another in a safe and conditional atmosphere."¹⁹² Similar programs are available through Jewish Family service Agencies throughout the United States and specifically in Cincinnati, Ohio, Minneapolis, Minnesota, San Diego, California, and Vancouver, British Columbia.¹⁹³ These programs respond to the needs of families in crises resulting

¹⁹¹ From a catalog of workshops available at Jewish Family Services of Cleveland, Ohio.

¹⁹² From a catalog of workshops available at Jewish Family Services of Baltimore, Maryland.

¹⁹³ Jewish Family Life Education Programs are available in cities with prominent Jewish populations throughout the United States. Only brochures from agencies in these cities were reviewed and that is why only they are mentioned in this chapter.

from illnesses, bereavement, divorce, homosexual liberation, and a host of other crises. These programs also attempt to provide more preventative responses to hazards of family life, particularly parenting for young ages and marital development.

Programs offered by synagogues are not as far ranging as those offered by social service agencies. The reason for this contrast is that the synagogue, as an institution, has more varied concerns than a social service agency; the main purpose of a social service agency is to provide this type of programming. Synagogues have more of an emphasis on incorporating Jewish Family Educational Ideals and do not focus as heavily on life experience workshops. Reform congregational opportunities in Jewish Family Education focus on pre-marital orientation, divorce, single parent families and blended families, adoptive families, family violence, and elderly and aging individuals.¹⁹⁴ A couple of exciting developments are the Rabbi's Task Force on the Jewish Family at Temple Kol Ami in Plantation, Florida and the Mishpacha Shlemah Center for Family Wholeness in Northridge, California. These programs offer Jewish Family Life Educational opportunities out of the synagogue which strive to meet the living and relating needs of the contemporary American Jewish family.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Committee on the Jewish Family of the UAHC, Table of Contents

¹⁹⁵ Committee on the Jewish Family of the UAHC, p.134-142

An exciting transformation is happening in the Jewish community today. Institutions in the Jewish community are marching out to respond to the needs of the institution which can preserve our survival, the Jewish family. Challenges remain in the form of unaffiliated families. Religious institutions are only beginning to modify to meet the needs of the contemporary American Jew. This effort can only be enhanced by redefining the role of the synagogue in the lives of our families and its members and injecting synagogue Family Life Educational Programs with a systemic guideline.

Jewish Family Life Education-- Pursuing 'Wholeness' Redefining the Goals of Our Religious Institutions

Why Jewish Family Life Education? The programming discussed earlier in the thesis is important and profitable work. The ideas behind Jewish Family Life Education do not appear to be as far reaching as the actual work, yet. In the many documents and articles devoted to the needs of the Jewish community and the needs of the Jewish family, the focus was on creating committed Jews. There was nary a mention of the need for the contemporary American Jewish family to face the stressors of our society and work to create functioning human beings.

The social services of the Jewish community and scattered synagogues are in the trenches responding to these needs, while the majority of Jewish community is focused on other concerns like maintaining Jewish affiliation, teaching Jewish patterns of observance, and advocating

social justice. However, committed Jewish individuals are not as viable as committed Jewish individuals who are functional human beings. Jewish Family Life Education must focus on the latter (from a Jewish perspective); to accomplish this aim our view of the synagogue and of Judaism needs adjustment.

Religion is an individual's response to the conflicts inherent in being human: death, meaning in life, balancing individual satisfaction and needing interpersonal ties, and the complexities of emotion. Religious institutions should aid the individual in her/his response to these conflicts. Basically, our contemporary religious institutions are attempting to accomplish this task by a network, or system, that is unrealistic and irrelevant to their lives.¹⁹⁶ Contemporary religious institutions do not offer many contemporary American Jews a viable, meaningful response in their lives.

This response, I believe, is inherent in Judaism. Judaism is a tale of growth, development, and reform. Jewish generations have molded and grown with Judaism to meet the challenges of the times. Institutionalized religion can be a catalyst in responding to being. This response also assumes another 'moniker', spirituality.

"Spirituality is a lifestyle -- that which enhances and expands life. Therefore spirituality is about growth and expansion, newness and creativity. Spirituality is about being. Being is that victorious thrust whereby we triumph over nothingness. Being is about why there is

¹⁹⁶ Reines, Polydomy, p.55

something, rather than nothing. Being is the ground of all the beings that are."¹⁹⁷

We possess in our own heritage the ability to find spirituality, to pursue wholeness, *shilamut*.

Our society has moved away from this manner of response, it has moved away from pursuing spirituality.

"We live in a world that prides itself on modernity, yet is hungry for wholeness, hungry for meaning. At the same time it marginalizes the very impulses that might fill this void. The pilgrimage toward the divine, the openness to knowledge that transcends ordinary experience, the very idea of feeling at one with the universe are impulses that we tolerate only at the fringes of our society . . . Shorn of the knowledge that we are part of something greater than ourselves, we also lose the sense of responsibility that comes with it."¹⁹⁸

Judaism does not answer, but allows us to be a meaningful part of something larger than ourselves -- our community and our deity.

In redefining our response to the conflicts of being we must evaluate the institution in which we learn how to respond, the family. Perhaps the reason that the marriage between Judaism and the family has been so intimate throughout history is because of the family's role in this type of 'religious' education. The family and Judaism worked side by side to establish a network of rituals and beliefs which offered avenues of spirituality to the members of the family and community. This network gave its members meaning, by giving them a part of something bigger than themselves,

¹⁹⁷ Bradshaw, John, Healing the Shame that Binds You, p.22

¹⁹⁸ Maybury-Lewis, David, p.76-7

intimate interpersonal encounters, and methods/rituals to help cope with the pains and enjoy the joys of being a human being. This network is not achieving the same result today.

The Role of Jewish Family Life Education

Jewish Family Life Education is not that new network; it is a medium to creating a new network. This type of programming reaches out to the contemporary needs of Jewish families. It enables Jewish families to face the reality of twentieth century America while learning healthy, functional ways to respond to the conflicts of being. It offers Jewish families religion in a way that they have not seen it before. Responding to existence, acting 'religious', is not solely a Jewish activity, it is a human activity. A Jewish manner of response does exist, and it can enhance lives just as it has throughout history. Jewish Family Life Education, by empowering healthy responses to life in a Jewish way, infuses families and individuals with a profound connection to other Jews and to Judaism.

The Role of the System

A systemic approach to Jewish Family Life Education allows the synagogue this dedication of helping to create functional human beings. Being an organization which operates systematically as well¹⁹⁹ the synagogue can model and provide an educational resource for the contemporary American Jewish family. Viewing the family as a system would enable Jewish Family Life Educational programming to

¹⁹⁹ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, p. 195

concentrate on both reactionary programs and preventative programs that teach youth, newlyweds, young families, and established families how to be a healthy part of their system at temple and at home.

A Jewish Family Life Educational program is not THE answer, it is an alternative means of offering meaning to the lives of the Jewish community. An ideal program would take a systematic approach towards the family and attempt to provide an avenue for wholeness. A successful implementation of Jewish Family Life Education warrants a community and a professional staff open to an interpretive and/or critical emancipatory approach to individual learning in a Jewish setting.

Jewish Family Life Education can serve both families and the community. Families can learn to become healthy and happy systems which accept and cope with change. Families create functional healthy individuals who contribute to the well-being of the family, community, and society. If families find meaning and an opportunity for development from a synagogue based program, they begin to see the synagogue and Judaism as offering something valuable for them -- they establish a desire to be part of this religious community.

Chapter 5

A Model JFLE Program

A Parent Workshop

As discussed in the previous chapters, there is a profound need for the synagogue to serve as a source for Jewish Family Life Education by providing resources for families to grow and produce functional, committed, Jewish human beings. These programs can take on many facets (see Appendix A), but this thesis provides one model.

These programs are not part of the customary programming package of a synagogue or similar institution. The four workshops do not teach Jewish history or customs, they offer something that is profoundly absent from the synagogue 'curriculum.' Jewish families need guidance in functioning as healthy individuals and teaching its members how to do the same. The objectives of the synagogue have customarily been to serve as a house of worship, a house of meeting, and a house of study -- and it should continue to meet these needs.

Contemporary American society adds a new wrinkle to synagogue function. Jewish Family Life Education must be a legitimate part of the life services provided by synagogues. Jews need to know how to light Shabbat candles, read Hebrew, and communicate better with each other; Jews need to have a place for communal support, individual meditation, and internalize ways to enhance their children's self-esteem. These programs focus on basic skills and needs that the contemporary American Jewish families do not possess.

Without these basic necessities, Jewish worship or Jewish learning are hollow, but with them all the opportunities in Jewish communal life realize their vast potential.

These workshops will be part of a larger programmatic offering for religious school parents. They will be marketed under this larger umbrella through Temple bulletins and classroom flyers. One of the challenges presented by the nature of the workshops is to make them appealing to parents. The programs merit a marketing strategy which portrays them as a valuable opportunity for all families and which does not suggest that the workshops are relevant only to those families which are inadequate or troubled. Parents from outside the religious school community will not be able attend these workshops.

The model is a series of Parent Workshops which will attempt to offer parents educational workshops about different parenting options. The workshops will take place in the form of four one to one and a half hour session. The sessions will concentrate on understanding the family as a system, the importance of communication, the use of ritual in family life, and the parents' role in establishing self-esteem in their children. An overall goal of all the workshops is to establish the synagogue as a viable resource for life experience development. The Jewish nature of these workshops lay not in the amount of Judaica taught, but the skills taught which enable individuals and families to function as healthy and committed, Jewish individuals.

ROCK OF AGES

It's ALL In the Family -- The Family as a System

Rockdale Temple Parent Workshop #1

Before this workshop

Read/Bibliography:

Satir, Virginia. The New Peoplemaking. 116-140

Bradshaw, John. Bradshaw: On the Family. p. 23-41

Friedman, Edwin. Generation to Generation. p. 1-66

Resources/Supplies:

A mobile constructed with different members of a Biblical family representing the various parts.

40' of 1/4" rope

Pencils/Pens

Family Beliefs List

Evaluation sheets

VCR/TV

Video of the movie Avalon

Copies of appropriate article(s) for participant

Objectives

- 1) To internalize the concept of how a family functions as a system
- 2) To identify how a systemic perspective can benefit family function
- 3) To practice some elements of healthy family functioning

Program

Beliefs About Families²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Adapted from Clark, p.vii

Biblical Family Mobile

Family Ropes Exercise²⁰¹

Rules Brainstorm/Analysis

Discussion

Set Induction:

Welcome the participants and introduce the ideas behind these Jewish Family Life Education workshops.²⁰² After this short introduction the facilitator will initiate the family belief exercise. Tell the group that before the session begins it is important to see what are perceptions about family life. The facilitator will hand out a list of **beliefs about families** and ask each participant to examine the list and star the one(s) which are most important, they may add or edit any of the entries on the list. The facilitator will lead a short discussion reviewing the participants' responses to the list of family beliefs.

Primary Activities:

The facilitator will then give a brief introduction of the family as a system using the Biblical family mobile. This mobile is constructed of two perpendicular pieces of wood or plastic which hold by string figures representing members of a selected Biblical family.

²⁰¹ This exercise is adapted from Virginia Satir, in Satir: Step by Step, p.251

²⁰² These ideas can be found in the introduction to this chapter or in chapter four in the discussion of the role of Jewish Family Life Education in the community.

Using the mobile the concepts of relationships, homeostasis/balance, and rules will be explained.

After the initial explanation, lead a lesson with two activities designed to reinforce how families function as systems. Reviewing the concept of homeostasis and interconnectedness of all family members with the Biblical Family Mobile, the facilitator will arrange the members in family-sized groups.²⁰³ Each person will tie a rope around their waist and receive the amount of ropes corresponding to the number of 'family' members. Instruct each participant to tie each family members rope to their waist rope.

After the tying has been completed ask individual members of each family to try to answer the phone(or any menial activity). Then ask two members of each family to hug one another. Get responses from the participants as to how they felt being so intertwined with the other people. Explain that this tension is similar to the functioning of a system; all members of a group function according to the others, whether it is noticed or not.

After reviewing the concept of balance within the Biblical Family mobile, introduce the concept of rules in a system. Explain the different type of rules, overt and covert. After a short explanation show the Thanksgiving scene from the movie "Avalon" which exemplifies the breaking of an unwritten family

²⁰³ These concepts can be reviewed in chapter three of the thesis.

rule. Follow the clip by discussing the family rules from that family. If time allows ask the participants to share their overt and covert rules in their families.

The focus shifts now to the application of systems theory, and the facilitator will lead a discussion on improving family systems.²⁰⁴ Following the tone of the previous discussion ask the participants and suggest how a systemic perspective of the family may be beneficial.

What do you think about the idea that the family is a system?

How does it change how we look at our families?

If we become a part of many systems, how can we navigate all of them?

How does it change our perception of children who act out, alcoholism, and illness?

Closure:

Return to the Biblical Family mobile and review the concepts discussed in the exercises and in the discussion.

Remind the participants about the future workshops.

²⁰⁴ These concepts can be reviewed in chapter three of the thesis.

Family Belief Worksheet

Families are important.

We learn how the most basic of functions from our families. Not only do we learn how to eat and how to use the toilet properly, but we learn how to feel, how to relate with others, and how to be from our parents.

Extended families do not exist the way that they used to, but the extended family members still have a profound affect on our lives. Families are constantly struggling to build and rebuild the support systems that extended families used to provide.

Parents learn how to parent from their parents. Children learn how to parent from their parents. Families work in the way that their ancestors worked.

Positive self-esteem is important for adults and children.

Workshop #_____

1. This workshop met my expectations.

2. I enjoyed the format of the program.

3. The subject of the workshop was relevant and timely.

4. The facilitator supported the program.

Please add any comments to these questions or any other thoughts you have about the workshop.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

ROCK OF AGES

We Are What We Speak -- Communicating for Life

Rockdale Temple Parent Workshop #2

Before this workshop

Read:

Satir, Virginia. The New Peoplemaking, p. 51-100

Resources:

pens/pencils

paper

copies of the Ten Commandments from the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy

five poster cut-outs representing Virginia Satir's five patterns of communicating

copies of the boxes from Johnson

appropriate sheets for "Your eggs are cold" and a large poster board copy

Objectives

- 1) To learn the role of communication in family function and individual development
- 2) To practice healthy communication skills

Program

Text Analysis

Multi- Level Communication²⁰⁵

Communication Style Role Play²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ From Reaching Out, by David Johnson, p.105-108

²⁰⁶ From The New Peoplemaking, by Virginia Satir, p.102-105

Your Eggs Are Cold Exercise²⁰⁷

Set Induction:

Welcome the participants and explain that the purpose of this session is to determine the importance of communication in our families. Pass out the copies of the Ten Commandments from Exodus and Deuteronomy and ask the participants to examine two sets and compare and contrast them. Discuss the differences implied by the subtle variances in the two texts. After a short discussion of the differences emphasize the importance of clear communication through the example of the text. Explain that every time we communicate we send a message by what we say, what we do not say, with our mouths and with our bodies.

Primary Activities:

Suggest that the next exercise will examine how we communicate. Choose one volunteer from the group to sit with her/his back facing the group. Give each member two pieces of paper and a writing utensil. Explain that the volunteer will be given a diagram of boxes and will explain to you how to draw it. For the first diagram, no questions will be asked and he/she will go through the explanation once. The exercise will be timed and tallied as to how many boxes were drawn correctly. Then the volunteer will face the group and will explain a second diagram, but questions will be allowed. The second drawing will be timed and tallied. Throughout this

²⁰⁷ From Self-Esteem: A Family Affair (Leader's Guide), by Jean Illsley Clark, p.67,81

exercise remind the group to pay attention to how it is communicating.

How was the communication in the two exercises different?

In which exercise were you more confident of the accuracy of your drawing? Why?

Explain how communication plays such a significant role in family life. Using the five figures as examples talk about the five ways of communicating and how they may be destructive or productive.

Virginia Satir outlines five different patterns of communication. These patterns reflect individual low self-esteem and determine how the participants understand communication and themselves. Individuals communicate on two levels (what they say and what they want to say) when they have low self-esteem, are worried about hurting the other person's feelings, worry about rupturing the relationship, or are unconscious of anything but themselves.²⁰⁸ When individuals communicate with these concerns they do not model their actual feelings, relationship partners learn incorrect information in communication. Systems and their rules become based on this information.

Individuals who communicate with these concerns do so by placating, blaming, computing, distracting; and the single level communicator does so by leveling.²⁰⁹ The placater speaks in an ingratiating way, so as not to anger or cause the other person discomfort. The blamer goes on the offensive so that she/he will be perceived as strong. The computer does not even recognize a threat and hides behind an intellectual front to appear calm, cool, and collected. The distracter acts

²⁰⁸ Satir, Virginia, The New Peoplemaking, p.82

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p.85-94

to make the threat irrelevant and is always moving and always directing the conversation in a safe direction. The leveler's message is complete, her/his message matches the facial expression, voice, and body language.

Explain the activity in which the participants will learn about these ways of communicating. It is a role play in which three family members at a time attempt to communicate in the manner described by one of the 5 types. Seat them in three chairs and ask each participant to pick a role (father, child, etc.) and one of the first 4 ways of communicating. Ask them to plan a family vacation keeping with these styles. After a short discussion stop the role play and get responses from the participants and feedback from the observers.

How did those roles feel to you? Real, familiar?

What actually happened in the encounter?

How were you communicating? On a verbal level? On a physical level?

If time allows or the situation calls for it, role play again.

Review and discuss how confusing and damaging ineffective communication could be in a family. Offer the next exercise, "Your eggs are getting cold", as practice in communicating effectively. Hand out sheets with different examples of statements. Each statement is an example of an unquestion or secret demand that implies responsibility without being clear who is responsible for what. Read the examples aloud and ask the group to rewrite the examples to

ask a clear question or to make a clear demand or express a clear feeling on a large poster board. Apply the "So?" test. If a "So?" response is applicable after the statement than it is still not clear. Remind the group that they are free to add other 'undemands' that they may think of. Discuss the exercise.

How do the different responses in the exercise evoke different responses?

Why isn't 'mindreading' good enough in family communication?

Notice how you ask questions or express your feelings.

Closure:

Wrap-up the discussion reviewing the significance of clear, effective communication in family life. Hand out the evaluation forms and remind the participants about the remaining workshops.

The Ten- Twenty Commandments?

from Exodus 20:1-14

God Spoke all these words, saying:

I, the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: You shall have no other gods besides me.

You shall not make for yourselves a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord your God will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work- you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is in your settlements. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother; that you may long endure on the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

from Deuteronomy 5:6-18

I, the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: You shall have no other gods beside me.

You shall not make for yourselves a sculptured image, any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters below the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord your God will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work- you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger who is in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest-as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord you God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

Honor your father and your mother, as the lord you God had commanded you, that you may long endure, and that you may fare well, in the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife: you shall not crave your neighbor's house, or his field, or his male or female slaves, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Your Eggs Are Getting Cold Worksheet

Examples:

Unclear: Your Eggs are getting cold.

Clear: *Your eggs are cooked, and if you want warm eggs come and eat them now.*

Unclear: I've lost my book.

Clear: *Do you know where my book is?*

Rewrite the following to indicate who is responsible for what.

Unclear: Is the dog hungry?

Clear:

Unclear: That picture is terrible.

Clear:

Unclear: There is no milk.

Clear:

Unclear: The dishes look as if they are not done.

Clear:

Unclear: There are no clean socks in my drawer.

Clear:

Unclear: The checkbook is overdrawn.

Clear:

Possible responses to your eggs are getting cold
worksheet:

Unclear: Is the dog hungry?

Clear: *Jim, feed the dog.*

Did you feed the dog.

Unclear: That picture is terrible.

Clear: *I will not put that picture in the family album.*

I did not like that motion picture.

Will you fix the picture on the T.V.?

Unclear: There is no milk.

Clear: *Will you please go get us some milk.*

I am thirsty and I want some milk.

Unclear: The dishes look as if they are not done.

Clear: *Do the dishes!*

Will you do the dishes?

Help me with the dishes.

Unclear: There are no clean socks in my drawer.

Clear: *I will wash my socks today.*

Will you get me some clean socks?

Unclear: The checkbook is overdrawn.

Clear: *I have overdrawn my bank account, I will deposit
some more money.*

Will you lend me some money?

I am upset that you bounced another check.

Satir - patterns of communications

PLACATER

Words	agree	"Whatever you want is okay. I am just here to make you happy."
Body	appeases	"I am helpless"—shown in victim's posture.
Insides		"I feel like a nothing; without you I am dead. I am worthless."

The *placater* talks in an ingratiating way, trying to please, apologizing, and never disagreeing, no matter what. This is a "yes man" who talks as though he could do nothing for himself; he must always get someone's approval. You will find later that if you play this role for even five minutes, you feel nauseous and want to vomit.

A big help in doing a good placating job is to think of yourself as really worth nothing. You are lucky just to be allowed to eat. You owe everybody gratitude, and you really are responsible for everything that goes wrong. You know you could have stopped the rain if you used your brains, but you don't have any. Naturally you will agree with any criticism of you. You are grateful that anyone even talks to you, no matter what they say or how they say it. You would not think of asking anything for yourself. After all, who are you to ask? Besides, if you can just be good enough, it will come by itself.

Be the most syrupy, martyrish, boot-licking person you can be. Think of yourself as being physically down on one knee, wobbling a bit, and putting out one hand in a begging fashion. Keep your head up so your neck will hurt, your eyes will strain, and in no time at all your head will ache.

When you talk in this position, your voice will be whiny and squeaky because you don't have enough air to project a rich, full voice. You will be saying *yes* to everything, no matter what you feel or think. The placating stance is the body position that matches the placating response.



DISTRACTER

Words	irrelevant	The words make no sense or are about an unrelated subject.
Body	angular	"I'm off somewhere else."
Insides		"Nobody cares. There is no place for me here."

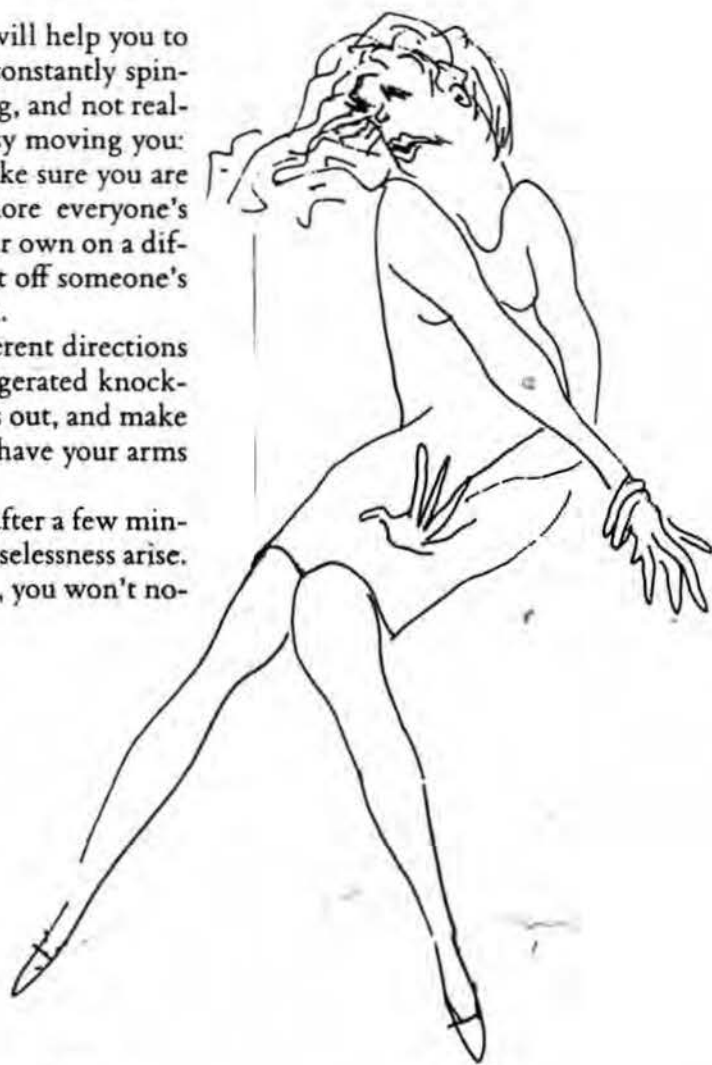
Whatever the *distracter* does or says is irrelevant to what anyone else is saying or doing. This person doesn't respond to the point. The internal feeling is one of dizziness. The voice can be singsong, often out of tune with the words, and can go up and down without reason because it is focused nowhere.

When you play the distracting role, it will help you to think of yourself as a kind of lopsided top, constantly spinning but never knowing where you are going, and not realizing it when you get there. You are too busy moving your mouth, your body, your arms, your legs. Make sure you are never on the point with your words. Ignore everyone's questions; maybe come back with one of your own on a different subject. Take a piece of imaginary lint off someone's garment, untie people's shoelaces, and so on.

Think of your body as going off in different directions at once. Put your knees together in an exaggerated knock-kneed fashion. This will bring your buttocks out, and make it easy for you to hunch your shoulders and have your arms and hands going in opposite directions.

At first this role seems like a relief, but after a few minutes of play, the terrible loneliness and purposelessness arise. If you can keep yourself moving fast enough, you won't notice it so much.

You will look like this:



Satir - patterns of communications

BLAMER

Words disagree "You never do anything right. What is the matter with you?"

Body accuses "I am the boss around here."

Insides "I am lonely and unsuccessful."

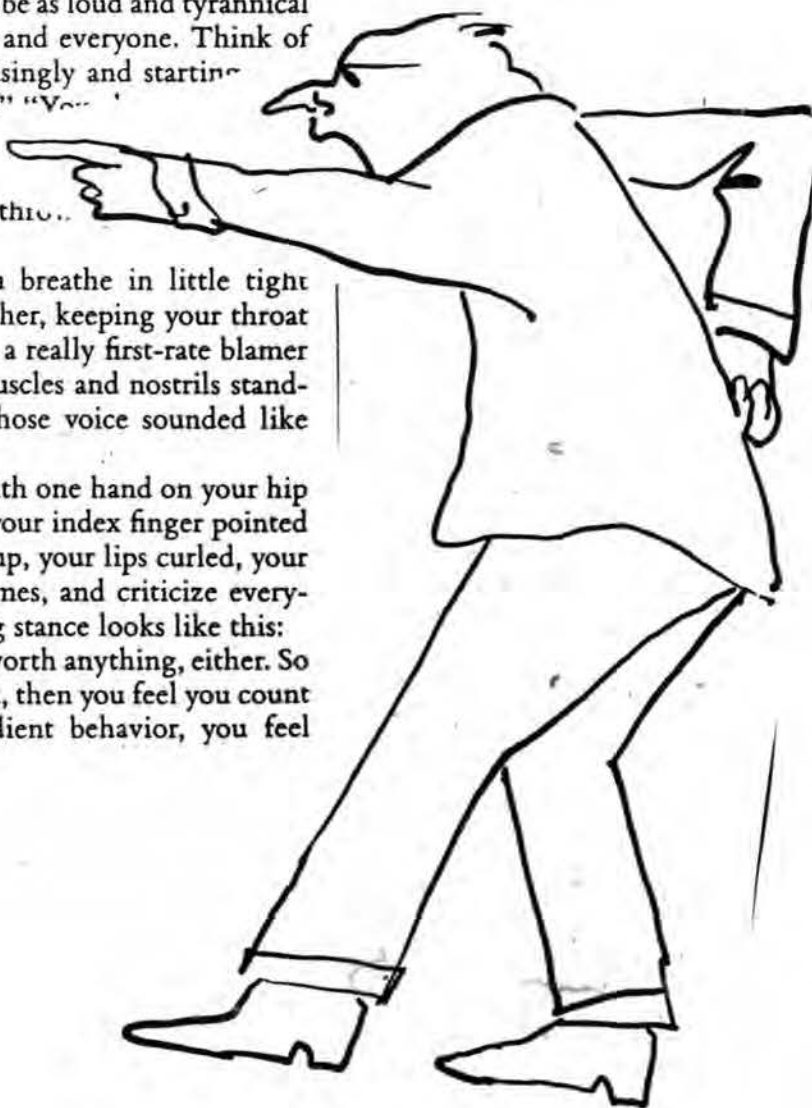
The *blamer* is a fault-finder, a dictator, a boss who acts superior and seems to be saying, "If it weren't for you, everything would be all right." The internal feeling is one of tightness in the muscles and organs. Meanwhile the blood pressure increases. The voice is hard, tight, and often shrill and loud.

Good blaming requires you to be as loud and tyrannical as you can. Cut down everything and everyone. Think of yourself pointing your finger accusingly and starting a sentence with "You never do this," "You..." "Why do you always," "Why do you never..." Don't bother about an answer; a blamer is much more interested in this... than really finding out anything.

When you are blaming, you breathe in little tight spurts, or hold your breath altogether, keeping your throat muscles tight. Have you ever seen a really first-rate blamer whose eyes were bulging, neck muscles and nostrils standing out, skin getting red, and whose voice sounded like someone shoveling coal?

Think of yourself standing with one hand on your hip and the other arm extended with your index finger pointed straight out. Your face is screwed up, your lips curled, your nostrils flared as you yell, call names, and criticize everything under the sun. Your blaming stance looks like this:

You don't really feel you are worth anything, either. So if you can get someone to obey you, then you feel you count for something. Given their obedient behavior, you feel effective.



Satir - patterns of communications

COMPUTER

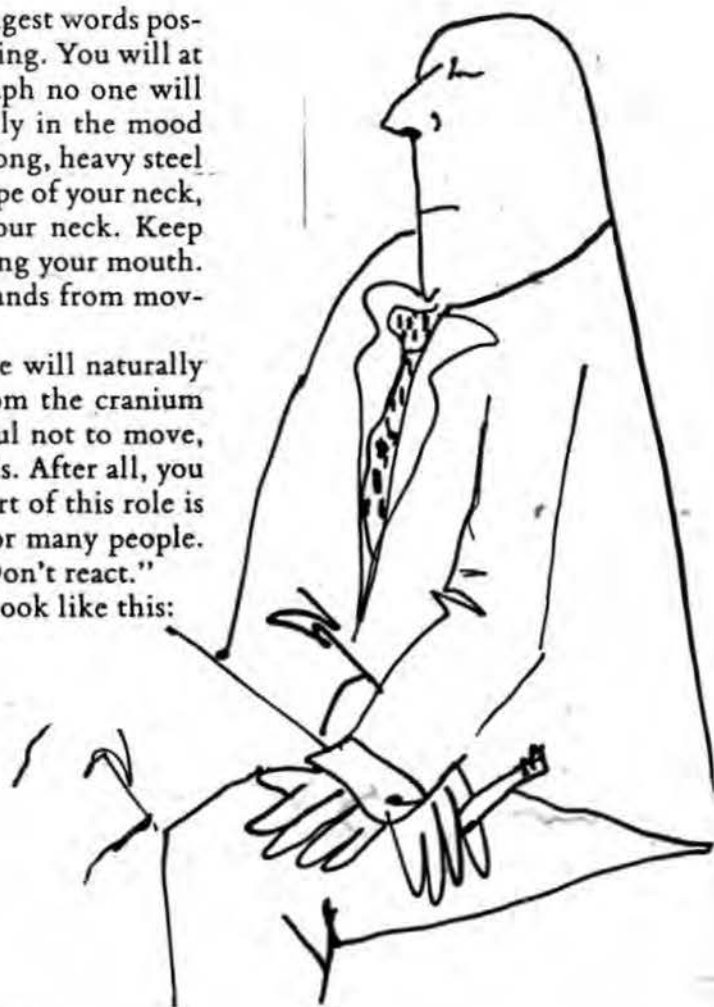
Words	ultrareasonable	"If one were to observe carefully, one might notice the very workworn hands of someone present here."
Body	computes	"I'm calm, cool, and collected."
Insides		"I feel vulnerable."

The *computer* is very correct, very reasonable, and shows no semblance of feeling. The person seems calm, cool, and collected. She or he could be compared to an actual computer or a dictionary. The body feels dry, often cool, and detached. The voice is a dry monotone, and the words are likely to be abstract.

When you are a computer, use the longest words possible, even if you aren't sure of their meaning. You will at least sound intelligent. After one paragraph no one will be listening anyway. To get yourself really in the mood for this role, imagine that your spine is a long, heavy steel rod reaching from your buttocks to the nape of your neck, and a ten-inch-wide iron collar girds your neck. Keep yourself as motionless as possible, including your mouth. You will have to try hard to keep your hands from moving, but do it.

When you are computing, your voice will naturally go dead because you have no feeling from the cranium down. Your mind is bent on being careful not to move, and you are busy choosing the right words. After all, you should never make a mistake. The sad part of this role is that it seems to represent an ideal goal for many people. "Say the right words, show no feeling. Don't react."

Your computer position stance will look like this:



Satir - patterns of communications

At this point you may well be wondering if these four crippling modes of communication are all we have. Of course not. There is another response that I have called *leveling* or *flowing*. In this response all parts of the message are going in the same direction: the voice's words match the facial expression, body position, and voice tone. Relationships are easy, free, and honest, and people feel few threats to self-esteem. This response relieves any need to placate, blame, retreat into a computer, or be in perpetual motion.

Of the five responses, only leveling has any chance to heal ruptures, break impasses, or build bridges between people. And lest leveling seem too unrealistic to you, let me assure you that you can still placate if you choose, blame if you like, be on a head trip, or be distracting. The difference is

you know what you are doing and are prepared to take the consequences.

When you are leveling, you apologize when you realize you've done something you didn't intend. You are apologizing for an act rather than your existence. Likewise, you may criticize and evaluate in a leveling way, by evaluating an act, not blaming the person. Usually you'll be able to offer a new direction as well.

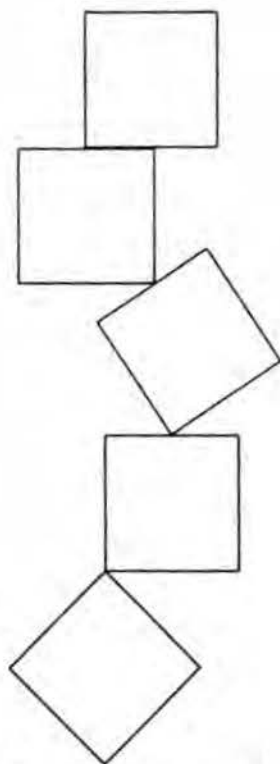
At times, you'll be talking about intellectual things, giving lectures, making explanations, or giving directions, when precise word meanings are essential. When you are leveling in this area, you are still showing your feelings and moving freely while you're explaining. You aren't coming off like a machine. (Many people who make their living with their brains—scientists, mathematicians, accountants, teachers, and therapists—are often motivated by a wish to be objective. They behave like machines and epitomize the computing response.) In addition, you will sometimes want to change the subject. In the leveling response you can say what you want to do instead of hopping all over the place.

The effect of leveling is congruence. When a leveler says, "I like you," the voice is warm and the person looks at you. If the words are, "I am mad as hell at you," the voice is harsh, and the face held tight. The message is single and straight.

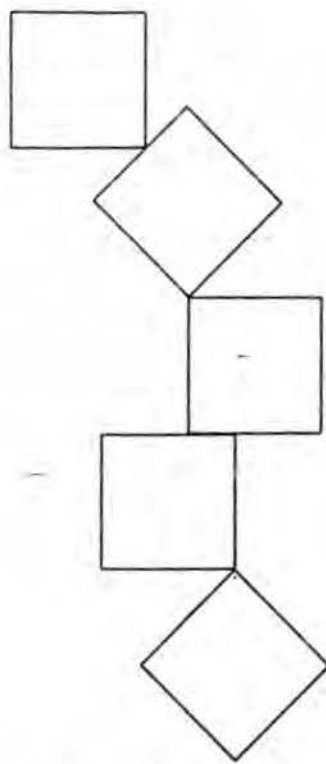
The leveling response also represents a truth of the person at that moment. This is in contrast, for example, to a blaming response, in which the person is feeling helpless but is acting angry—or is hurting but is acting brave.

Multi-Level Communication Figures

Instructions: The sender is to study the figure to the left below. With his back to the group, he is to instruct the members of the group on how to draw them. He should begin with the top square and describe each in succession, taking particular note of the placement relationship of each to the preceding one. No questions are allowed.



Square Arrangement I:
One-Way Communication



Square Arrangement II:
Two-Way Communication

Instructions: The sender is to study the figure to the right above. Facing the group, she is to instruct the members on how to draw them. She should begin with the top square and describe each in succession, taking particular note of the placement relationship of each to the preceding one. She should answer all questions from participants and repeat her descriptions if necessary.

ROCK OF AGES

Sitting Down to Dinner, Setting Up Love and Meaning --

Rituals and Their Role in Family Life

Rockdale Parent Workshop #3

Before this workshop

Read:

Imber Black, Evan and Janine Roberts. Rituals For Our Times.
p. 3-81

Resources:

pens/pencils

A large piece of poster board with the word "RITUAL" on it
ritual remembering worksheet

ritual style grid on large poster board or blackboard

and many copies of worksheets to hand out

symbolic foods, music, clothing (using notecards with words or
cut-out pictures of foods) to create ritual

Objectives

- 1) To understand the role that rituals play in family function
- 2) To learn how to create and implement meaningful family rituals

Program

Ritual Brainstorm

Ritual Remembering Exercise²¹⁰

Creating a Ritual

Discussion

Set Induction:

²¹⁰ adapted from Imber-Black and Roberts, p.76

Welcome the group and introduce the word/concept to them on a large piece of poster board or blackboard. Ask them to list (or brainstorm) what associations they have about rituals (types of rituals: life cycle, daily, etc.; aspects of rituals: religious, family, national, etc.; components of rituals: time, activities, food, etc.).

Primary Activities:

Hand out the ritual remembering worksheet while sharing a story (following the outline of the sheet) of how a certain Jewish ritual left an impression upon you in your life. An example of such a story would be the Shabbat dinners that my family held periodically as a child. They were planned by my mother, but the entire family participated following the books she purchased. The most meaningful part of the ritual was the meal and the togetherness it offered to us. Ask the group to do the same type of analysis of a specific Jewish ritual from their lives (choose a Passover holiday and analyze it together as a group). Discuss the role of rituals, both negative and positive in the lives of the group and the family.

Give a brief explanation of Imber-Black's and Robert's interpretation of the role of rituals in family life.

Families must possess a functional ritual system which validates their life passages and serves them on both a practical and spiritual level. Rituals perform basic functions in family process²¹¹; rituals allow families to celebrate and affirm deep joy and honor life with festivity; rituals mark transition and make these transitions manageable and safe; they allow individuals

²¹¹ Imber-Black, Evan and Janine Roberts, Rituals for Our Times, p.32-56

to state their beliefs in non-verbal messages; rituals help to mark how we relate with others as families shape, express, and maintain relationships; and rituals play a significant role in healing and recovering from all kinds of losses, including betrayal, trauma, and death.

The rituals of families represent the nature of their family process. The rituals may become **minimizing**, so that everyday things take precedence over rituals and may be an attempt to sever connections with a painful past; **interrupted** rituals may show signs of coping troubles; **rigid** rituals which do not allow newness or creativity may be protecting the family homeostasis, and **obligatory** rituals may oblige all to adhere to the entrenched family rules.²¹²

Minimized rituals often occur in families who want to avoid continuity with the past. They accomplish minimization by having as few rituals as possible; no daily rituals of belonging, special events like birthdays are not as important as work, or actual rituals are easily interrupted or ended.²¹³ Rigid rituals are those which do not and cannot change, like similar dishes at holidays or limited allowable behavior patterns in daily rituals. Obligatory rituals may include the required and painful holiday visit to relatives.²¹⁴

The group will now examine what the styles of our rituals are today and how they might be made more meaningful. Explain that we will do this by creating a ritual right now and by examining our own rituals. Tell the group that they have assorted music, food, and clothing at their disposal and that the task at hand is to create a meaningful ritual. (which encompasses the positive aspects of the brainstorming session and any other appropriate concerns)

²¹² Imber-Black, Evan and Janine Roberts, Rituals for Our Times, p.58-73

²¹³ Ibid, p.58

²¹⁴ Ibid, p.71

After the ritual has been created discuss what has been created and why and how this type of transformation can and should be translated into meaningful family rituals. Hand out the planning your rituals worksheet for group use(if appropriate) of for the group to use at home.

Can you think of places where rituals need to be modified or meaningful rituals need to be implemented?

How can meaningful rituals be modified or implemented at home?

How can rituals from Judaism be a part of this process? Why should they be a part of it?

Closure:

Review the ritual which was made, touching on its components which represent positive rituals and how positive Jewish rituals can be a factor in family life.

Remind the group about the future workshops and hand out the evaluation.

Ritual Remembering Exercise

Think of a ritual from your family of origin. (any kind; daily, life-cycle, holiday, etc.) Consider and answer the following questions:

1. What time of year is it? What time of day?
2. What does it feel like to be in that environment?
3. Who is with you? What did they look like?
4. Are there different sides of the family present? Friends? People with special roles?
5. Who gathered the people together?
6. How were words used? Were there toasts or special messages, or storytelling?
7. What symbols were there?
8. Is there a particular clothing that people are wearing? Why?
9. What symbolic actions are there?
10. How did people anticipate this ritual?
11. Rank who enjoyed the ritual the most and who the least.
12. What meaning did different people derive from this ritual?
13. After the ritual was over, what was the aftermath? What feelings were stirred up and how were they handled?
14. If another member of your family would tell the story, about this ritual, how would it be different from your story?

Planning Your Rituals

	POSITIVE— Aspects that are working well and should be maintained	PROBLEMATIC— Aspects that are not working well and need to be changed	WAYS OUR RITUALS COULD BE DIFFERENT
<i>Preparation</i> In the process of preparing for the ritual, what special activities are involved (like travel, getting gifts, food)? How do gender, age, culture, and family-of-origin experiences influence this process?	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
<i>People</i> Who is the occasion shared with and what family dynamics are involved in deciding who does or does not participate?			
<i>Place</i> Is there anything special about where the ritual occurs that influences the meaning of the experience? What are the family rules regarding the choice of location?			
<i>Participation</i> What activities are part of the ritual and how are they influenced by gender, culture, age, and family-of-origin experiences?			
<i>Presents</i> What parts do gift-giving and receiving play in the ritual?			

ROCK OF AGES

The Parental Power Trip -- Building Up and Tearing Down Functional Human Beings (Our Children)

Rockdale Parent Workshop #4

Before this workshop

Read:

Bradshaw, John. Bradshaw: On the Family. p. 23-86

Satir, Virginia. The New Peoplemaking. p.20-42, 141-157

Illsely Clark, Jean. Self-Esteem: a Family Affair.

Resources:

video of New York Stories, Music of and lyrics of Cats in the
Cradle, and text of Rebecca and Jacob from Genesis

Quotient Theory Worksheet

Good Father/ Good Mother lists

posters representing four ways of parenting

pen/pencils

VCR/T.V.

colored and white notecards

Objectives

1) To gain an appreciation of how parents and families can
impact children

2) To learn the importance of self-esteem for a functional
person

3) To practice some self-esteem building techniques

Program

Parental review -- Woody Allen, Tevye/Golda, Rebecca-Jacob

Stroke Quotient theory²¹⁶

Good father/good mother exercise²¹⁷

Four ways of parenting exercise²¹⁸

Set Induction:

Welcome the group and explain we are here to examine how parents can affect their children. The group will first analyze three different parenting styles and decide the nature of those styles and how they affect the way the children act and perceive themselves. Introduce the three examples. The clip from Woody Allens' New York Stories exhibits the relationship of Allen with his overprotective mother and the drastic affect of their relationship on his personal identity. The excerpt and lyrics from Harry Chapin's Cats in the Cradle demonstrate how a child learns patterns of relating from how she/he relates with her/his parent; in this case the child does not learn how to be with the people she/he loves. The excerpts from the Torah depicting scenes from Rebecca's relationship with her children and Jacob's relationship with his children display how a child learns his or her parenting techniques from her/his own parents; as Jacob learned the art of favoritism from his mother. Discuss these parents and their children.

How have the children affected their children?

Were they aware of their impact?

²¹⁶ adapted from Clark, p. 57, p.81

²¹⁷ adapted from Clark, p. 24-27

²¹⁸ adapted from Clark in the leader's guide, p.81; p. 66-68

Describe the significance of the children's self-perception in context of their parental influences.

Primary Activities:

Reinforce the idea that parents knowingly or unknowingly are the architects of their children's self-perception and that their self-esteem is a crucial element in their children's ability to survive and thrive in the world. Children's self-esteem comes from their own parents' self-esteem; so we begin looking at our own self-image and how we translate that to our children. Explain the Stroke quotient exercise. Strokes are acts of boosting or supporting others, and this theory helps us to understand what we think of ourselves and how we get and give strokes to others. Hand out the stroke quotient sheet and explain the calculation.

The stroke quotient theory²¹⁹ states that young children decide that the proportion of positive and negative strokes they receive must be what life has to offer them, so they go through life making that happen. A child needs food, protection, warmth and a certain amount of strokes to get by in one day. Say the number is 100 strokes to get by in one day. If she/he receives 70 positive strokes in one day then she/he will have to get thirty or more to 'stay alive'. To do this she/he does anything to get any type of strokes, positive or negative. The thirty negatives do not feel as good as thirty positives, but they are strokes. Once a child recognizes

²¹⁹ Clark, p.57

her/his ratio of strokes that the world will give her/him, she/he orders life around it.

Ask the group to guess their own stroke economy and record it on the top of the worksheet. Direct them to complete the rest of the exercise and compare their two figures. If they are similar than what the theory suggests is accurate; we learn how to esteem ourselves from the strokes we receive in childhood. Discuss the results.

Could this indicate how you have set up your personality to make your stroke quotient come true?

How productive is your stroke quotient or adjective ratio?

How do you think your children's ratio would relate to yours?

Explain that since our self-esteem affects our parenting, we must examine our concept of how we parent. Pass out the good father and good mother lists. Ask the participants to add, subtract, or edit the lists that they have in from of them. After they have completed their editing review the lists and any additions and discuss some of the items.

Which one is the most important? least important?

Which items teach the children how to relate?

Which ones affect their self-esteem?

Explain that we now want to recognize different parenting styles and those which most benefit the growth of our children. Introduce the four ways of parenting and some examples with each distinctive poster. The Nurturing, Structuring, Marshmallowing, and Criticizing signs will remain

for all to see as each person receives a colored note card with messages on them. Explain the four ways distributing white note cards with a descriptive word of each style. Ask the participants to read their colored card aloud and ask the group to decide which type of parenting it fits. Ask the group for more 'messages' that may have not been included. Discuss the different parenting styles.

Which one of these styles do you resemble?

Which one is the most difficult to imagine?

How can you see that these styles affect children?

Closure:

Review the role of parents in establishing self-esteem and some of styles of parenting.

Stroke Quotient Theory Worksheet

1. Figure out your stroke quotient as explained by the group leader.

+ _____ - _____

2. List ten adjectives, positive or negative, that describe you.

Put a plus or a minus next to each adjective - plus(+) if it is a positive thing or minus(-) if it is a negative thing.
Add the number of pluses and minuses.

Total + _____ - _____

Check the ratio of your stroke quotient and to the proportion of the pluses and minuses of your adjectives.

Stroke Quotient Decision Theory

The **stroke quotient decision theory** states that young children decide that the proportion of positive and negative strokes they receive must be what life has to offer them, so they go through life making that happen. For example, in order for him to survive, baby Tommy has certain needs that must be met: food, protection, warmth, and a certain level of strokes. Let us assume that baby Tommy needs one hundred strokes per day to live—to stay alive (knowing that he could actually need more or less than one hundred). If his environment offers him seventy positive strokes per day rather consistently, he will have to get thirty more to stay alive. To do this he cries. A baby could get thirty positive strokes for this in some families, but baby Tommy gets thirty negatives. The thirty negatives don't feel as good as positives, but they do keep him alive! Later he notices that some children get one hundred positives and he wonders why he doesn't. In order to make sense

out of his stroke economy, he makes a decision. He decides that the world has seventy positives and thirty negatives to offer him—that's just how it is. Once he has made that type of decision he will look for his quota each day. If he goes to nursery school and a loving teacher offers him one hundred positives, he may take seventy, **discount** the rest, and go home to get his thirty negatives. And so on."

This is a theory. It could explain why some wives stay with husbands who batter and why some people criticize themselves. It could also explain why people hear some channels louder than others in the Four Ways of Parenting exercise.

Stroke quotient decision theory⁷ explains why when we invite a child to change stroke patterns, the child sometimes seems to resist, and why encouraging a person to change a little bit at a time rather than to make a sudden, dramatic change often works more smoothly.

²²⁰ Clark, p.57-58

Rebecca as a parent

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." He answered, "Here I am." ²And he said, "I am old now, and I do not know how soon I may die. ³Take your gear, your quiver and bow, and go out into the open and hunt me some game. ⁴Then prepare a dish for me such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my innermost blessing before I die."

⁵Rebekah had been listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau had gone out into the open to hunt game to bring home, ⁶Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I overheard your father speaking to your brother Esau, saying, ⁷'Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat, that I may bless you, with the LORD's approval, before I die.' ⁸Now, my son, listen carefully as I instruct you. ⁹Go to the flock and fetch me two choice kids, and I will make of them a dish for your father, such as he likes. ¹⁰Then take it to your father to eat, in order that he may bless you before he dies." ¹¹Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned. ¹²If my father touches me, I shall appear to him as a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing." ¹³But his mother said to him, "Your curse, my son, be upon me! Just do as I say and go fetch them for me."

¹⁴He got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother pre-

^a *As though "oath."*

TORAH GENESIS 27.

pared a dish such as his father liked. ¹⁵Rebekah then took the best clothes of her older son Esau, which were there in the house, and had her younger son Jacob put them on; ¹⁶and she covered his hands and the hairless part of his neck with the skins of the kids. ¹⁷Then she put in the hands of her son Jacob the dish and the bread that she had prepared.

37 Now Jacob was settled in the land where his father had sojourned, the land of Canaan. ²This, then, is the line of Jacob:

At seventeen years of age, Joseph tended the flocks with his brothers, as a helper to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. And Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father. ³Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic.^a ⁴And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.

^a Heb. Dishan; but cf. vv. 21, 25, 28, and 30, and 1 Chron. 1:41.

^c Or "Saul."

^d Or "a coat of many colors"; meaning of Heb. uncertain.

⁵Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶He said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷There we were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright; then your sheaves gathered around and bowed low to my sheaf." ⁸His brothers answered, "Do you mean to reign over us? Do you mean to rule over us?" And they hated him even more for his talk about his dreams.

⁹He dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: And this time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him. "What," he said to him, "is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?" ¹¹So his brothers were wrought up at him, and his father kept the matter in mind.

¹²One time, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father's flock at Shechem, ¹³Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing at Shechem. Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "I am ready." ¹⁴And he said to him, "Go and see how your brothers are and how the flocks are faring, and bring me back word." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

When he reached Shechem, ¹⁵a man came upon him wandering in the fields. The man asked him, "What are you looking for?" ¹⁶He answered, "I am looking for my brothers. Could you tell me where they are pasturing?" ¹⁷The man said, "They have gone from here, for I heard them say: Let us go to Dothan." So Joseph followed his brothers and found them at Dothan.

A Good Father . . .

Helps kids to learn to ride a bike
doesn't do homework
schedules
says "don't put your elbows on the table"
reads stories
works a lot
drinks with his friends
says "If I say no I mean no."
doesn't do housework
makes money to feed the family
loves
explains and explains
goes to Temple
teaches children not to pick their nose
makes sacrifices for clarinets and college
is tired from working
fixes anything
thinks to himself
tells me that I'm good at things
makes me feel safe
takes the family on trips
doesn't touch kids, leaves that to Mom
spanks
is quiet, doesn't talk much
spends time with children
is strong and silent
gives rules

A Good Mother . . .

Doesn't have children who are obnoxious in stores
takes care of her children
keeps the house clean at all times
cooks for the family
thinks of her children first
is an affectionate, warm, caring person
is right
doesn't yell at kids
caters to Daddy
loves father before kids
doesn't drink liquor
is virtuous, religious
is long suffering
works hard
is self-sacrificing
keeps peace in the family
gives up her career for her family
is strong
is from a happy marriage
saves her tears for at night in bed
is home with her children enough to listen to them and be an
influence in their lives
supports and is a team with her husband - doesn't disagree
is always tired

Four Ways of Parenting Exercise

Descriptive words to be placed on the white notecards

Nurturing

affirms
gives permission to do things well
invites person to get needs met
gives affection

Structuring

Affirms
tells how to do things well
sets limits
demands appropriate performance
offers tools
is capable
acts responsibly

Marshmallowing

negates
gives permission to fail
subtly destroys
smothers
patronizes
sounds supportive, invites dependence

Criticizing

negates
tells how to fail
tears down
ridicules
blames
discourages harshly

Messages to be placed on the colored notecards

Nurturing

I love you
you are important to me
comforting hug
encouraging smile

Structuring

Don't pull the cat's tail because you'll hurt the cat. Pat her gently.
You are smart, you solve it. Do it.
Stops young child from running into the street.
confronts chemical abuse

Marshmallowing

Mommy, will you do it for me
Dear, you're having a hard time, aren't you?
Can't you think of ways to get your friends not to be mad at
you anymore?
hugs too long
smiles at destructive behavior

Criticizing

It's all your fault, you should have been a better mother
why do you always do that
Is that all you ever think about - yourself?
laughs at humiliation and pain

These workshops provide parents with a resource, with the tools to become better parents. This attitude needs to be maintained and guarded throughout the workshops. As the workshops progress different needs and focuses of various synagogues and community may call for different subjects, or a heavier focus on one subject. Consistent evaluation of the individual workshops and their direction would be beneficial to attaining the overall goal of establishing the synagogue as a resource for life experience development.

As stated earlier, these workshops would ideally be part of a larger synagogue program of education. This program would include worship opportunity, a social justice agenda, "womb to tomb" educational programming, religious school education, Jewish Family Education, and Jewish Family Life Education. The Jewish Family Life Educational programs provide a portion of the basic human skills for surviving and thriving as functional Jewish human beings.

Epilogue

"Whether familiness is an acquired trait or whether it is a deep set natural part of the human being, there is no doubt that it contributes to the quality of the individual and consequently the quality of the family unit. The Jews have always accepted this thesis as completely beyond discussion, and the striving to create and maintain a good family life has been a constant ideal throughout Jewish history. Life without family is inconceivable in Jewish thought and much the same way as it is impossible to live without breathing. Being a part of a family - taking roles which change in the course of time - is the natural condition of man."²²¹

Our community is at a crossroads. America is home to the most successful Jewish community in history; successful at achieving financial heights in secular society, successful in combating antisemitism, and successful in living freely as Jews and Americans. Our communities, specifically our families have been committed to these goals. In the struggle to achieve them we are losing something else in the process. Our communities, our families are not producing healthy human beings -- people who claim wholeness as an attribute.

This spiritual dysfunction currently plagues our community. It is a subtle dysfunction, for on the outside we are still successful, still mobile, and still comfortable. On the inside we struggle to find meaning in our lives. Our families are the institutions which give us the tools to survive on all levels -- today they are not giving us the tools of spirituality. All of our religious institutions need to be refocused towards this end.

²²¹ Schneid, Hayim, p.1

Jewish Family Life Education is a means to this end. It is not an end in itself, nor is it the only means. The type of growth that Jewish Family Life Education offers the family and its individuals is truly spiritual and religious. It offers the family weapons in its struggle to teach responding to life -- not merely the social, economic, and political aspects to life, but the religious, spiritual parts. These parts are the ones which provide ultimate meaning and contentedness -- they allow individuals to pursue wholeness.

Jewish Family Life Education calls for a great deal from the Jewish community. Many institutions will be called to redirect their emphasis. Jewish professionals will need proper training in facilitating Jewish Family Life Educational programming. Jewish individuals will have to acknowledge a need in their lives for this type of educational experience and be able to see the community center, the social service agency, and the synagogue as a viable source.

The synagogue, especially, must redirect its concentration to these more widely cast spiritual needs of its congregants -- after all people do not go to Jewish Family Service for a wedding or to the Jewish Community Center for a funeral. Rabbis must take notice to the needs and take appropriate measures to accommodate them.

Judaism and the family have a unique relationship; one has always been a partner in the other's survival and 1993 is no different than Sinai or 70 or 800 or 1492 or 1850. The Jewish community and the Jewish families of those

communities must work in tandem to insure a healthy survival for each.

" . . . the family is a microcosm of the world. To understand the world, we can study the family: issues such as power, intimacy, autonomy, trust, and communication skills are vital parts underlying how we live in the world. To change the world is to change the family."²²²

Jewish Family Life Education will serve to nurture the unbroken alliance between the physical survival of the Jewish community and the spiritual survival of its people.

כן יהי רצון

²²² Satir, New Peoplemaking, p. 2

Appendix A

This an overview of Jewish Family Life Educational opportunities available throughout North American in the last few years. This list is not meant to be comprehensive; it is meant to provide an idea of the various types of programming being made available to the contemporary North American Jewish family.

The programs are listed by title or subject, a short capsule explanation if possible, and the city and institution which offer them.

Grief Support Group.

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.
An ongoing group for people at any stage of grief. Meetings held once a week.

Raising a Child - Jewish

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.
A workshop designed to help Jewish parents living in an open society help their children feel good about being Jewish. A two session workshop to show how to define and develop positive Jewish values.

Intermarriage: Dealing With Differences

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.

"This group is offered to intermarried couples as an opportunity to explore the richness and diversity within the relationship and to develop practical strategies for bridging differences."

Alzheimer/Dementia Support Group

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.

This group is designed for people caring for a loved one with Alzheimer Disease or other kinds of dementia. An opportunity to talk about and share feelings of isolation, guilt and frustration. A bi-weekly group.

Children and Family Transition

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.

One informational session which focuses on the ways that major family change (like divorce, separation, and remarriage) affects children of different ages.

Expressing Your Anger

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.

A one time program teaching how to express anger in order to benefit emotional well-being.

Developing Self-Confidence and Social Skills

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.
Offered to aid those individuals uncomfortable in social situations through experiential exercises and exploration of shyness and self-confidence.

Exploring Your Identity as a Jewish Woman

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.
For five weeks a series for Jewish women interested in exploring future and choices and different relationship and forces that have shaped their lives.

Mid-Life Daughters of Aging Parents

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.
A two evening workshop provides opportunity to explore how the aging of one's parents affects the lives of mid-life women, their mates and their children, and to develop skills which will develop effective coping.

Creative Use of Rituals During Adolescence

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.
On evening for parents of teenagers to "explore how the creative use rituals can help celebrate teen's new autonomy, and at the same time promote family solidarity."

Positive Parenting

Winter 1993

Jewish Family Service Agency, Vancouver, British Columbia.

A seven part series helping parents to understand normal behavior and learn about discipline, communications, building self-esteem, and teaching socially appropriate skills.

**Lecture: How to Talk So That Kids Will Listen &
Workshop: Siblings Without Rivalry**

Winter 1993

Seminar with Adele Farber on effective communication

Jewish Family Service Agency of Vancouver, British, Columbia

Effective Jewish Parenting of Pre-School Children

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

"A supportive and experiential learning group for mothers/fathers and their pre-school children, designed to share parenting dilemmas, toddler challenges, and the how-to's of creating a sense of Jewishness in the families of the 1990's."

Critical Issues In Selecting and Starting College

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

A forum for high school parents and their parents to make an responsible educated college decision.

**"Funny, You don't look Jewish!" A Discussion for
Interfaith Couples**

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

A one session program for interfaith couples designed to focus on raising children, dealing with in-laws, and planning holiday observances.

Children Who Ask in a Different Way. Jewish Children With Learning Problems

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

Designed for parents with children involved in special education.

Couples Communication OR "Let's Talk"

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

A four week workshop for couples who wish to develop specific communications to enrich their relationships.

The Clock Is Running Out

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

A four week session for women in their late thirties or forties who are facing the prospect of never having children.

Making the Mature Marriage More Meaningful

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

For 25 year married couples to face issues of mature marriages.

Living With Chronic Illness

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

For Parents of Jewish Teenagers

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

You and Your Aging Parents – "The Sandwich Generation"

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

designed to help children understand the physical, medical, and emotional needs of aging parents.

Learning to Live After Loss

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

Divorce Recovery Workshop

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

For those adults dealing with the stages of divorce.

Eating Feelings – Weight and Worth

Spring 1991

Jewish Family Service, San Diego, California

Jewish Single Parents Group

Spring 1990

Jewish Family and Children's Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mothers at Home

Spring 1990

Jewish Family and Children's Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Helping Your Child to Cope With Divorce

Spring 1990

Jewish Family and Children's Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota

A Kids Group About Divorce

Spring 1990

Jewish Family and Children's Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Divorce After Forty

Spring 1990

Jewish Family and Children's Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota

When Someone You Love Has HIV/AIDS

Spring 1990

Jewish Family and Children's Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Finding Our Fathers

Spring 1990

Jewish Family and Children's Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Living with you Preschooler

Jewish Family Services, Baltimore, Maryland

Trying to Live with Adolescents

Jewish Family Services, Baltimore, Maryland

Parent Support Group

Jewish Family Services, Baltimore, Maryland

Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Jewish Family Services, Baltimore, Maryland

Standing Up for Yourself

Jewish Family Services, Baltimore, Maryland

Parenting/Life Stages

Jewish Family Service Agency, Cleveland, Ohio

Helping children leave, managing sibling rivalry, living with difficult children, your child, your school, and you

Women's Issues

Jewish Family Service Agency, Cleveland, Ohio

for working women, motherhood today, mothers and daughters

Marriage/Remarriage/Couples

Jewish Family Service Agency, Cleveland, Ohio

for wives in a second marriage, working couples: whose turn to do the dishes, money and your marriage

Illness/Disability

Jewish Family Service Agency, Cleveland, Ohio
families concerned about persons with AIDS, spouses of the mentally ill, stroke: a family affair

Abuse/Violence

Jewish Family Service Agency, Cleveland, Ohio
for adults who were abused as children

Bereavement

Jewish Family Service Agency, Cleveland, Ohio
coping with miscarriage, for children who have lost a parent, for parents who have lost a child

Divorce Separation

Jewish Family Service Agency, Cleveland, Ohio
children and divorce, for adults whose parents are divorcing, non-custodial parents

Single Parents Support Group/Chavurot

Temple Beth Hillel, North Hollywood, California
Temple Beth Zion, Buffalo, New York
Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, Texas
Beth El Hebrew Congregation, Alexandria, Virginia

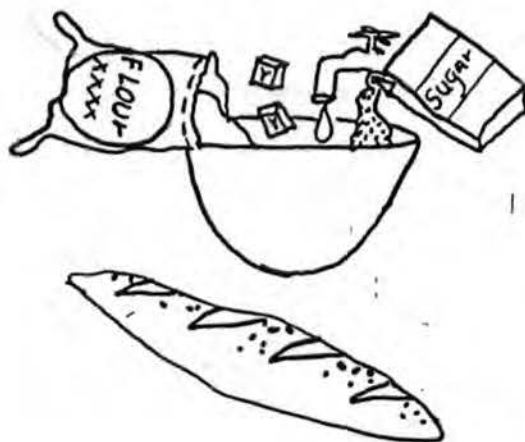
Appendix B²²³

²²³ Handouts for Workshop #1; from Satir, The New Peoplemaking

Systems: Open or Closed?

In this chapter I want to discuss something that at first you might not think has much to do with your family and people-making. Stay with me. The concept of *systems* was borrowed from the world of industry and commerce. It has become a way of understanding how human beings in groups work.

Any system consists of several individual parts. Each part is essential and related to each other part to attain a certain outcome; each acts as a stimulus to other parts. The system has an order and a sequence which is determined



through the actions, reactions, and interactions among the parts. This constant interplay governs how the system manifests itself. A system has life only now, when its component parts are present.

Sounds confusing? It isn't really. You put yeast, flour, water, and sugar together to make bread. The bread isn't like any one of its ingredients, yet it contains all of them.

Steam isn't like any of its parts, but it contains them all.

All human life is part of a system. We hear a lot about beating the system, which would seem to say that all systems are bad. Not so. Some are and some are not. The implications of systems thinking for personal, family, and societal behavior are evident everywhere today; in the early Seventies, when this book first came out, they were just beginning to be apparent.

An operating system consists of the following:

A purpose or goal. Why does this system exist in the first place? In families, the purpose is to grow new people and to further the growth of those already here.

Essential parts. In families, this means adults and children, males and females.

An order to the parts' working. In families, this refers to the various family members' self-esteem, rules, and communication.

Power to maintain energy in the system so the parts can work. In families, this power is derived from food, shelter, air, water, activity, and beliefs about the emotional, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual lives of the family members and how they work together.

Ways of interacting with the outside. In families, this means relating to changing contents, the new and different.

There are two types of systems: closed and open. The main difference between them is the nature of their reactions to change, both from the inside and from the outside. In a closed system, the parts are rigidly connected or disconnected altogether. In either case, information does not flow between parts or from outside in and inside out. When parts

are disconnected, they often appear as if they are operating: information leaks in and out but without any direction. There are no boundaries.

An open system is one in which the parts interconnect, are responsive and sensitive to one another, and allow information to flow between the internal and external environments.

If one were to deliberately design a closed family system, the first step would be to separate it as completely as possible from outside interference, and to rigidly fix all roles for all time. The fact is, I don't believe anyone would deliberately design a closed system. Closed family systems evolve from certain sets of beliefs:

People are basically evil and must be continually controlled to be good.

Relationships have to be regulated by force or by fear of punishment.

There is one right way, and the person with most power has it.

There is always someone who knows what is best for you.

These beliefs are powerful because they reflect the family's perception of reality. And the family then sets rules according to their beliefs. In other words, in closed systems:

Self-worth is secondary to power and performance.

Actions are subject to the whims of the boss.

Change is resisted.

In open systems:

Self-worth is primary; power and performance, secondary.

Actions represent one's beliefs.

Change is welcomed and considered normal and desirable.

Communication, the system, and the rules all relate to each other.

Most of our social systems are closed or very nearly so. A little change is allowed, which in my opinion is the reason we have been able to limp along as well as we have.

Now we come to an important philosophical question. Do you believe that all human life deserves the highest priority? *I believe this with all my being.* Therefore I unashamedly admit I will do everything I can to change closed systems into open ones. An open system can choose to be open or closed when it fits. The important word is choice.

I believe that human beings cannot flourish in a closed system; at best, they can only exist. Human beings want more than that. The task of the therapist is to see the light that shines in every person or family, and to uncoil the wrappings that shroud that light.

Right now you and I could point to countless examples of closed systems, including dictatorships in current society, schools, prisons, churches, and political groups. What about the system in your family? Is it open or closed? If your communication now is mostly growth-impeding and if your rules are inhuman, covert, and out of date, you probably have a closed family system. If your communication is growth-producing and your rules are human, overt, and up to date, you have an open one.

Let's return to an exercise we've done before and do it again with different goals and different reasons for doing it. Ask your family members or any other five people to work with you. They can be a family or coworkers or a board of directors. As before, ask them to take different names and to pick one of the growth-impeding communication styles (placating, blaming, computing, or distracting). Try planning something together for ten minutes.

Notice how quickly the nature of the system emerges. Before I was asking you to do this with three people to see what happened to you individually. This time you might begin to see how closed systems develop. In addition to your back hurting, your head aching, and not being able to see and hear well, you may begin to feel locked in. People look like strangers or burdens. They are not giving each other information, only grief.

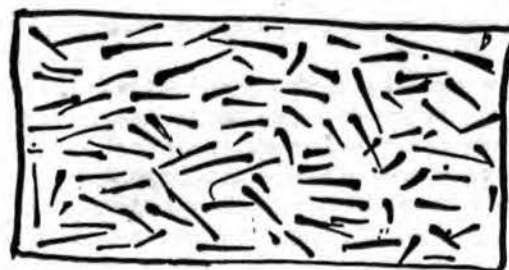
Now try the same planning experiment with the leveling response. Can you see the beginnings of an open system? In contrast to your experience in the closed system, you may feel more loose, more lucid. Your body probably feels better and you may be breathing easier.

The following chart shows how the closed system applies to troubled families, and the open system to nurturing families.

CLOSED SYSTEM

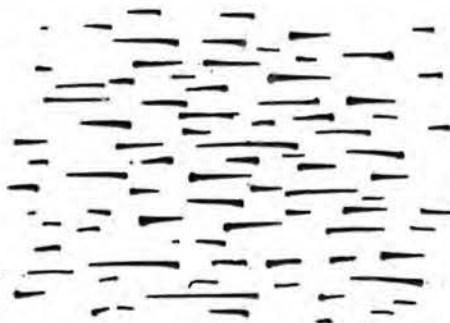
SELF-ESTEEM	low
COMMUNICATION	indirect, unclear, unspecific, incongruent, growth-impeding
Styles	blaming placating computing distracting
RULES	covert, out-of-date, inhuman rules remain fixed; people change their needs to conform to established rules restrictions on commenting
OUTCOME	accidental, chaotic, destructive, inappropriate

Self-worth grows ever more doubtful and depends more and more heavily on other people.



OPEN SYSTEM

SELF-ESTEEM	high
COMMUNICATION	direct, clear, specific, congruent, growth-producing
Style	leveling
RULES	overt, up-to-date, human rules; rules change when need arises full freedom to comment on anything
OUTCOME	related to reality; appropriate, constructive Self-worth grows ever more reliable, confident, and draws increasingly more from the self.



All right. When three or more people are related in any way and are joined in one common purpose, they will develop into a system. This happens in families, with friends, and at work. Once established, the system remains very much in operation, even when not in evidence. If it's a closed system, it will probably operate on a *life-death, right-wrong* basis; fear permeates the atmosphere. If open, it probably operates on the basis of *growth, intimacy, and choice*.

Put very simply, your self-worth, your communication, together with your rules and your beliefs, are the ingredients that make up your family system. Leveling communication and human rules characterize an open system and allow everyone in that system to flourish. Crippling communication and inhuman rules make a closed system, retarding and distorting growth.

Becoming aware of their system usually opens the way for family members to become searchers and to stop berating themselves and others when things go wrong. People can ask "how" questions instead of "why" questions. Generally speaking, "how" questions lead to information and understanding, and "whys" imply blame and so produce defensiveness. Anything contributing to defensiveness contributes to low pot and leads to potentially unsatisfying outcomes.

Another important part of any system is that it tends to perpetuate itself. Once established, a system will stay the same until it dies or something changes it: a part breaks down from lack of care or because of a defect; or a catastrophic event affects the system. Sometimes even a minor incident can overwhelm the system, which indicates that the system's designers behaved as though change would never happen.

Each member in a system is a most significant factor in keeping the system going as it is or changing it. Discovering your part in the system and seeing others' parts is an exciting, although sometimes painful, experience. And you can certainly see the importance of systems when you consider

the very life of the family depends on its system to a very large degree.

Let's look at the family system in another way. Maybe another comparison would help at this point.

In a mobile all the pieces, no matter what size or shape, can be grouped together in balance by shortening or lengthening their strings, rearranging the distance between pieces, or changing their weight. So it is with a family. None of the family members is identical to any other; each is different and at a different level of growth. As in a mobile, you can't arrange one member without thinking of the others.



Try this. Take objects—any objects—that are very different from one another and work out a balance for them. Take as many as there are different people in your family, and think of them as your family members. The more parts to your mobile and the greater the differences among them, the more variety and interest you will have.

If you settle for the first balance you achieve, you'll be doing what so many people do: making the only way they know the "right" way. You resist other ways to bring balance to your family because you fear experimentation.

To avoid this bind, find at least two more ways to make the pieces balance. Many more ways exist, but I will have made my point if you find three. You now have three options, and you need not be stuck with only one.

The trick of making a vital family system is to enable each family member to have a truly individual place and to have fun in that place. Bringing off this trick entails your ability to change and to adjust the "strings" in your family mobile. The strings are your feelings, rules, and communication patterns. Are they immovable or flexible?

While you are working on your mobile, think of the parts of a family. They can be divided into two major categories: adults and children, then males and females. Even the most casual glance at this array shows a great diversity in what people have to give each other at any point in time.

No established rule says one person has to do all the giving and everyone else all the getting. Yet some families cripple themselves by appointing a specific person to be the giver, and nothing ever changes. Ordinary life is such that even if someone agreed to do so, he or she couldn't always give without great cost. One time it may be only the husband who is able to give; another time it may be only the wife or one child. Many families have rules that dictate who may give to whom:

Boys always give to the girls.

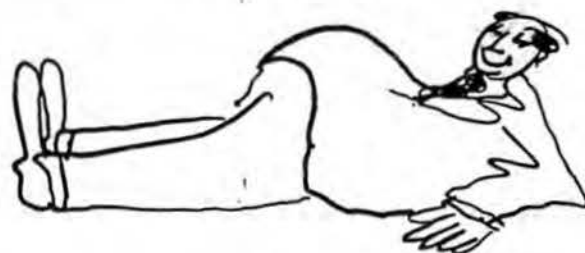
Mother always gives to the children.

Husband always gives to the wife.

Eventually, everyone gets cheated. However, if the ideal outcome of a family today is the growth of all its members, then the family job is to use all its parts to ensure this growth.

How can adults use themselves so the children can grow? How can the children use themselves so the adults can grow? How do the males make development possible for the females and the females for the males? How does everyone help everyone else—adult, child, male, and female alike? These are significant questions in families' efforts to become more nurturing.

Each of these groups has a world that members of the complementary group do not share. Talking about respective worlds, offering their variety and stimulation, not only adds interest but also expands our whole reality. No woman knows what it feels like to carry around a penis, and men don't know what it's like to carry babies. Far too many



adults have forgotten how to enjoy the simple pleasures children find in life. Simple sharing among groups can help greatly in these areas.

All families are in balance. The question is: What is the cost to each family member to maintain that balance?

I think the stakes are high regarding the nature of your family system. The family is the one place in the world where all of us can expect nurturing: soothing bruised souls, elevating self-worth, as well as getting things done.

The family is the obvious place to learn this nurturing and growing. To achieve these goals and become truly vital, there has to be continual observation and changing and reshaping in the family. This can only take place in an open system.

Appendix C²²⁴

²²⁴ Handouts for Workshop #2; from Satir, The New Peoplemaking

Patterns of Communication

After many years of listening to interactions among people, I gradually became aware of certain seemingly universal patterns in the way people communicate. Over and over again I observed four ways people had of handling the negative results of stress. These four patterns—which I call *placating*, *blaming*, *computing*, and *distracting*—occurred when one was reacting to stress and at the same time felt one's self-esteem was diminished—that "the pot got hooked." In addition, the "hooked" one could not say so.

As I began to understand these patterns more fully, I saw that self-esteem became easily hooked when one had not developed a solid, appreciative sense of self-worth. When one is doubtful about one's worth, it is easy to use another's actions and reactions to define oneself. For instance, if someone called us green, we would agree without checking and take the other's comment as fitting us. We are green because the other person said so.

It's easy for anyone with doubts about self-worth to fall into this trap. I recommend you treat everything that comes to you from the outside as something with which to cope, not as a way to define yourself.

Likewise, stress alone need not feel like an attack on self-worth. Feeling stress might be painful or annoying, but that isn't the same as doubting your own worth.

Do you know your internal feeling when your pot gets hooked? When mine does, my stomach gets knots, my mus-

cles get tight, I find myself holding my breath, and I sometimes feel dizzy. While all this is going on, I find that my thoughts concern the dialogue I am having with myself. The words are variations of "Who cares about me? I am unlovable. I can never do anything right. I am a nothing." Descriptive words for this condition are embarrassed, anxious, incompetent, helpless, and fearful.

What I say at a point like this might be quite different from anything I am feeling or thinking. If I think that the only way out of my dilemma is to make things right with you—so you will think I am lovable, acceptable, and so on—I will say whatever I think would fit. It would not matter if it were true. What matters is my survival, and I have put that in your hands. When I do this, I give away my power.

Suppose, instead, I keep my survival and power in my hands. Then I can say straight out what I think and feel. I might feel some initial pain at exposing my weaknesses and taking any accompanying risk, but I avoid the greater pain of hurting myself physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually.

It's important to understand that every time you talk, all of you talks. Whenever you say words, your face, voice, body, breathing, and muscles are talking, too:

Verbal communication	— words
Body/sound communication— (with or without words)	facial expression body position muscle tone breathing tempo voice tone gestures

Discrepancies between verbal and nonverbal communication produce double messages. Your words are saying one thing, and the rest of you is saying something else.

Have you ever heard, "Oh, I really like this!" and wondered why the speaker's head was moving from side to side?

The troubled families I have known handled their communication through double messages. Double messages come through when a person holds the following views:

1. I have low self-esteem (low pot) and believe I am bad because I feel that way.
2. I am fearful about hurting the other person's feelings.
3. I worry about retaliation from the other.
4. I fear rupture of our relationship.
5. I do not want to impose.
6. I am unconscious of anything but myself and do not attach any significance to the other person or the interaction itself.

In nearly all of these instances, the person is unaware of giving double messages.

So the listener will be confronted by two messages, and the outcome of the communication will be greatly influenced by her or his response. In general, the possibilities are: pick up the words and ignore the rest; pick up the nonverbal part and ignore the words; ignore the whole message by changing the subject, leaving, or going to sleep; or commenting on the double nature of the message.

For example, if I have a smile on my face and the words "I feel terrible" come out of my mouth, I am giving a double message. What are your options? Picking up on the above possibilities, you might respond to the words and say, "That's too bad," to which I can respond, "I was just kidding." Your second choice is to respond to the smile and say, "You look great," in which case I can say, "How can you say that!" Your third choice is to ignore the whole thing and go back to your paper, in which case I would respond, "What's the matter? Don't you give a damn?" Another choice, the leveling response, is to comment on my double message: "I don't know

what you're telling me. You're smiling, yet you tell me you're feeling bad. What gives?" I then have a chance to respond, "I didn't want to impose on you," and so on.



I feel terrible

I believe that unless any family communication leads to realness or a straight, single meaning it cannot possibly lead to the trust and love necessary to nourish family members.

What goes on in a moment between two people has many more levels than are visible on the surface. The surface represents only a small portion of what is going on, much in the way that only a very small part of an iceberg is visible.

Thus, in this interaction:

"Where were you last night?"

"You are always nagging me!"

something is happening to each person in relation to herself or to himself.

Something is happening to the perception by each of the other.

The relationship can go toward distrust, personal low pot, or frustration. On the other hand, this can be the beginning of new depth and trust. Outcomes depend on the responses one chooses.

Let's take a closer look at the four universal patterns people use to get around the threat of rejection. Feeling and reacting to the threat, the individual who doesn't want to reveal weakness attempts to conceal it in the following ways:

1. *Placate* so the other person doesn't get mad;
2. *Blame* so the other person will regard one as strong (if the person goes away, it will be her or his fault—not one's own);
3. *Compute* so that one deals with the threat as though it were harmless, and one's self-worth hides behind big words and intellectual concepts;
4. *Distract* so one ignores the threat, behaving as though it were not there (maybe if one does this long enough, it really will go away).

Our bodies have come to portray our feelings of self-worth whether we realize it or not. If our self-worth is in question, our bodies show it through some form of physical manifestation.

With this in mind I have devised certain physical stances to help people get in touch with parts of themselves that are obvious to other people but not always to themselves. I've exaggerated and expanded each facial and vocal message into the whole body so nobody can miss it.

To help clarify the responses (we will play out these roles in communication games in the next chapter), I have included a simple word-diagram with each descriptive section. Please note that these responses are used by men as well as women, by children as well as adults.

PLACATER

Words	agree	"Whatever you want is okay. I am just here to make you happy."
Body	appeals	"I am helpless"—shown in victim's posture.
Insides		"I feel like a nothing; without you I am dead. I am worthless."

The *placater* talks in an ingratiating way, trying to please, apologizing, and never disagreeing, no matter what. This is a "yes man" who talks as though he could do nothing for himself; he must always get someone's approval. You will find later that if you play this role for even five minutes, you feel nauseous and want to vomit.

A big help in doing a good placating job is to think of yourself as really worth nothing. You are lucky just to be allowed to eat. You owe everybody gratitude, and you really are responsible for everything that goes wrong. You know you could have stopped the rain if you used your brains, but you don't have any. Naturally you will agree with any criticism of you. You are grateful that anyone even talks to you, no matter what they say or how they say it. You would not think of asking anything for yourself. After all, who are you to ask? Besides, if you can just be good enough, it will come by itself.

Be the most syrupy, martyrish, boot-licking person you can be. Think of yourself as being physically down on one knee, wobbling a bit, and putting out one hand in a begging fashion. Keep your head up so your neck will hurt, your eyes will strain, and in no time at all your head will ache.

When you talk in this position, your voice will be whiny and squeaky because you don't have enough air to project a rich, full voice. You will be saying yes to everything, no matter what you feel or think. The placating stance is the body position that matches the placating response.



BLAMER

Words	disagree	"You never do anything right. What is the matter with you?"
Body	accuses	"I am the boss around here."
Insides		"I am lonely and unsuccessful."

The *blamer* is a fault-finder, a dictator, a boss who acts superior and seems to be saying, "If it weren't for you, everything would be all right." The internal feeling is one of tightness in the muscles and organs. Meanwhile the blood pressure increases. The voice is hard, tight, and often shrill and loud.

Good blaming requires you to be as loud and tyrannical as you can. Cut down everything and everyone. Think of yourself pointing your finger accusingly and starting your sentence with "You never do this," "You always do that," "Why do you always," "Why do you never," and so on. Don't bother about an answer; that is unimportant. The blamer is much more interested in throwing weight around than really finding out anything.

When you are blaming, you breathe in little tight spurts, or hold your breath altogether, keeping your throat muscles tight. Have you ever seen a really first-rate blamer whose eyes were bulging, neck muscles and nostrils standing out, skin getting red, and whose voice sounded like someone shoveling coal?

Think of yourself standing with one hand on your hip and the other arm extended with your index finger pointed straight out. Your face is screwed up, your lips curled, your nostrils flared as you yell, call names, and criticize everything under the sun. Your blaming stance looks like this:

You don't really feel you are worth anything, either. So if you can get someone to obey you, then you feel you count for something. Given their obedient behavior, you feel effective.



COMPUTER

Words	ultrareasonable	"If one were to observe carefully, one might notice the very workworn hands of someone present here."
Body	computes	"I'm calm, cool, and collected."
Insides		"I feel vulnerable."

The *computer* is very correct, very reasonable, and shows no semblance of feeling. The person seems calm, cool, and collected. She or he could be compared to an actual computer or a dictionary. The body feels dry, often cool, and detached. The voice is a dry monotone, and the words are likely to be abstract.

When you are a computer, use the longest words possible, even if you aren't sure of their meaning. You will at least sound intelligent. After one paragraph no one will be listening anyway. To get yourself really in the mood for this role, imagine that your spine is a long, heavy steel rod reaching from your buttocks to the nape of your neck, and a ten-inch-wide iron collar girds your neck. Keep yourself as motionless as possible, including your mouth. You will have to try hard to keep your hands from moving, but do it.

When you are computing, your voice will naturally go dead because you have no feeling from the cranium down. Your mind is bent on being careful not to move, and you are busy choosing the right words. After all, you should never make a mistake. The sad part of this role is that it seems to represent an ideal goal for many people. "Say the right words, show no feeling. Don't react."

Your computer position stance will look like this:



DISTRACTER

Words irrelevant The words make no sense or are about an unrelated subject.

Body angular "I'm off somewhere else."

Insides "Nobody cares. There is no place for me here."

Whatever the *distracter* does or says is irrelevant to what anyone else is saying or doing. This person doesn't respond to the point. The internal feeling is one of dizziness. The voice can be singsong, often out of tune with the words, and can go up and down without reason because it is focused nowhere.

When you play the distracting role, it will help you to think of yourself as a kind of lopsided top, constantly spinning but never knowing where you are going, and not realizing it when you get there. You are too busy moving your mouth, your body, your arms, your legs. Make sure you are never on the point with your words. Ignore everyone's questions; maybe come back with one of your own on a different subject. Take a piece of imaginary lint off someone's garment, untie people's shoelaces, and so on.

Think of your body as going off in different directions at once. Put your knees together in an exaggerated knock-kneed fashion. This will bring your buttocks out, and make it easy for you to hunch your shoulders and have your arms and hands going in opposite directions.

At first this role seems like a relief, but after a few minutes of play, the terrible loneliness and purposelessness arise. If you can keep yourself moving fast enough, you won't notice it so much.

You will look like this:

As practice for yourself, take the four physical stances I have described, hold them for just sixty seconds, and see what happens to you. Since many people are unaccustomed to feeling their body reactions, you may find at first that you are so busy thinking you aren't



feeling. Keep at it, and you will begin to have the internal feelings you've experienced so many times before. Then, the moment you are on your own two feet and are freely relaxed and able to move, you find your internal feeling changes.

My hunch is that we learn these ways of communicating early in childhood. As children make their ways through the complicated and often threatening world in which they find themselves, they try out one or another of these communication patterns. After enough use the child can no longer distinguish response from feelings of worth.

Using any of these four responses bolsters an individual's feeling of low self-worth or low pot. These ways of communicating are reinforced by the way we learn about authority in families and by attitudes prevalent in our society:

"Don't impose; it's selfish to ask for things for yourself" reinforces placating.

"Don't let anyone put you down; don't be a coward" reinforces blaming.

"Don't be so stupid; you're too smart to make mistakes" reinforces computing.

"Don't be so serious. Live it up! Who cares?" reinforces distracting.

At this point you may well be wondering if these four crippling modes of communication are all we have. Of course not. There is another response that I have called *leveling* or *flowing*. In this response all parts of the message are going in the same direction: the voice's words match the facial expression, body position, and voice tone. Relationships are easy, free, and honest, and people feel few threats to self-esteem. This response relieves any need to placate, blame, retreat into a computer, or be in perpetual motion.

Of the five responses, only leveling has any chance to heal ruptures, break impasses, or build bridges between people. And lest leveling seem too unrealistic to you, let me assure you that you can still placate if you choose, blame if you like, be on a head trip, or be distracting. The difference is

you know what you are doing and are prepared to take the consequences.

When you are leveling, you apologize when you realize you've done something you didn't intend. You are apologizing for an act rather than your existence. Likewise, you may criticize and evaluate in a leveling way, by evaluating an act, not blaming the person. Usually you'll be able to offer a new direction as well.

At times, you'll be talking about intellectual things, giving lectures, making explanations, or giving directions, when precise word meanings are essential. When you are leveling in this area, you are still showing your feelings and moving freely while you're explaining. You aren't coming off like a machine. (Many people who make their living with their brains—scientists, mathematicians, accountants, teachers, and therapists—are often motivated by a wish to be objective. They behave like machines and epitomize the computing response.) In addition, you will sometimes want to change the subject. In the leveling response you can say what you want to do instead of hopping all over the place.

The effect of leveling is congruence. When a leveler says, "I like you," the voice is warm and the person looks at you. If the words are, "I am mad as hell at you," the voice is harsh, and the face held tight. The message is single and straight.

The leveling response also represents a truth of the person at that moment. This is in contrast, for example, to a blaming response, in which the person is feeling helpless but is acting angry—or is hurting but is acting brave.

A third aspect of the leveling response is that it is whole, not partial. The body, thoughts, and feelings are all shown, in contrast to computing, for example, in which nothing moves but the mouth and that only slightly. People who are leveling show an integration, a flowing, an aliveness, an openness, and what I call a juiciness. Leveling makes it possible to live in a vibrant way, rather than a dead way. You trust these people; you know where you stand

with them, and you feel good in their presence. Their position is one of wholeness and free movement.

Now, to help you distinguish these five different ways of expressing yourself, let me present five ways of apologizing. This can also serve as a demonstration before you play the games in the next chapter. Let's imagine that I have just bumped your arm.



PLACATING (*looking down, wringing hands*): Please forgive me. I am just a clumsy oaf.

BLAMING: Ye gods, I just hit your arm! Keep it in next time so I won't hit it!

COMPUTING: I wish to render an apology. I inadvertently struck your arm in passing. If there are any damages, please contact my attorney.

DISTRACTING (*looking at someone else*): Gee, some guy's mad. Must've got bumped.

LEVELING (*looking directly at person*): I bumped you. I'm sorry. Are you hurt?

Let's take another imaginary situation. I am your father, and there is something wrong in what you, my son, are doing.

PLACATING (*with a hushed voice, downcast face*): I'm—uh, uh—gosh, gee, Jim, I . . . am sorry—you feeling okay? You know—promise me you won't get mad. No, you're doing okay, it's just—maybe you could do a little better? Just a little, maybe? Hm?

BLAMING: What's the matter with you, don't you know anything, you dumb cluck?

COMPUTING: We are making a survey of our family efficiency. We find that in this department, namely with you, efficiency is beginning to go down. Would you have any comments to make?

DISTRACTING (*talking to his other son, standing next to Jim*): Say, Arnold, is your room about the same as Jim's? No, nothing wrong—I was just taking a walk through the house. Tell Jim to see his mother before he goes to bed.

LEVELING: Jim, your room is in bad shape. You haven't made your bed since yesterday. We need to stop, take a look, and see what's wrong.

It's anything but easy to break old habit patterns and become a leveler. One way you might help yourself achieve this goal is to learn what some of your fears are that keep you from leveling. To thwart the rejection we so fear, we tend to threaten ourselves in the following ways:

1. I might make a mistake.
2. Someone might not like it.
3. Someone will criticize me.
4. I might impose.
5. She will think I am no good.
6. People might think me imperfect.
7. He might leave.

When you can tell yourself the following answers to the foregoing statements, you will have achieved real growth:

1. I am sure to make mistakes if I take any action, especially new action.
2. I can be quite sure that there will be someone who doesn't like what I do. Not everyone likes the same things.
3. Yes, someone will criticize me. I really am not perfect. Some criticism is useful.
4. Sure! Every time I speak and interrupt in the presence of another person, I impose!
5. So maybe she will think I'm no good. Can I live through that? Maybe sometimes I'm not so hot. Sometimes the other person is "laying a trip on me." Can I tell the difference?
6. If I think of myself as needing to be perfect, chances are I will always be able to find imperfection.
7. So he leaves. Maybe he should leave, and anyway, I'll live through it.

These attitudes will give you a good opportunity to stand on your own two feet. It won't be easy and it won't be painless. If we can laugh at ourselves, the journey will be easier. You can grow and feel good about yourself. The outcome will be worth the effort.

With no intention of being flippant, I think most of the things we use to threaten ourselves and that affect our self-worth turn out to be tempests in teapots. This is an opportunity to see the joke in how we treat ourselves. Another way I helped myself through these threats was to ask myself if I would still be alive if all the imagined threats came true. If I could answer yes, then I was okay. I can answer yes to all of them now.

I will never forget the impact of discovering other people worried about these same silly threats. I had thought for years I was the only one, and I kept myself busy trying to outwit them, simultaneously doing my best to conceal my anxiety. My fear was, "What if somebody found out?" Well, what if somebody did? Now I know we all use these same kinds of things to threaten ourselves.

By now you realize this leveling response isn't some kind of magical recipe. It's a way of responding to real people in real situations that permits you to agree because you really do, not because you want to make points. Leveling allows you to use your brain freely but not at the expense of your feelings or your spirit. It also enables you to change course, not to get you off the hook but because you want to and need to.

The leveling response makes it possible for you to live as a whole person: real, in touch with your head, your heart, your feelings, and your body. Being a leveler enables you to have integrity, commitment, honesty, intimacy, competence, creativity, and the ability to work with real problems in a real way. The four other communication patterns result in doubtful integrity, commitment by bargain, dishonesty, loneliness, shoddy performance, strangulation by tradition, and dealing in a destructive way with fantasy problems.

It takes guts, courage, some new beliefs, and some new skills to become a leveling responder. You can't fake it.

People are hungry for straightness, honesty, and trust. When they become aware of it and are courageous enough to try it, they diminish their distance from other people.

I came to this awareness in a tough, trial-and-error way, trying to help people who had serious life problems. I found that people healed by finding their hearts, their feelings, their bodies, and their brains; this process once more brought them to their souls and thus their humanity. They could then express themselves as whole people, which in turn helped them to greater feelings of self-worth, nurturing relationships, and satisfying outcomes. None of these

results is possible through the use of the four crippling ways of communication.

From what I have seen I've made some tentative conclusions about what to expect when I meet new groups of people. In general, 50 percent will say yes, no matter what they feel or think (placate); 30 percent will say no, no matter what they feel or think (blame); 15 percent will say neither yes nor no and will give no hint of their feelings



(compute); and 0.5 percent will behave as if yes, no, or any feeling did not exist (distract). That leaves only 4.5 percent who will be real, who will level. My colleagues tell me I am optimistic, saying the leveling response is probably found in

only 1 percent of our population. (Again, this is not validated research. It is only a clinical hunch.)

In the vernacular, it would seem we are a bunch of emotional crooks, hiding ourselves, playing dangerous games with one another, and calling it society. If we want to make our bodies sick, become disconnected from other people, throw away our beautiful brainpower, and make ourselves mute, deaf, and blind, we can continue using only the four crippling ways of communication.

I feel very strongly as I write this. For me, isolation, helplessness, and feeling unloved, low-pot, or incompetent comprise the real human evils of this world. Certain kinds of communication perpetuate this, other kinds of communication can change it. If we can understand and recognize the leveling response, we can also learn to use it.

I would like to see each human being value and appreciate himself or herself, and feel whole, creative, competent, healthy, flexible, beautiful, and loving.

Despite my exaggerations of the first four ways of communication (they may even seem amusing) I am deadly serious about their killing nature. In the next chapter, when you play the games I have invented, you will experience exactly what these communication styles are like. You will quickly understand the toll they take on your body, the distrust that forms in your relationships, and the blah, disappointing, and many times disastrous outcomes that ensue.

Appendix D²²⁵

²²⁵ Handouts for Workshop #3; from Imber-Black, Rituals for Our Times

How Rituals Work for Us

THE FIVE PURPOSES OF RITUALS



Jennifer Comes of Age

Evan's daughter, Jennifer, was born with some severe disabilities that affected her capacity to read, write, and speak. During her childhood her mother watched in amazement as she took her handicap in stride, despite some very cruel teasing from other children about her differences, and despite coming from a family where high academic achievement was the norm. She willingly spent hour upon hour with tutors and speech therapists. She went to some fine schools with excellent teachers and some schools that tried to hide youngsters with disabilities, as if other children might "catch" it. Through it all she taught her family a lot about perseverance in the face of enormous struggles, and about building on strengths, rather than focusing on weaknesses, as she

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developed warmth, humor, compassion, and a keen sense of responsibility toward relationships and work.

When Jennifer was nineteen, it was time for her to graduate from high school. Unlike her brother, Jason, she had not had a Bat Mitzvah celebration to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. And, because of her disabilities, she would not be going to college. Clearly, high school graduation was to be her rite of passage, and the family had lots of talks about how to mark Jennifer's "coming of age" with a ritual that would both honor all she had accomplished and send her forth into the adult world with confidence.

Jennifer wanted a party at a Chinese restaurant—her favorite festive food. Her mother and stepfather chose a restaurant and made a list of people to invite who were important to Jennifer, including extended family who lived far away, friends who had supported her from young childhood on, special teachers, and coworkers from her part-time job. Unbeknownst to Jennifer, the invitation included a secret that read "We are making a special 'becoming an adult woman' album for Jenni. If you would like, please bring anything you want to add to this album, including poems, letters, photos, stories, drawings, etc." During the weeks before the party, her mom worked secretly to construct an album that began when Jennifer joined the family as an adopted infant, and marked it with significant sections of her development, such as toddlerhood, starting school, and adolescence. Since her handicaps sometimes made it difficult for both Jennifer and those around her to notice her growth and changes, this album recorded them for all to see. When Jennifer arrived at her party, the album was waiting for her as a special symbol of her development. What she still didn't know was that the album was open-ended and that a new section, "Becoming an Adult Woman," was about to be added. After we ate Jenni's favorite foods, people were invited to give their presentations to Jennifer. A very moving and unexpected ceremony unfolded, as person after person spoke about who Jenni was to them, what she meant to them, how they experienced her, and gave her their own special brand of advice about living.

Her grandma Dena, Evan's mother, gave Jenni a photograph of her late husband, Jenni's grandfather, down on his knees proposing marriage to her, and spoke about enduring love and her wish that Jenni would have this in her life. Her aunt Meryle Sue, Evan's sister, com-

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posed an original poem, "Portrait of Jenni," and after she read it, spoke through tears about what this day would have meant to Jenni's grandfather and how proud he would have been of her. Her cousin Stacey Landsman also wrote a poem that captured who Jenni was to her and gave words to Jenni's future:

J is for Jen
 Joy, Jewel, Just Jenni.
 Easy to love.
 Now moving forward with
 Nothing to stop her.
 Interesting places and people to see.
 Free to keep growing with confidence and faith.
 Everyday, everyway, especially now.
 Rarin' to go, Jenni!

Person after person spoke with grace and love and special stories of Jennifer's strengths that they had experienced. Advice about men and what to beware of was offered by Jennifer's step-grandfather, and received with much laughter. Photographs of strong women in history were presented. Her mother watched as Jennifer took in all that she was to people, the sometimes unknown impact that her own courage had had on family and friends. And then all who gathered witnessed the emergence of Jennifer, the adult woman, as she rose from her seat and spoke unhaltingly and with no trace of her usual shyness, thanking each person in turn for what they had given her in life, talking about the loss of her grandfather and her wish that he could be with her today, and ending with all that she anticipated next in her life.

The weeks and months following this ritual were perhaps even more remarkable as her family experienced a changed Jennifer, a Jennifer who moved from adolescence to young womanhood, starting a full-time job, auditing a community college course, traveling by herself, making new friends, and relating on a level previously unseen.

This ritual contained all of the elements of how rituals work for us. Jennifer's "Coming of Age" ritual involved *relating*, the shaping, expressing, and maintaining of important relationships. People gathered who were seldom together in one place, including extended family who lived in different parts of the country. Established relationship

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reaffirmed and new relationship possibilities opened. The ritual included *changing*, the making and marking of transitions for self and others. Jennifer's change from a teenager to a young woman was both marked and, in fact, made. Her mother and stepfather changed, too, from the parents of a teen to the parents of a young adult. *Healing*, the recovery from loss, occurred through the special tributes to Jennifer's grandfather, who had died four years earlier, enabling a new kind of healing. The ritual included *believing*, the voicing of beliefs and the making of meaning. Thus each person gave voice to deeply held beliefs about life and helped Jennifer to create new meaning about what she had achieved in the face of her disabilities. Finally, *celebrating*, the expression of deep joy and the honoring of life with festivity, marked this ritual as everyone celebrated Jenni's accomplishments and her very being.

As you look at rituals in your life, you will find that they function in your individual development and in your interactions with others to enable *relating*, *changing*, *healing*, *believing*, and *celebrating*, which are, in fact, major themes in all human existence. Any given ritual, whether it be a daily ritual, a special tradition, a holiday celebration, or a life-cycle ritual, naturally may contain one or more of these elements. A particular ritual can be shaped and reshaped to include aspects that you deem necessary.

Relating: Shaping, Expressing, and Maintaining Relationships

All human systems must deal with relating, including questions of who is in and who is out, who belongs, who decides who belongs, who is close to whom, and who is distant. Rituals can help us to *see* aspects of our relationships and enable us to rework relationship patterns, rules, roles, and opportunities. They allow us to preserve human ties, even during times of intense turmoil. The relating aspect of rituals occurs daily during meals when seating arrangements, allowable topics, and allowable emotions metaphorically define and redefine family relationships. Who gets invited, who chooses to actually attend, and who is left out of any given ritual is, of course, an implicit comment on relationships. Where a given ritual is held—for instance, at whose home Christmas dinner occurs each year—may tell you a lot about who holds power or influence in family networks.

In the 1990 film *Avalon*, changing family relationships are poignantly portrayed through three different Thanksgivings. In the first, the entire extended family, including many aunts, uncles, and cousins, is present. The oldest generation reminisces about their migration to America, telling stories about their now-dead father. The middle generation laughs and makes fun of these stories. The youngest generation simply enjoys the connections, the food, the holiday. The relationships seem warm and close, anchored in a shared sense of the past. By the time of the second Thanksgiving, part of the family has moved to the suburbs, making the major shift from working class to middle class that can powerfully affect family relationships and family rituals. At this Thanksgiving, a long-standing family rule is broken, as the turkey is cut before all of the relatives have arrived. While, at first glance, this may seem a small matter, this action is symbolic of much larger relationship changes in the extended family in which distance and misunderstanding replace the previous closeness. At the third Thanksgiving, no one from the extended family gathers, and one small nuclear family is portrayed with turkey dinner in front of the television. The erosion of the entire extended-family network of relationships is seen through its absence.

WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

Jonas and Ellen Korba were a remarried couple. Both had two children from a previous marriage. Jonas had two daughters and Ellen had two sons. All of the children lived with them. Each one's children fought ferociously with the stepparent, and the brothers argued constantly with the sisters. Each parent sided with his or her own children, and so fought with each other. To save their marriage, the couple was seriously considering giving up custody of all of the children. During a therapy session, Jonas and Ellen described their wedding, which had occurred three years previously. When asked "What part did the children have in the wedding?" Ellen replied, "Oh, they weren't there—they had made such a fuss about our getting married and I really didn't want to have to worry about children making noise during my wedding." So this most important life-cycle ritual had happened *without* the children. Without realizing it and without intending it, Jonas and Ellen sent their children the message that they were not expected to form good relationships in the new family. Rather than using the ritual to form the relation- s of

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a remarried family, Jonas and Ellen created a ritual more appropriate to a first marriage where there are no children.

All rituals have an important relationship component. They help us to "see" what's going on in relationships, and offer a specific time and place to highlight ongoing relationships and to make relationship changes. Rituals to welcome babies may involve the creation of a grandparent generation or new sibling relationships. Children have long marked special friendships by becoming "blood brothers" or creating secret ceremonies. All of the preparation for a ritual, the drama of the ritual event itself, and the period of time following a ritual can have an enormous impact on relationships that may endure for many years.

When we choose to forgo an important ritual, usually there are troubled relationships among extended family members, and no one can figure out how to do the necessary work on the relationships to make the ritual happen. When parents have had a bitter divorce, for instance, a young adult may run off and get married because having the parents come together is just too difficult and having a wedding without one or the other is just too painful. *If you find that you are avoiding creating or attending rituals, this is an important signal that relationship issues need attention.* Preparatory work may need to be done, opening areas of tension for conversation and repairing relationship cutoffs, before a ritual occurs. If you are not on speaking terms with your brother and you simply invite him for a New Year's brunch, his likely refusal to come will solidify the cutoff even further.

Sometimes, however, the sheer act of everyone getting together at the same time and in the same place for a particular ritual can alter previous patterns of anger and distance. Sammy Cohen's parents were divorced, and the two extended families had not seen each other or spoken for seven years. All the relatives wanted to attend Sammy's Bar Mitzvah, however, and the importance of the event helped everyone to transcend their anger. A portion of this ritual included passing the Torah from one generation to the next. Maternal and paternal grandparents handed the Torah to Sammy's mother and father, and together they placed the Torah in Sammy's hands. This powerful symbolic action, handing sacred knowledge down the generations, enabled Sammy to know that family members were there for him, despite their conflicts with each other. Here the power of the ritual *per se* was able to hold and confine

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many smaller relationship struggles. Having participated together in the symbolic action of passing the Torah from one generation to the next, rather than remaining grouped in "sides" of the family, helped to redefine relationship possibilities in this binuclear family.

Changes in relationships may be "announced" silently when the place where a ritual is held shifts from one household to another. In Ginny Granger's family, birthdays and holidays were *always* held at her parents' home. When her father died, her oldest sister, Anna, decided on her own that making the rituals was simply too much work for their mother. When Thanksgiving approached, Anna announced that it would occur at her house. The brothers and sisters were upset with this change, but no one voiced their resentment at Anna for making this decision unilaterally. Grumbling in private twosomes, all nonetheless showed up. This was the beginning of a shift in decision-making power and influence in the entire family, as Anna became the unchallenged "boss" in all extended family matters.

As you review the rituals in your life, the relationship theme will become apparent to you. When people have painful memories of childhood rituals, it is often the aspect of troubled relationships that they are remembering. Yet as we've seen, rituals can help us change and enhance our relationships in the present. A carefully planned nightly dinner ritual can ease the tension that occurs when a stepfather joins a preexisting unit of mother and children. A weekly Sunday brunch can enable a busy two-career couple to protect special time every week to be together. Family solidarity and cohesion may be experienced as family members participate together in any given ritual. And an engagement ritual can mark the formation of a new relationship and create a boundary around a young couple.

Take some time to talk about either an ongoing daily ritual or an upcoming tradition or celebration ritual. Are you satisfied with the aspects of your relationships that are being expressed through this ritual? Are other people satisfied? If not, how might this ritual be altered? Often, some work on the relationship may need to be done first. If you and your partner go out every Friday night for dinner and don't speak through the entire meal, it probably won't change much to add a Saturday night dinner. Talking over how you would like the ritual of the Friday night dinner to be different, however, is usually a

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lot less threatening and more productive than complaining about the "lack of communication" in your relationship. As you begin to *do* the Friday night ritual differently, new relationship possibilities get shaped in action.

Changing: Making and Marking Transitions for Ourselves and Others

Across time and cultures, rituals have been used to make and mark transitions. The truly magical quality of rituals is embedded in their capacity not only to announce a change but to actually create the change. In Jennifer's "Coming of Age" ritual, her graduation from high school was celebrated, thus marking the transition from adolescence to young adulthood, *and* the ritual made the transition through the action of family and friends giving her the "secrets" of adult life and Jennifer receiving these in her very adult acceptance speech.

Given that volumes are written advising people how to change, and countless hours are spent in therapy, often agonizing over being unable to make needed changes, it is no wonder that rituals exist in all cultures to ease our passage from one stage of life to another. Using familiar symbols, known symbolic actions, and repeated words, rituals make change manageable and safe. Simply knowing which rituals lie ahead during a day, a year, or a lifetime stills our anxiety. Change is *enacted* through rituals and not simply talked about—couples don't change from being single to being married by talking about marriage, but rather by a ceremony; teens don't graduate from high school by a teacher saying "you're finished now," but by proms, picnics, and the graduation.

In contemporary American society, the power of rituals to make and mark transitions, to truly change our identity and alter our self-concept is sometimes lost. The "ritual as social event" can easily overwhelm the capacity of our rituals to function as agents of personal and relationship change. This capacity can be recaptured by careful thought and planning to make a given ritual truly into a "rite of passage."

The change in the status of an individual, such as going from being single to being married, is an obvious part of such rituals. Less obvious are the changes occurring simultaneously in all of the surrounding participants, which are sometimes enhanced with a symbolic action. A

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couple who never celebrated their wedding anniversary, because the woman was pregnant before their marriage, dance with delight when the "Anniversary Waltz" is played at their daughter's wedding, publicly confirming their joy with being together.

MAKING AND MARKING YOUR OWN CHANGES THROUGH RITUAL

While the element of change is inherent in all of our life-cycle rituals, other rituals can also facilitate change and transition. Something as simple as a daily meal can mark and make transitions in children, such as when they shift from being served by adults to helping with the preparation and cleanup. Important changes in gender-role expectations can occur when fathers genuinely share in cooking the daily dinner, rather than only doing the Sunday barbecue. Birthdays and anniversaries that mark the movement from one year to the next offer unique opportunities to announce change. Shifting from number candles on a cake, which are appropriate for a young child, to trick candles, which ten-year-olds usually adore, recognizes the fact of change and growth. If these rituals remain *exactly* the same year after year, then the change possibilities inherent in rituals are lost. Family members may let you know rather loudly that they are ready for change in their life to be recognized through ritual, such as the time Corie Spalding simply didn't show up for her fifteenth-wedding-anniversary celebration at the same restaurant she and her husband had gone to for the last fourteen years. As you see the need for particular changes, or as you anticipate particular transitions, you can design rituals that enable them to happen.

"GROWING UP" KATIE

Katie Murphy was four years old when her sister, Dawn, was born. Dawn's crib was set up in Katie's room. Katie had been a fairly easygoing baby and toddler, but when Dawn appeared on the scene she quickly developed bedtime problems, throwing tantrums and refusing to go to sleep until she and her parents were totally exhausted. Months and months of midnight bedtimes went by with no change. Katie's mom, Karen, was at her wit's end. Karen and her husband, Alan, came to dread every evening and their own relationship was suffering from lack of time together and sheer lack of sleep. When Dawn was born, Karen and Alan had planned to move Katie into a new room of her own, but now hesitated to do so because friends told them she n

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feel more isolated and upset. As they learned a bit about rituals from their therapy, they made a new decision. They first began talking to Katie about her new room. They told her she could pick the colors she would like, emphasizing that this is something a baby can't do. Katie began to get quite intrigued. As the day for moving Katie into her new room approached, they told her she would have a special party, marking her beginning to grow up. They said this party would occur after dinner on the night when she would sleep in her new room for the first time, and told her only bigger girls had evening parties. They also began to tell her stories about the kind of bedtime rituals they had when they were her age, and that she could begin to have, but only after she moved into her new room. All of this preparation phase went on for about a week, during which time Katie began to settle down more and more quickly each evening. They asked Katie's grandparents to attend this special ritual and to bring gifts "appropriate for the room of a bigger girl." On the evening of the party, they came with a new dollhouse with small people and furniture, and told her that this was certainly something babies couldn't play with. After a small celebration, during which Dawn was put to bed, Alan carried Katie on his shoulders to her new room. When they got to the door, Katie asked to be put down because "I am a big girl now, Daddy!" She put on her pajamas and waited for the promised bedtime ritual and then went to sleep. Her previous bedtime tantrums never recurred.

Here Karen and Alan used preparation for an unusual ritual and the ritual itself in order to give Katie a new sense of herself. They worked with the normal desires of a young child to be seen and experienced as "a bigger girl" to construct a ritual that could interrupt the nightly bedtime ordeal. You can do this with needed changes in yourself and in your relationships.

Once-familiar ethnic or religious life-cycle rituals can be revived and adapted to current circumstances. The Ghanaian community in New York City has worked to keep change-oriented rituals alive. A special coming-of-age ceremony for girls is held in which elder women talk and sing all day about a woman's responsibilities and everything she needs to know about men just as it would have been done in Ghana, but now they include large stereo speakers, a microphone, and a video camera.¹ The ritual has been further modified by allowing men to attend, which we can perhaps see as an action that announces other changes in the

relationships between Ghanaian men and women now living in the United States. You may want to ask your own parents and grandparents or other elders to tell you stories about rituals that promoted change in life status or in relationships. You may want to take parts of these rituals and include them in rituals that you create to make and mark changes.

Sometimes very important changes take place, but remain unacknowledged. This may be because the changes are difficult to talk about, they bring up the pain of how things used to be, or no one has thought about how to mark the change. In our experience, recovery from medical or psychiatric illness is an aspect of change that is seldom marked by a ritual. Families, relationships, and the individual's own identity remain stuck with the illness label, and behavior among family members and friends remains as it was when the person was ill. Adolescents who have recovered from cancer or adults who are now healthy after heart surgery often maintain an "illness identity," and others treat them accordingly. A ritual can declare in action that a person has moved from illness to health. Such a ritual might include a ceremony of throwing away no-longer-needed medicines or medical equipment, burning or burying symbols of a long hospital stay, or writing a document declaring new life and health. After recovering from breast cancer, Gerry Sims had a T-shirt made that read "Healthy Woman!" She wore this T-shirt to a family dinner and announced to everyone that they were to stop treating her as a patient, and that, in particular, she wanted people to argue with her as they had before she became ill. Then she passed out T-shirts to her husband and children that read "Husband of a Healthy Woman," "Child of a Healthy Woman," and "Teenager of a Healthy Woman." Everyone put on their shirts and for the first time spontaneously began to talk about what they had been through together during Gerry's yearlong illness. They cried together and talked about how scared they all had been but could not say out loud to each other. Following this, Gerry's teenage daughter picked a fight with her, just as Gerry had hoped!

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

As you plan rituals to announce and enact change, think about what you really want to express about yourself and others. Unfortunately, in many communities adolescent rites of passage have come to center

drugs and alcohol, rather than on the new and exciting rights and responsibilities that can come with growing up. In contrast, many black churches have developed a new growing-up ritual, combining elements of the Bar Mitzvah and African tribal rites of passage, which involves yearlong study of African-American history and culture, culminating with a celebration witnessed by the community.

Weddings have sometimes become ostentatious material displays, rather than opportunities for family and community support of a new couple. If you are planning or participating in a wedding, think through the truly important changes you would want this ritual to express.

The change aspect of rituals is powerful and you can use it. Ask yourself and your intimates if there are changes in your relationships that should be happening but are not. Are you anticipating particular transitions in the next six months to two years? Consider whether certain changes occurred, but have gone unmarked. Whatever your circumstances, rituals are always available to make and mark development, growth, and change.

Healing: Recovering from Relationship Betrayal, Trauma, or Loss

In every human life, there are times when personal and relationship healing is needed. Significant loss, such as in death or divorce, requires a period of mourning in order to fully grieve and reengage in life. Though less recognized, relationship betrayal, such as an affair, breaking an important promise, or deceiving an intimate also needs healing if the relationship is going to be able to resume and grow. Rituals to initiate healing following a death are found in every culture and religion. Even less common are rituals to heal the trauma of violence and abuse, although many people are beginning to invent these out of a profound need for healing.

Recovery from deep personal crisis is a slow process that occurs over time, and at a person's own pace. While rituals can facilitate healing, or announce completion of a healing process, they are not quick-fix gimmicks. As you read ahead, you will likely be considering experiences of loss, betrayal, or trauma in your own life. You may want to review what healing rituals you have participated in and whether these provided genuine renewal. Rituals can provide authentic healing as they connect

us with forgiveness, empathy and compassion, justice, and the ways that we are more alike than different from one another in our human longings for love, support, and understanding.

HEALING RELATIONSHIP BETRAYAL WITH RITUALS OF RECONCILIATION

The crisis of shattered trust and broken promises can lead to genuine atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation, and relationship renewal, or, alternatively, to chronic resentment, bitterness, parting, and becoming cut off. Since rituals are able to hold and express powerful contradictory feelings, like love and hate, anger and connectedness, they enhance the possibility of relationship healing.

BURYING THE PAST

Sondra and Alex Cutter had been married for twelve years. Seven of those twelve years were spent in bitter arguments about a brief affair Alex had just before their fifth anniversary. Sondra didn't want to leave her marriage, but she felt unable to let go of the past. Alex, in turn, had become extremely defensive about his behavior. He remained unable to genuinely show Sondra that he was sorry. In couple's therapy, Sondra and Alex were asked to bring two sets of symbols of the affair. The first set of symbols was to represent what the affair meant to each of them at the time it occurred. The second set was to symbolize what the affair had come to mean in their current life together. Sondra brought a torn wedding photograph to symbolize that the affair initially meant a break in their vows. Alex's symbol surprised Sondra, as he brought an old picture of his father who had had many affairs. "I thought this was just what husbands did. I thought this was what made you a man, but I found out quickly that this didn't work for me and for what I wanted my marriage to be. Then we couldn't get past it." Sondra had never heard Alex speak about the affair in this way. Her belief that the affair meant he didn't love her and that he loved another woman began to shift for the first time in seven years.

As a symbol of what the affair meant currently, Alex brought the wheel of a hamster cage, remarking, "We just go round and round and round and get nowhere." Sondra brought a bottle of bitters, and said, "This is what I've turned into!" After a long conversation engendered by their symbols, Sondra said quietly, "This is the first time in seven

years that we've talked about this without yelling and screaming." When the therapist asked if they were ready to let go of the past, both agreed that they were. They decided to revisit a favorite spot from early in their relationship and to bury these symbols there. During the ceremony, Alex cried and for the first time asked Sondra to forgive him, which she readily did. They followed this with a celebration of their anniversary, which they had stopped celebrating seven years earlier.

This healing ritual, created as part of couple's therapy, gave Sondra and Alex a new way to talk about their chronically unhappy marriage. Bitter recriminations were replaced with a sense of empathy for one another from which could flow a renewed sense of what they really wanted to be about as a couple. You don't need to be in therapy, however, to create rituals to effect healing. Common to all healing rituals is a dimension of time, time for holding on and time for letting go. Selecting symbols to express painful issues generally allows for a new kind of conversation to emerge. Taking some joint action together, such as burying the past, can impart a new possibility of collaboration. Creating a ritual together can help you to rediscover playful parts of your relationship, such as the couple who "put an affair on ice," placing symbols in their deep freezer and agreeing that they could only fight about the affair after they had thawed these symbols out!

HEALING TRAUMA WITH RITUALS

As family therapists, we frequently work with individuals who are recovering from physical and sexual abuse. The healing dimension of rituals provides an important aspect of our work. Healing rituals may also assist families who are recovering from political terror.²

BURNING AND PRESERVING TRAUMATIC MEMORIES

Corinne found that she was flooded with memories of the sexual abuse that occurred in her childhood. In therapy, she began to create a healing ritual. She selected one hour a day to write out the memories. In order to move the memories out of her house symbolically, she went to a nearby coffee shop to do her writing. By containing the memories to one hour a day, she found that she could function well the rest of the day. In therapy, she began a long process of sorting through what happened to her as a child. With her therapist as witness and support,

she made a decision to end each therapy session by burning parts of her writing about the abuse. She also sorted out certain aspects of her writing that she wanted to keep. She carefully cut and pasted paragraphs that referred to her strength, her survivorship, while burning those that described herself as a victim. She put what she wanted to save in a safe-deposit box outside of her immediate neighborhood.

In this ritual, Corinne and her therapist worked steadily to balance holding on and letting go, a process common to all healing rituals. Corinne was totally in charge of the pace, symbols, and symbolic action in the ritual, thereby reclaiming herself as the person in charge of her movement in life. The ritual was in no way a "quick fix," but instead was respectfully embedded in a therapy focused on her recovery. If you have been abused and want to work with healing rituals, we recommend that you do so within the safety provided in a therapeutic relationship or self-help group. Do not let anyone pressure you to move quickly, since participating in an inauthentic ritual or a ritual that you do not feel you own can do more harm than good. Rituals to address the magnitude of abuse and violence develop slowly, enabling you to reclaim your own voice.

Utilizing the profound healing capacity available in rituals, the Cape Cod Women's Agenda has initiated the Clothesline Project.³ This ongoing ritual devoted to recovery from abuse is a growing collection of T-shirts, hand-decorated by women who have been assaulted. When displayed, the T-shirts are ironically hung on a clothesline. The exhibit includes ringing gongs and bells and blowing horns to symbolize how often a woman is assaulted (every fifteen seconds), raped (every six minutes), and murdered.⁴ Healing in this ritual comes from the autonomous act of painting one's own shirt and from the connected sense of community grieving and public awareness made with each showing of the clothesline. The marvelous contradiction of regaining power in the face of servitude is clearly contained in these hand-painted depictions of violence hung on a clothesline.

HEALING LOSSES WITH RITUALS

There is no life that is lived without loss. We all experience the death of people we love and care for deeply. Rituals whose central function is to address death simultaneously mark the death of a person, honor what their life was about, facilitate the expression of grief in ways

consonant with the culture, and point out a direction for continued life. The danger of self-imposed isolation immediately following a death may be warded off by rituals of shared meals and prescribed periods of visiting the bereaved. During condolence rituals, stories of the deceased person are usually shared, since the sorting through of a life by storytelling aids the process of mourning.

Since most people now die in hospitals rather than at home, the earlier connection of death and loss as part of the ongoing cycle of life has all but disappeared, making healing more difficult to accomplish. Condolence rituals may focus less on the healing capacity of storytelling, since many people have become too uncomfortable to speak about those who have died. When Susan Jackson's father died, she felt the absence of true healing. She remarked, "After the burial, people came to our house. They hugged me. They ate and drank. But we never talked about Dad. Maybe that's why it's so hard to talk about him even now—we just never began." The extremes of superficiality and lack of human relatedness in facing death may be seen in the new American practice of "drive-through" funeral visiting in which people "pay their respects" by observing the deceased on a video screen and recording their presence on a computer. Obviously such practices do nothing to promote healing.

When healing rituals have not occurred, or have been insufficient to complete the grief processes, a person can remain stuck in the past or unable to move forward in meaningful ways. Even the unhealed losses of previous generations may emerge as debilitating symptoms in the present. When this happens, new rituals can be created to address the need for healing.

RETURNING HOME

Carolyn Bell was twenty-eight when she began to recognize herself as a woman who "never finished anything." She had dropped out of college, left several jobs, ended two important relationships with no sense of why she had done so. As she thought about her life, she began to see many "unfinished" areas, which she started to talk over in therapy.

Carolyn's mother died when she was fourteen. Since she was so upset at the sudden and unanticipated loss of her mother, her family doctor recommended that she not attend her mother's funeral. Her father agreed and she was sent to a friend's home while everyone else

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went to the funeral. Grieving deeply and unable to live with so many daily reminders of his wife, her father sold the family home abruptly and with no discussion. Carolyn missed her junior high school graduation, and that entire transition went unmarked. In her new school, teachers began complaining that Carolyn never finished homework or projects and that she dropped out of activities she began. During high school, she asked her father twice if they could go visit their old house, but both times he declined, saying, "That'll be too upsetting for you." As Carolyn looked over this period in her life, she could see the many disconnections.

As she thought about it, leaving her home became more and more vivid and powerful to her as a metaphor for the loss of her mother. All of her relationship connections to her mother were in this house. Slowly, Carolyn constructed a new healing ritual for herself that involved several steps. She contacted the people who lived in her old house and explained why she wanted to visit. She thanked her father for protecting her when she was younger, and then told him of her plan to visit the house, enabling them to begin to finally talk about her mother and their life together in the old house. He gave her several photographs taken in the house, which they had not looked at since her mother died. She then made what she called a "pilgrimage" to the old house. She walked through each room, revisiting both happy and painful memories. She took a new photograph of the outside of the house, and talked with her father about her visit, about what had remained the same and what had changed. Four months later, her father asked if they might go see the house together, and they made a second "pilgrimage" during which they cried together for the first time. Following this healing ritual of "returning home," Carolyn returned to college and finished.⁵

By designing this healing ritual, Carolyn was able to reflect on a pattern in her life of never finishing anything and connect this with her deep need to heal all of the losses connected to her mother's death. She recognized that simply going to the cemetery was not the healing ritual she required, and that visiting her old home was far more important. As you design new healing rituals for yourself, you will need to think carefully about what will work for you, which may well be different from what might help others.

In creating her ritual, Carolyn discovered wellsprings of her own

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courage, both in contacting the family who currently lived in the house and in speaking with her father about what had previously been taboo. Often, generating new healing rituals requires breaking some old rules about what can and cannot be discussed.

Carolyn did not express anger at her father for not allowing her to go to the funeral and for moving the family, which would have probably made him defensive and unavailable, for she sensed that he had done what he thought best at the time, and she told him so. In our experience, healing rituals seldom develop in an atmosphere of recrimination. If healing a death hasn't occurred, this is not because people have deliberately prevented it, but because they just didn't know what to do.

By designing and carrying out this ritual from start to finish, Carolyn not only experienced a sense of healing the wound of her mother's death that had been missing for so many years, she also challenged the myth about herself as a "person who never finishes anything" that had held her back since the loss itself.

HEALING COMMUNITY LOSSES WITH RITUALS

Communities or nations may also create rituals to deal with profound losses. One contemporary example is the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., which provides an ongoing healing ritual. Family and friends who lost men and women in the war make trips that have been called "pilgrimages," a part of many rituals. At the wall, they search for their loved one's name and make rubbings to carry back home. This ritual, repeated over and over by thousands of individuals, is able to connect personal loss with a much larger community of mourners. Public grieving for a war that carried so much secrecy and shame has been facilitated by the Wall.

More recently in the American gay community, a healing ritual has been created called the Names Project. This ritual involves a quilt consisting of individually hand-sewn patches, each memorializing a person who has died of AIDS. The ritual has extended beyond the gay community, so that anyone who has lost a person to AIDS can design a piece of the quilt. Each patch contains personal expressions meant to capture and express some essential aspect of the person who died. Every time the quilt is shown, a ceremony is held in which all of the thousands and thousands of names are read aloud as the quilt is un-

folded in preagreed-upon motions of connection and uplift. The choice of a quilt for this healing ritual is striking. Making a quilt is often a community endeavor, connecting those grieving with one another, rather than isolating them as the wider community response to AIDS has tended to do. And surely a quilt symbolizes the possibilities of warmth and care, affirming life even in the face of terrible death. The quilt is painfully unfinished, serving as a stark visual reminder to the wider community of the magnitude of loss.

Rituals to heal community losses remind us of the importance of giving witness to our losses as part of any healing process. Thus, the Wall, the Quilt, the Yad Vashem Memorial to those who died in the Holocaust, and other such memorials become healing rituals for us as we make pilgrimages to get there, experience symbols that reflect the enormity of these losses, grieve publicly what has been kept secret, and return to our own communities changed by having given witness.

HEALING THE LOSS OF A CULTURE THROUGH RITUALS

Immigrants often experience a deep sense of loss for their own homeland. Keeping some familiar rituals alive can help heal these losses, but it's not always easy to do this in an unfamiliar land. The right foods may be unavailable. People who participated in the old rituals may be nowhere around. And adolescent children who are eager to "Americanize" may balk at participating. Of some curiosity is the fact that an immigrant family can arrive in the United States on November 15, never having seen a turkey in their lives, and will be celebrating Thanksgiving with all of the trimmings a week and a half later. Eager to join their new culture, immigrant families may give little initial thought to what is being left behind, only to experience a profound sense of loss later.

A key challenge for immigrant families lies in how to stay connected to where they came from, grieve what is irreparably lost due to migration, and begin to connect to the new culture. Many immigrant families seem to try to cope with this challenge by unconsciously parceling out roles to various family members. In Gina Napolitano's family, her grandmother remained permanently sad about what the family had lost. Her mother tried to stay connected to the "old" country through cooking, photos, and letter-writing, and had little energy left to engage

in her new life in America. Her father, her brother, and she moved exclusively into the new culture, ignoring grandmother's pain and teasing mother's "old-fashioned" cooking. Over time, such roles became more and more rigid. No real healing for what had been lost occurred, and the whole family experienced a sharp sense of discontinuity.

EL SALVADOR AND THE BRONX

The Torres family approached the need to heal losses prompted by their migration through a ritual. When they first arrived in the Bronx as political refugees from El Salvador, Mrs. Torres and her son, Manuel, thirteen, and her daughter, Maria, eleven, were coping with the death of their husband and father, and recovering from their wartime experiences. They remained very close for two years. The children quickly learned English. Mrs. Torres became worried that they would soon forget that they were Salvadoran. She spoke to them in Spanish, but the children insisted on replying in English. Soon they were struggling, as Mrs. Torres wanted to talk about "home," and her children insisted that home was in the Bronx.

In family therapy, they were all asked to bring symbols to the next session of El Salvador and the Bronx. Mrs. Torres was very surprised to find that her children brought symbols of El Salvador that showed how connected they still were to their original home. Manuel and Maria brought toys and photographs that Mrs. Torres didn't know they had kept. Their symbols from the Bronx included a rock-and-roll tape and a poster from a concert, and they were able to talk about music without the usual fights. Mrs. Torres brought food for both of her symbols. She brought Salvadoran food and a small pizza to symbolize both the Bronx and the arguments they had been having when the children wanted pizza instead of her ethnic cooking. The family sat and ate both foods together. Following this sharing and mutual acceptance of symbols, the family designed a weekly storytelling ritual, in which the children agreed to listen to their mother's stories of El Salvador and Mrs. Torres agreed to listen to her children's stories of the Bronx. Over time, this storytelling ritual enabled all three to express their deep sense of loss and sadness connected to their forced migration. At the same time that this ritual provided healing, it also anchored them in a new life that could now include elements of El Salvador and the Bronx.⁶

HEALING RITUALS AND OTHER LOSSES

Throughout our lives, we are confronted with losses for which there are no agreed-upon rituals in the culture. Loss of marriage through divorce, loss of a relationship, or loss of functioning or body parts due to illness all require healing that can be enabled through ritual. Specific rituals for divorce and relationship loss will be described in Chapter 11.

Finally, as you examine and experience all of the rituals in your life, you will find unexpected places where healing can take place, even when that is not the central purpose of a given ritual. In Jennifer's "Coming of Age" ritual, space was spontaneously made for further healing the loss of her grandfather. As holidays are celebrated, traditions are marked, and life-cycle transitions are made, many families take a bit of time to consciously commemorate the death of a family member, through a moment of silence dedicated to this person, or by playing some favorite music, or reciting a prayer, or through active storytelling that calls forth memories of previous rituals when this person was present. Such moments within larger rituals tell us that healing is an ongoing process available to us in all our rituals.

Believing: Voicing Beliefs and Making Meaning

Every time we participate in a ritual we are expressing our beliefs, either verbally or more implicitly. Families who sit down to dinner together every night are saying without words that they believe in the need for families to have shared time together. When a family eats only vegetables or survives on takeout meals, they are expressing values. Nightly bedtime rituals offer parents and children an opportunity to tell each other what they believe about all kinds of matters. The sheer act of doing the bedtime ritual expresses a belief in a certain kind of parent-child relationship where warmth and affection and safety are available. Many families use Thanksgiving as a time to really express what they are thankful for, sharing beliefs about what is most important to them in life. The fact that Thanksgiving is the most traveled of all American holidays expresses a value about connecting with each other face-to-face despite long distances that may ordinarily separate us. Birthdays and anniversaries express our ideas about the passage of time in our lives. Where people sit during a religious ritual can express beliefs about the value and position of men and women. Wedding give

voice to beliefs about the nature of marriage. When couples choose to construct their own wedding ceremonies or add their own vows to the predetermined and traditional vows, it is because they have recognized the ways in which this ritual creates and expresses such beliefs. Adolescent rites of passage usually contain opportunities for the culture to impart its beliefs about adulthood. In Jennifer's "Coming of Age" ritual, family and friends offered her their deepest values. The possibilities for voicing beliefs, expressing deeply held ideas, negotiating differences, changing beliefs, and making meaning are endless in rituals.

If you have had the experience of a particular ritual becoming extremely routine, empty, meaningless, or even oppressive to you, likely this ritual no longer captures and expresses what you personally believe. Those rituals that remain alive and meaningful continue to connect with deeply held beliefs and values. Vibrant rituals have room for variations that can express changing norms and opinions while still anchoring us with a sense of shared history. The Passover Seder is a good example. This ritual has celebrated the emancipation of the Jews from slavery for centuries. During the Seder, the leader takes time to talk about the meaning of the holiday. In many families, others who are gathered also take part in this discussion, enabling beliefs to be expressed and explored. Variations in the Seder can be found in Jewish practice and in particular families. These differences also express deeply held beliefs. For instance, all Passover Seders include four cups of wine. In a recent Reform Judaism Seder service, a fifth cup of wine has been added. Called the "Cup of Redemption," this fifth cup is set aside for the future, for a time when all who still lack freedom will be free. This addition to a ritual that has existed generation after generation demonstrates in action the belief that the Seder is not simply the commemoration of a past event, but a living celebration of the present and future as well. Many people have told us about other changes they have made in the Seder while still remaining connected to its essential form. For example, during the Seder, ten plagues are recited. In Evan's family, time has been added for everyone to express their beliefs and ideas about contemporary "plagues," such as racism, sexism, poverty, and war. Feminists have designed new Seders that address issues of gender equality within the overarching framework of moving from slavery to freedom.

When beliefs are expanded, altered, or challenged, new rituals

emerge to express these differences, or significant aspects of preexisting rituals undergo profound changes. If you are a Roman Catholic who grew up before Vatican II, you no doubt remember a Latin Mass. You also remember a priest who stood with his back to the congregation. Think about what it means now to participate in a Mass in your own daily language presided over by a priest who faces the congregation. The repeated ritual of the Mass can connect you to the beliefs of millions of Catholics over centuries. The change in language and in the priest's position, however, expresses a new belief about an active rather than a passive congregation.

WHAT DO WE REALLY BELIEVE?

When Shanna and Bill Watson had their first baby, they struggled long and hard to create a naming ceremony that would welcome their baby into the world in ways that would express what they believed about life, while still honoring their own parents' differing beliefs. Raised as Christians, Shanna and Bill had become agnostics in their adult lives. They felt enormous pressure from their parents all during Shanna's pregnancy to plan a christening. Having a christening no longer made sense to them, as they did not believe in the meanings expressed in this ritual. Simply to do the ritual for the sake of their parents felt empty and inauthentic. For a while they thought about having no ceremony at all, but they realized that this would deprive them of an opportunity to begin their baby's life and their new life as parents with a celebration that might express their own deeply held beliefs about the meanings of family relationships. Over time, they constructed a baby naming and welcoming ceremony that was largely nonreligious, and also included an opportunity for the grandparents to offer their own values. Shanna and Bill went separately to each of their parents, and told them how they planned to celebrate their baby's birth. In these visits, they expressed appreciation for what their parents had given them in life that they hoped to give to their baby. They took care not to argue with their parents' beliefs, but to express their own simply and calmly. Finally, they invited their parents to come to the ceremony, telling them that a special time would be given to them to speak their wishes, including their prayers, for this new grandchild. The actual baby-naming ritual was held in a community park that held meaning for Shanna and Bill. During the ceremony, they asked their friends and family to offer

words to the baby and to them as new parents. This ritual was ultimately shaped to accommodate a range of differing beliefs that could fit within a commonly held belief that new life was precious and should be honored.

You may want to think through the various rituals in your life and ask yourself what beliefs are expressed in these rituals. Are these the beliefs you want to be expressing? Have your beliefs changed in ways that your rituals have not yet captured? Do you find yourself silently "going through the motions" of rituals just to please other people, yet remain alienated from what you genuinely believe?

You may want to choose one ritual in your life now and have a conversation with all of this ritual's participants about what beliefs this ritual expresses. Or you may want to look at a given ritual that repeats and repeats in your life, such as Christmas or New Year's, and ask yourself and your family what beliefs have changed through the years and what beliefs have remained the same. Finally, you may decide to change one or more aspects of a particular ritual to capture and express what you believe.

BELIEF NEGOTIATION THROUGH RITUALS

Rituals not only express beliefs. They allow us to negotiate differences in our values with one another. As family therapists, we frequently use a ritual called "Odd Days and Even Days" to help couples to negotiate competing beliefs. You don't have to be in therapy to use this ritual. When you and your partner are struggling with differing beliefs, try dividing up the week into "Odd Days" and "Even Days." You will need to agree ahead of time that on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, your partner's point of view about a given issue will prevail without argument, and that you will listen and observe carefully to see what you can learn. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, your point of view will prevail, and your partner will listen and observe to see what he or she can learn. On Sunday, spend a bit of time talking over what happened. This belief-negotiation ritual allows you to step out of your normal relationship with one another. Ferocious arguments over who is correct stop immediately during the ritual time. Opportunities to really see the other one's point of view become possible.

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ODD DAYS AND EVEN DAYS IN ACTION: JANNA TAKES A BATH

Anne Wright and Susan Pollard adopted a little girl, Janna, when she was four years old. Soon after Janna joined their family, Anne and Susan found that they were arguing over the best ways to raise her. Janna was afraid to take a bath. Anne insisted that she had to take a bath every night, while Susan sided with Janna and frequently let her skip a bath. Fights between Anne and Janna quickly became fights between Susan and Anne. Bath time became more and more difficult. They decided to try the "Odd Days and Even Days" ritual in order to address this struggle. When Susan stayed out of Anne's attempts to bathe Janna, Anne became much calmer, and consequently so did Janna. When Anne stayed out of Susan's methods and simply watched, she learned some playful ways to engage Janna with water that initially didn't involve an actual bath. Janna's fears subsided, as Anne and Susan learned from each other's ways of approaching the problem. Janna talked about "Anne's Janna bath" and "Susan's Janna no-bath" and managed to get clean every night. What had initially appeared as strongly held beliefs about the required frequency of children's baths went down the drain.

While not all struggles may be resolved this easily, experimenting with the "Odd Days-Even Days" ritual will give you an opportunity to fully explore your own reasons for doing what you do without defensive escalations with your partner. You'll have a chance to really learn about another way that may differ radically from your way. If a whole day seems too enormous, you can tailor this ritual to fit your own tolerance for change by trying it for an hour a day. By jointly agreeing to try this ritual, you and your partner may discover a new belief regarding cooperation.

Rituals sometimes involve us in trying new roles, roles whose values and beliefs may be unfamiliar to us. A second ritual to negotiate differences in beliefs is called a "Conversation Ritual." Jim and Ellen Marcus were struggling daily over whether or not to have a third child. Ellen wanted another baby and Jim was adamant that he did not. This issue had come to dominate all of their interactions. They had become repetitive and stuck in their own positions. They agreed to try a conversation ritual, consisting of three conversations, and held the conversations on their screened porch, a place that symbolically held good feelings for them. In the first, each would bring all of

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the good reasons to have another child. In the second, each would raise all of the good reasons to limit their family to two children. In the third, they would talk over what they had learned and explore what each currently felt and believed about the issue. In order to mark these conversations as a ritual occurring outside of regular talk and arguments, they chose the same time and place. These three conversations were to occur one week apart on Sunday at 2:00 P.M., a time when their two children were out playing with friends. No other conversations about this issue would occur outside of this special time and place. Unlocked from their usual struggle, Jim and Ellen both felt heard and understood in a new way. During their first conversation, Jim was able to express what would be wonderful about having another baby. He talked about what being a father had meant to him, which Ellen had not heard before. During their second conversation, Ellen talked about some of her fears about a third child that she had hidden because she feared Jim would use these to talk her out of having a baby. As they talked over their full beliefs about this issue, rather than the partial beliefs that usually were expressed, they felt much more connected to each other. Each began to hear the other's point of view in a novel way. They made a new decision to wait six months and to revisit this issue at that time. Their daily conversations were able to shift to other topics.

As a child you may have experienced a playful "Reversal Ritual." Many schools set aside a day each year when the children become the teachers and administrators, and the adults become the students. Such reversals are found cross-culturally in rituals where, once a year, the men dress up as women and the women dress up as men. As we step into each other's roles in a time-limited and ritualized fashion, we get an opportunity to see the other one's point of view and express beliefs that might ordinarily seem quite foreign to us. After following such reversal rituals, our own beliefs tend to have more flexibility. The next time you are locked into an argument with one of your children, you may want to try such a reversal ritual, pretending to be each other and taking the other's position on the issue for a limited period of time. Then talk over what you found out. Reversal rituals will likely clarify your own beliefs and give you more of an understanding of the other side. Couples can also do such reversals of positions, as can grown children and their

parents. What is required is the genuine willingness to enter the other's point of view or belief in a nondefensive way for an agreed-upon period of time, and then to discuss what you discovered.

USING COSTUMES FOR BELIEF EXPRESSION AND NEGOTIATION IN RITUALS

Costumes are often part of rituals. How we dress for a given ritual provides a visual commentary on our beliefs. Children going to church are dressed in their "Sunday best," clothing not worn the rest of the week, to express a belief in the specialness of the event. In Judaism, men cover their heads with a skull cap or yarmulke to carry out a belief regarding reverence for God. Recently, in Reform temples, some women have begun to wear these same yarmulkes, thereby expressing a belief in gender equality in religious matters. Prior to Vatican II, women in the Catholic Church were required to cover their heads while men were not, expressing the belief of St. Paul that women were merely a reflection of male glory and were under the power of their husbands.⁸

How we dress for any given ritual can also express changing beliefs. During the 1960s, many young couples changed from traditional wedding garb, both to challenge cultural mores and to express new beliefs about the nature of marriage. In the 1980s, white wedding dresses and tuxedos made a big comeback, mirroring more conservative beliefs in the society.

T-SHIRTS—RITUAL COSTUMES FOR THE 1990S

In our work with couples who are attempting to negotiate beliefs with one another, we often suggest a playful and effective ritual using T-shirts. Since every shopping mall now has a T-shirt store where you can design your own shirt for little money, this ritual is readily available to you. When you and your partner are having difficulties making meaning with each other and negotiating differing beliefs, you can each think through what T-shirt design best symbolizes your own position. Take a special trip to the store together and get your shirts made. On the next argumentative occasion, stop for a moment and put on your shirts, symbolizing a new context for conversation. The context of your argument will immediately shift to one marked by some humor and goodwill. Or put on your shirt as a signal to your mate that it's time

to discuss important matters. Talks with each other while you are wearing your shirts become the special time that marks rituals.

You can also make T-shirts to challenge outmoded or stuck beliefs. Geraldine and Willie Jackson found that they were responding to one another as if they were back arguing with their own parents. They went to the store and had two shirts made. Geraldine's shirt said "Guess What? I'm Not Your Mother!" and Willie's shirt stated "Guess What? I'm Not Your Father!" Each time they found themselves responding to each other as parent and child, one or the other would call out "Shirts!" and they would don their new costumes. Old patterns fell away quickly, laughter replaced bitter arguments, and they were able to begin to negotiate with each other. After a while, they only had to say the word "shirts" to evoke a frame of reference that would preclude arguing and lead the way to negotiation.

You can create belief-negotiation rituals among your many relationships. What is required is some joint willingness to step out of the same old boring fight into an experiment with special ritual symbols and time where new rules for interacting prevail. Choose a time when you both can really be available without interruptions. Select a place that has warm and pleasant associations for each of you. Play with novel ways to hear and be heard, such as exchanging symbols of your differing beliefs, preparing documents that express your position, or wearing unique clothing, like T-shirts. One couple we know created a board game to express and negotiate their differing beliefs. The very act of making the board game together opened space for something new to happen between them. Playing the board game as a weekly ritual allowed them to negotiate their differences.⁹ The bitter polarizing that so frequently occurs when human beings express differing ideas can give way through the capacity of rituals to hold contradictions and discover new and unexpected beliefs.

Celebrating: Affirming Deep Joy and Honoring Life with Festivity

Life-cycle rituals, including weddings, baby namings, graduations and funerals, religious and cultural holiday rituals, and birthdays and anniversaries, all involve celebrating. The celebration aspect of rituals is often the most visible and dramatic marker of individual, family, and

community continuity and change. As we announce who we are and who we are becoming through the joyful and celebratory moments of ritual, we also connect with a sense of humanity through time. We can celebrate the accomplishments of an individual life, the positive elements of a relationship, the warmth and caring in a family.

All cultures have celebrations. These rituals usually include certain foods and drinks, ethnic, religious, or cultural expression, unique music, gifts, and particular clothing, all of which mark the celebration as "special time." In Jennifer's "Coming of Age" ritual, the guests ate her favorite food to honor her choices. Both the Jewish-American and Jamaican aspects of her family culture were deeply present. Janine and Natalya played beautiful music. Jennifer received gifts to send her into adult life. The entire ritual celebrated her accomplishments in life, along with celebrating those who had stood by her and supported her.

Since celebrating is one of the major ways rituals work for us, it may be important to examine your own rituals to discover where you are experiencing a sense of celebration and where you are not. Rituals containing celebration express warmth, comfort, support, affirmation of life, and a sense of being connected to others. While not all rituals are intended to celebrate, if you come away from rituals where you anticipate celebration, and instead feel anxious, exhausted, hypocritical, or cut off from yourself or others, then one of rituals' key functions, celebrating, is not happening. Since rituals are a lens through which you can see developmental and relationship issues, discovering the absence of celebration in rituals where you expect it to be is a signal that work needs to be done. A genuine sense of celebration is often missing from rituals when there has been relationship cutoff, when important issues have gone underground and cannot be discussed, or when losses remain unhealed, unspoken, or unresolved.

CELEBRATING JIM'S LIFE:

AN UNEXPECTED PART OF A CHRISTMAS RITUAL

Sophie and Joel found themselves dreading yet another Christmas at Joel's mother's house. "It's like a funeral, not like Christmas," Sophie complained. "No one can talk about your brother Jim and yet he's present throughout the day!" Joel's brother Jim had died in a boating accident six years earlier. The family gathered every Christmas as t

always had, but the specter of Jim's death hung over the holiday. No mention was ever made of Jim, and the family went through the motions of Christmas, with no sense of celebration.

Joel and Sophie thought long and hard about how to change Christmas. They considered not going to Joel's mother's, but didn't want to upset her. Finally, they decided that they needed to take a risk in order to open both Christmas and family relationships. They made an album that affirmed and honored who Jim was in life. The album included photographs, press clippings of his accomplishments, letters he had written. During the Christmas gift exchange, Joel announced that he and Sophie had a gift for the whole family, and he took out the album. At first, Joel's sister left the room, angry that Joel and Sophie had done this, but she returned. The whole family sat and pored over the album, with lots of tears and stories about Jim being voiced for the first time since his death. The Christmas dinner that followed was a genuine celebration. Family members laughed. Joel's mother recalled the year Jim opened all of his presents two days before Christmas and then tried to wrap them all up again, only to be caught in the act. Favorite foods were eaten with joy instead of with furtive guilt. The family reclaimed its right to celebrate.

Christmas, a ritual that is supposed to include a sense of joy and celebration, had become stagnant for this family. The taboo subject of Jim's death was on everyone's mind, but no one dared mention it. Joel and Sophie knew that if they asked permission of other family members to make and present the album, they would be told not to do it because it would be too upsetting to Joel's mother. By celebrating Jim's life openly, they were able to join with the deep pool of memories of celebration that existed in the family. Joel's mother captured the genuine celebration that had occurred when she said to Joel and Sophie as they were leaving, "You gave me back Christmas and you gave me back Jim."

CELEBRATING THE UNCELEBRATED

While the celebration theme is obvious in our accepted life-cycle, holiday, and family-tradition rituals, there are many events in life that go unmarked and uncelebrated. This lack of celebration may result from shame or guilt, from the absence of social or community support, or simply because accomplishments and changes have gone unnoticed

Since new rituals can be created, you may want to think about parts of your own life or those close to you to determine if a new celebration is in order.

For instance, in our work we knew an intermarried couple who struggled and struggled to figure out how to celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas. The dilemma was finally resolved the year that they each made room for the other to celebrate his or her own holiday, followed by a new celebration on December 27 that they called a "Celebrating Our Differences!" day. They prepared favorite foods from their own ethnic and religious backgrounds, and told previously unheard stories from their own heritage. They ended the day with the phrase "Thank you for being different and enriching my life!"

Our own society has few established rite-of-passage rituals. Some families have taken to celebrating various rites of passage, such as first menstruation, or first shaving. Marking these passages into puberty offers an opportunity to celebrate family values regarding womanhood and manhood.

Many gay and lesbian couples, whom our society will not allow to have a legal marriage and wedding celebration, have begun to create their own public commitment ritual to celebrate their relationship with family and friends present to witness and offer them support.

A family whose son was profoundly retarded created a small family ritual to celebrate each new step he accomplished, including spaghetti for dinner (his favorite food), and a toast between the parents to each other in appreciation of what each gave to their son.

John and Sue married because Sue was pregnant. They never celebrated their anniversary or their daughter Karen's birthday, as these were connected with a deep sense of shame. Following a successful therapy, they chose a new anniversary date, one that marked their being together because they chose each other and not because their parents forced them to be married. To celebrate their daughter's third birthday and to announce their own freedom from shame, they invited family and friends to a "celebration of Karen's first, second, and third birthdays."

The celebration aspect of rituals honors life with all of its dilemmas, problems, and difficulties, and with all of its joys, successes, and accomplishments. Sometimes, just persevering in the face of enormous odds deserves a celebration. You may want to think about a II but

important detail, or an enormous but unmarked happening in your own life or in the lives of people that you care about that warrants a celebration ritual. Not every ritual requires weeks and weeks of preparation. A special dinner, a brief exchange of symbols, or even a nightly cup of tea together can hold and express a celebration of life.

Making Rituals Work for You

Any particular ritual may include one or some or all of the ways that rituals work for us. As you reflect on the rituals in your life, consider how these express and address *relating, changing, healing, believing, and celebrating*. Are your rituals doing what you want them to do and what you need them to do? Does a given ritual, for instance, express certain beliefs that you hold, but do little or nothing to heal relationships? Have you been able to affirm a change in personal status through a ritual, but still feel bereft of relational support? As you think over these five ways that rituals address central human needs, consider which ones may be missing from your current ritual life. Which of rituals' purposes would you like to develop? As you will discover in Chapter 3, your own family history and a variety of current life circumstances interact in powerful ways to shape your particular ritual style.



Appendix E²²⁶

²²⁶ Handouts for Workshop #4; from Satir, The New Peoplemaking and Illsley-Clark, Self-Esteem: a Family Affair

3

Self-Worth: The Pot Nobody Watches

Self-esteem is a concept, an attitude, a feeling, an image; and it is represented by behavior.

When I was a little girl, I lived on a farm in Wisconsin. On our back porch was a huge black iron pot, which had lovely rounded sides and stood on three legs. My mother made her own soap, so for part of the year the pot was filled with soap. When threshing crews came through in the summer, we filled the pot with stew. At other times, my father used it to store manure for my mother's flower beds. We came to call it the "3-S pot." Anyone who wanted to use the pot faced two questions: What is the pot now full of, and how full is it?



Long afterward, when people told me about themselves—whether they felt full, empty, dirty, or even "cracked"—I thought of that old pot. One day many years ago, a family was sitting in my office struggling to find words to tell each other how they felt about themselves. I remembered the black pot and told them the story. Soon the members of the family were talking about their individual "pots," whether they contained feelings of worth or of guilt, shame, or uselessness. They told me later how useful this metaphor was to them!

Before long this simple shorthand word was helping many families express feelings that had been difficult to talk about before. A father might say, "My pot is high today," and the rest of the family would know that he felt on top of things, full of energy and good spirits, secure in the knowledge that he really mattered. Or a son might say, "I feel low-pot." This told everyone that he felt he did not matter, he felt tired or bored or bruised, not particularly lovable. It might even mean he had always felt he was not good; that he had to take what was handed to him and could not complain.

Pot is a plain word in this use, almost a nonsense word. Many of the words professional people use to talk about self-worth sound sterile and lack life-and-breath images. Families often find it easier to express themselves in pot terms and to understand when other people express themselves this way. They seem suddenly more comfortable, released from our culture's taboo against talking about one's feelings. A wife who might hesitate to tell her husband that she feels inadequate, depressed, or worthless can say frankly, "Don't bother me now—my pot is dragging!"

In this book when I say "pot," I mean *self-worth* or *self-esteem*; I use these words interchangeably. (If you prefer another playful word that suits you better, use it.) As I said earlier, every person has a feeling of worth, positive or negative. As with my old family pot, the questions are: is my self-worth negative or positive at this point, and how much of it is there?

Self-esteem is the ability to value one's self and to treat oneself with dignity, love, and reality. Anyone who is loved is open to change. Our bodies are no different. In my many years of teaching young children, treating families of all economic and social levels, meeting people from all walks of life—from all the day-to-day experiences of my profession and personal living, I am convinced that the crucial factor in what happens both *inside* people and *between* people is one's self-worth, one's pot.

Integrity, honesty, responsibility, compassion, love, and competence—all flow easily from people whose self-esteem is high. We feel that we matter, that the world is a better place because we are here. We have faith in our own competence. We are able to ask others for help, yet we believe we can make our own decisions and are, in the end, our own best resources. Appreciating our own worth, we are ready to see and respect the worth of others. We radiate trust and hope. We don't have rules against anything we feel. We also know that we don't have to act on everything we feel. We can choose. Our intelligence directs our actions. We accept all of ourselves as human.

Vital people feel high-pot most of the time. True, all of us experience times when we would just as soon chuck it all, when fatigue overwhelms us and the world has dealt out too many disappointments too quickly, when the problems of life suddenly seem more than we can manage. But vital people treat these temporary low-pot feelings as just what they are: a crisis of the moment. This crisis might well be the birth pains of some new possibility for us. We may feel uncomfortable at the time but do not have to hide. We know we can emerge from this crisis whole.

When people feel they have little worth, they expect to be cheated, stepped on, and depreciated by others. This opens the way to becoming a victim. Expecting the worst, these people invite it and usually get it. To defend themselves, they hide behind a wall of distrust and sink into the terrible feeling of loneliness and isolation. Thus separated



from other people, they become apathetic, indifferent toward themselves and those around them. It is hard for them to see, hear, or think clearly, and therefore they tend to step on and depreciate others. People who feel this way build huge psychological walls behind which they hide, and then defend themselves by denying they are doing this.

Fear is a natural consequence of this distrust and isolation. Fear constricts and blinds us; it keeps us from risking new ways of solving our problems. Instead, we turn to still more self-defeating behavior. (Fear, incidentally, is always fear of some *future* thing. I have observed that as soon as a person confronts or challenges whatever she or he is afraid of in the present, the fear vanishes.)

When persons with constant low-pot feelings experience defeat, they often label themselves as failures. "I must be worthless or all these terrible things would not be happening to me" is often the inside response. After enough of these reactions, the self is vulnerable to drugs, alcohol, or other flights from coping.

Feeling low is not the same as low pot. Low pot essentially means that when you experience undesirable feelings, you try to behave as though those feelings did not exist. It takes a lot of high self-worth to acknowledge your low feelings.

It is also important to remember that persons of high self-esteem can feel low. The difference is that people who

are feeling low don't label themselves as worthless or pretend that their low feelings do not exist. Nor do they project their feeling on someone else. Feeling low is quite natural from time to time. It makes a big difference whether one condemns one's self or sees this low time as a human condition with which one needs to cope. I shall be frequently calling your attention to this process of coping.

Feeling low and not admitting it is a form of lying to yourself and others. Devaluing your feelings this way is a direct link to devaluing yourself, thus deepening the conditions of low pot. Much of what happens to us is the outcome of our attitude. Since it is attitude, we can change it.

Relax for a moment now. Close your eyes and feel your condition now. How are you feeling about yourself? What has happened or is happening at the moment? How are you responding to what is happening? How are you feeling about how you are responding? If you are feeling tight, give yourself a message of love, physically relax yourself, and consciously be in touch with your breathing. Now open your eyes. You will feel stronger as a result.

This simple remedy will help build your sense of worth: in moments you can change your state of feeling. You then meet any event with a clearer mind and a firmer personal foundation.

Invite your family members to try the following experiment with you. Take a partner, then tell one another your feelings ("Right now, I feel scared/tight/embarrassed/happy/etc."). Each partner simply thanks the other without judging or commenting. You thus hear one another's feelings so you can know each other better. We need a lot of practice to break the taboo against sharing our feelings. Practice as much as you can with people you trust.

Now, tell each other what makes you each feel low, or high. You may find new dimensions to the people you have been living with all these years and feel closer or more real to them as a result. When you have finished the exercise, give yourself permission to share what happened for you.

An infant coming into the world has no past, no experience in handling itself, no scale on which to judge his or her own worth. The baby must rely on experiences with people and their messages about his or her worth as a person. For the first five or six years, the child's self-esteem is formed almost exclusively by the family. After the child starts school, other influences come into play; the family remains important. Outside forces tend to reinforce the feelings of worth or worthlessness the child learned at home: the confident youngster can weather many failures, in school or among peers; the child of low self-regard can experience many successes yet feel a gnawing doubt about his or her own value. Even one negative experience can have effects out of all proportion to the event.

Every word, facial expression, gesture, or action on the part of a parent gives the child some message about self-worth. It is sad that so many parents don't realize what messages they are sending. A mother may accept the bouquet clutched in her three-year-old's hand and say, "Where did you pick these?"—with her voice and smile implying, "How sweet of you to bring me these! Where do such lovely flowers grow?" This message would strengthen the



child's feeling of worth. Or she might say, "How pretty!" but add in a judgmental voice, "Did you pick these in Mrs. Randall's garden?", implying that the child was bad to steal them. This message would make the three-year-old feel wicked and worthless.

What kind of self-worth is your family building in the children and reinforcing in the adults? You can begin to find out with this next experiment.

Tonight, when the family has settled around the table for dinner, notice what is happening to your feelings about yourself when other members speak to you. There will be some remarks to which you have no special response. However, you may be surprised to find that even "Pass the potatoes, please" can give you a feeling of value or depreciation, depending on the speaker's tone of voice, facial expression, timing (did the message interrupt you, or ignore something you said?), and how good you are feeling about yourself. If you are feeling good about yourself, you may find that you have a lot of options for how you respond. If you are feeling low, however, you might find that your options are limited (see chapter 6 on communication).

Halfway through dinner, change the perspective. Listen to what you are saying to others. Try to be in the other's shoes and imagine how you might feel if you were talked to as you are doing now. Would you, for instance, feel loved and valued?

Tomorrow night explain this little game to the other members of the family and invite them to join you. It will be helpful to read this chapter aloud before you do this as a family. After dinner, talk together about what you discovered and how you felt.

Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere in which individual differences are appreciated, love is shown openly, mistakes are used for learning, communication is open, rules are flexible, responsibility (matching promise with delivery) is modeled and honesty is practiced—the kind of atmosphere found in a nurturing family. It is no accident that the children of families who practice the above usually feel good about themselves and consequently are loving, physically healthy, and competent.

Conversely, children in troubled families often feel worthless, growing up as they must amid "crooked" communication, inflexible rules, criticism of their differentness, punishment for their mistakes, and no experience in learning responsibility. Such children are highly at risk of developing destructive behavior toward themselves and/or others. Much of an individual's potential is held in abeyance when this happens. If this has happened to you, I hope you are now taking steps to free that energy. The basic tools and directions for doing so are contained throughout this book, especially in the chapters on communication and self-esteem.

These same differences in self-worth can be seen in adult family members. It is not so much that the family affects the adult's sense of self (although that certainly happens) as that parents with high self-esteem are more likely to create nurturing families, and low-self-worth parents to produce troubled families. The system evolves out of the architect's of the family: the parents.

After years of working with families, I find that I can no longer blame parents, no matter how foolish or destructive their actions may be. I do hold parents responsible for accepting the consequences of their acts and learning to do differently. This is a good first step to improving the whole family situation.

Happily, it is possible to raise anyone's self-esteem, no matter what one's age or condition. Since the feeling of low worth has been learned, it can be unlearned, and something new learned in its place. The possibility for this learning lasts from birth to death, so it is never too late. At any point in a person's life, she or he can begin to learn higher self-worth.

I mean this to be the most important message in this book: *there is always hope that your life can change, because you can always learn new things.* Human beings can grow and change all their lives. It is a little harder as we grow older, and sometimes takes a little longer. It all depends on how set

we choose to be in our ways. Knowing that change is possible and committing oneself to changing are first big steps. Some of us may be slow learners, but we are all educable.

This bit of prose contains my feelings and ideas about self-worth.*

My Declaration of Self-Esteem

I am me.

In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me. There are persons who have some parts like me, but no one adds up exactly like me. Therefore, everything that comes out of me is authentically mine because I alone chose it.

I own everything about me: my body, including everything it does; my mind, including all its thoughts and ideas; my eyes, including the images of all they behold; my feelings, whatever they may be: anger, joy, frustration, love, disappointment, excitement; my mouth, and all the words that come out of it: polite, sweet or rough, correct or incorrect; my voice, loud or soft; and all my actions, whether they be to others or to myself.

I own my fantasies, my dreams, my hopes, my fears.

I own all my triumphs and successes, all my failures and mistakes.

Because I own all of me, I can become intimately acquainted with me. By so doing, I can love me and be friendly with me in all my parts. I can then make it possible for all of me to work in my best interests.

I know there are aspects about myself that puzzle me, and other aspects that I do not know. But as long as I am friendly and loving to myself, I can cou-

*Reprinted by permission of (and available in poster form from) Celestial Arts. The poster is called "I Am Me."

rageously and hopefully look for the solutions to the puzzles and for ways to find out more about me.

However I look and sound, whatever I say and do, and whatever I think and feel at a given moment in time is me. This is authentic and represents where I am at that moment in time.

When I review later how I looked and sounded, what I said and did, and how I thought and felt, some parts may turn out to be unfitting. I can discard that which is unfitting, and keep that which proved fitting, and invent something new for that which I discarded.

I can see, hear, feel, think, say, and do. I have the tools to survive, to be close to others, to be productive, and to make sense and order out of the world of people and things outside of me.

I own me, and therefore, I can engineer me.

I am me and I am okay.

Self-Worth: The Source of Personal Energy

Let us imagine that inside each one of us is a power center responsible for maintaining life and hooked up to a universal power source. Each center has a generator that produces energy to continue life. The center is fueled by our breath, which comes from a central energy source. Without breath, there is no life.

The generator has many valves that control the rate of each person's energy, its quantity, and the directions in which it is channeled. Let us further imagine that what controls the valves are the knowledge and feelings that we have about ourselves. Our body language and activities reflect our thoughts and emotions. When we appreciate and love ourselves, our energy builds. When we use this energy positively and harmoniously to make a smoothly running system within each self, it creates a strong foundation from which that self can cope creatively, realistically, and compassionately with what life presents.

Another way of expressing this is: "When I feel good about myself and like myself, the chances are excellent that I will be able to meet life from a position of dignity, honesty, strength, love, and reality." This is the state of high self-esteem.

On the other hand, if a person's feeling toward him- or herself is one of depreciation, limitation, disgust, or any other negative attitude, the energy becomes diffused and fragmented. The self weakens, becoming a victim defeated

by life: "If I do not like myself, I devalue and punish myself. I meet life from a position of fear and impotence, creating a state in which I feel victimized and act accordingly. I punish myself and others blindly. I become interchangeably subservient and tyrannical. I hold others responsible for my actions." In the accompanying psychological state, a person feels he or she doesn't count, feels a constant threat of rejection, and lacks the ability to look at her- or himself, others, and events in perspective. This is a state of low self-esteem.

A person who does not value him- or herself will expect someone else—a wife, husband, son, or daughter—to be responsible for bestowing that value. This often leads to endless manipulations that usually backfire on both parties.

To many, it may seem radical or even destructive to hear that it is essential for human beings to love and value themselves. To many people, loving one's self is selfishness, and thus an act against another, a war between people.

To avoid being against others, people have been taught to love others *instead* of themselves. This results in self-depreciation. The question also arises, if one does not love self, how can one know how to love others? We have plenty of evidence that loving oneself makes it possible to love others; self-worth and selfishness are not the same.

Being selfish is a form of upsmanship in which the message is some variation of "I am better than you." Loving oneself is a statement of value. When I value myself, I can love others as equally valuable. When I don't like myself, my feelings for others may be envy or fear.

We may also fear being criticized for seeming self-centered. I have found that the first step toward diminishing fear is to acknowledge it openly. You might say, for example, "I am afraid you will reject me if I tell you I like myself." Then check on your perception: "Is that true?" Ninety-five percent of the time, the answer will be, "No, I don't reject you; I feel you are brave to say so." It is amazing what happens when we confront our own monster—Fear of Rejection—especially in this simple way.



Good human relations and appropriate and loving behavior stem from persons who have strong feelings of self-worth. Simply stated, persons who love and value themselves are able to love and value others and treat reality appropriately. Having a strong sense of self-worth is the way to become more fully human, to having health and happiness, gaining and maintaining satisfying relationships, and being appropriate, effective, and responsible.

When one cares for oneself, one will not do anything to injure, degrade, humiliate, or otherwise destroy oneself or another, and will not hold others responsible for one's actions. For example, people who care for themselves would not abuse themselves through the use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco or allow themselves to be physically or emotionally abused by others. People who care for themselves would not violate their relationships to others through violence.

Those who do not love themselves can easily become instruments of hate and destruction by unscrupulous people. They essentially give away their power, which often leads to emotional slavery. Perpetual placating exemplifies this.

The stronger one's self-worth, the easier it is to have and maintain the courage to change one's behavior. The more one values oneself, the less one demands from others. The less one demands from others, the more one can feel trust. The more one trusts oneself and others, the more one can love. The more one loves others, the less one fears them. The more one builds with them, the more one can know them. The more one knows another, the greater is one's bond and bridge with them. Self-worth behavior will thus help end the isolation and alienation between persons, groups, and nations today.

I invite you to look at two human facts.

FACT 1. Everyone has fingerprints and each set of fingerprints is unique, belonging only to that person. I REALLY AM THE ONLY ONE EXACTLY LIKE ME IN THIS WHOLE WORLD. THEREFORE I AM GUARANTEED TO BE DIFFERENT FROM EVERYONE IN SOME WAYS.

FACT 2. All human beings have the same basic physical ingredients—feet, arms, heads, etc.—and they are the same relative to each other. Therefore, I AM LIKE EVERYONE ELSE IN SOME BASIC PHYSICAL WAYS.

However, since I am also unique, I am different from and the same as everyone else in many ways.

These perspectives are very important in the development of self-esteem. Every person is a discovery. There is no way we can morally fashion one person in another's image. This means not asking a child to live in a parent's image or vice versa.

When I can acknowledge that I am a unique being, with the sameness and differentness of every other human being, then I can stop comparing myself to anyone else, and thus stop judging and punishing myself.

I can then learn about me. Many people act as though they think sameness creates love, and differentness creates dissension and difficulties. If we hold that view, we have no way of feeling whole. We will always feel split. I contend that we meet on the basis of our sameness and grow on the basis of our differences.

It is in honoring all parts of ourselves and being free to accept those parts that we lay the groundwork for high self-esteem. To do otherwise is to thwart nature. Many of us have created serious problems for ourselves by failing to understand that we are unique beings. We have tried instead to stuff ourselves into a mold so we will be like everyone else.

Some styles of parenting are based on comparison and conformity. This almost always results in low self-esteem. Accepting our uniqueness is one important foundation of self-esteem. Parents need to join the child in discovering who she or he is.

Let us think of a child as the outcome of two seeds that have joined. These seeds carry the physical resources of individuals who have preceded the child. These include tendencies and talents as well as physical characteristics. Each sperm and egg are channels from the past to the present.

Each of us has a different reservoir from which we draw. Whatever our heritage, it is our response to and our use of that heritage that make us different. We come into the world with a specific set of attributes, a unique cluster of variables selected from myriad possibilities of people who have preceded us.

Maybe another way of looking at this is: the sperm from any man contains physical manifestations of all the people who came before him, that is, his mother, his father, his grandmother, his grandfather—all those people connected by blood to him. The egg of any woman likewise contains physical manifestations of all who came before her. These are the initial resources from which we all draw.

Each person thus becomes a study in uniqueness and needs to be discovered and responded to in terms of that human specialness. Each human being is like an unlabeled



plant seed. We sow it and then wait to see what the plant turns out to be. Once it arrives, we have to discover its needs, what it looks like, how it flowers, and so forth. If we as adults have not yet discovered this for ourselves, now is a good time to start.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to parents is to plant our seeds in good faith and then wait to see what kind of plants they will become. The goal is to have no preconceptions about how a child should be. Instead, parents need to accept the fact that the plant will be unique unto itself. The child will have sameness as well as differentness in relation to each parent and every other human being. This makes parents discoverers, explorers, and detectives, rather than judges and molders. Parents can use time, patience, and observation to learn about the new treasure that has come into the world.

All individuals constantly shift and change. One is physically different at sixteen from what one has been at five or will be at eighty. This also applies to experience: a woman yet to bear a child is different from one who has given birth. Given this continual process of change, I strongly suggest we consciously keep discovering who we are. *We might call this our Updating Program. Reacquaint yourself with yourself and other family members. Bring yourselves up to date with the changes and growths that have taken place.*

Families who know about updating having found it helpful to arrange such a time every few months or so. *Take a Saturday morning or a Sunday afternoon. The topic is "What new has been happening to me lately?" Everyone has a chance to share, not just the children. Leadership can rotate among the members.*

It is important to keep a context of unconditional love and an uncritical attitude. The growths can include new bodily growth ("I grew three inches"), new skills ("Look, Ma, no hands [as I ride a bicycle]"), new views, new questions, and new jokes.

Don't forget the celebration party afterward. You will probably find these times can be very enjoyable. You might try creating a funny or romantic theme, for instance.

This process gives everyone's self-esteem a boost. We can each be seen as we now are, not as we were five months or two years ago. This also helps us put the past in perspective.

I have heard teenagers say, "But I am not a child anymore." This time-honored assertion of change is a good reminder. Staying up-to-date with each other furthers understanding and develops new opportunities for connection and excitement. Sometimes what is discovered is painful. That, too, is part of life and also needs airing.

I have a metaphor that families have found helpful. Think of a circular fountain that has hundreds of jet holes. Imagine each of these little holes as a symbol of growth in ourselves. As we grow, more of these jets open. Others are finished and close down. The fountain design keeps changing. It can always be beautiful; we are dynamic beings in constant movement.

Each of our fountains is in play even in infancy. The psychological reservoir from which an infant draws self-esteem is the outcome of all the actions, reactions, and interactions between and among the persons who care for that infant.

Coming into the world with a clean slate, the infant's sense of value and worth is a by-product of adults' handling. Adults can be unaware that the way they touch a child can contribute to the child's self-esteem. Children learn self-esteem from the voices they hear, the expressions in the eyes of the adults who handle them, the muscle tones as they are held, the way adults respond to their cries.

If the infant could talk, the words might be, "I am loved," "I am unnoticed; I feel rejected; I feel lonely," "I am most important," "I don't count. I am a burden." These are all forerunners to later messages of self-worth.

For parents starting out with new babies, giving attention to the following will greatly enhance the opportunity to develop self-worth of the babies.

1. Teach yourself to be aware of how you touch. If you were on the other end of your touch, how would it feel? When you touch your child, imagine what the child is learning. Is your touch hard, soft, weak, wet, loving, fearful, anxious? Tell your child what you are feeling.
2. Teach yourself to be aware of the expressions in your eyes. Then acknowledge them: "I am angry," "I am scared," "I am happy," and so forth. The important thing is to give your child straight emotional information from you about you.
3. Very young children tend to think all events occurring around them are because of them. That includes both good and bad events. One significant part of teaching self-esteem is to differentiate accurately between those events that belong to the child and those that belong to someone else. When you talk to your child, be very specific about whom your pronouns represent.
For example, a mother, upset with one child's behavior, may say, "You kids never listen to me!" This is heard and believed by all her children present, though she is intending the message for one in particular.
4. Support children's ability and freedom to comment or ask questions, so that each person can verify what's going on. In the example above, the child with freedom to inquire can ask, "Do you mean me?"

All events, actions, voices, and the like that occur around infants are registered within them and, at some level, have meaning. Regressing adults to childhood through hypnosis validates these conclusions. Infants often register these events without the context that could adequately explain them. Without understanding these circumstances,

the events become foundations for later false conclusions and consequent behavior.

I recommend that parents tell their infants what is going on, clearly indicating the context and the persons involved. When you and your spouse have had a fight, for instance, both of you could go to your infant's bed or playpen and take turns telling the child what is happening. This is particularly important if your child's name has been used by either of you in the fight. For example,

MOTHER (*picking up child from crib, holding the child lovingly*):
Your father and I just had a fight. I wanted to take you over to my mother's house tonight. Your father is objecting. I have a short fuse. I got very angry and called him names.

FATHER (*holding the child and looking directly at him or her*):
Your mother and I just finished a big fight. We still get mad when we have opposing ideas. I want to be home tonight, and your mother wants to go out. It is important for you to know that you are not the cause of this fight. We do it all by ourselves.



Being angry is different from describing anger; the tone of voice changes. I have seen babies as young as four months crying as their parents fight. When the fight was over and the parents talked to the child in the manner I've described, the child started smiling and went off to sleep.

Events do not have to be negative to confuse a child. They can be positive: "Your grandmother is coming today," or "Your father won a million dollars in the lottery." Events trigger emotional responses. Events color the emotional context. Tell your infants about that, too.

Infants do not differentiate *context from event, and event from self*, unless they are given help. The goal is to verbalize and clarify so that the child can know what is going on.

Another way to help a young child gain self-worth is to speak directly at eye level, using the child's name, touching lovingly, and carefully enunciating "I" and "you." When you do this, take the time to center yourself and be fully present for the child. Do not be thinking about something else. These directions will enable you to make full contact with the child, to successfully convey your love.

Self-esteem is further taught by calling attention to your child's sameness and differentness. Introduce this in the spirit of discovery, not in the context of competition or comparison (see "My Declaration of Self-Esteem" at the end of the previous chapter).

Self-esteem also is taught when you offer a child many opportunities to stimulate his or her interest and then patiently guide the child to a sense of mastery.

You, the parent, also teach self-esteem by how you manage discipline. When you become aware of the need to strengthen your child's self-worth while at the same time being very realistic, your efforts will produce the courage and strength to reshape behavior. A child treated with high esteem responds well to guidance.

For example, you have asked your child of three to pick up his or her toys. Your child does not respond immediately, proceeding as if you had not spoken. With the goal of

heightening self-esteem, you recognize the communication has not been completed and recall that if one is immersed in thought or activity, people's voices can be faint.

You may also realize that your child's reaction might be a response to the hard tone in your voice. Or perhaps you made your request in an incongruent or nagging way. In addition, you may recognize that your child is playing around with power.

You can handle all these possibilities effectively by contacting the child at eye level, touching her or him in a loving way, and then, in a light but firm voice, saying that it is time to put things away. Become the cheering section while this is going on, turning the whole episode into a happy learning event.

Supporting self-worth helps a child toward creative amends-making and accepting the consequences of his or her behavior. This is another way to approach discipline as a chance for learning. Perhaps the most erosive effect on self-esteem comes from adults who shame, humiliate, deprive, or punish children for unacceptable behavior.

A self that is clearly loved and valued will learn new ways more easily.

Adults are the initiators, teachers, and models for self-esteem. However, we can't teach what we don't know. When wise people learn that they don't know, they can set out to learn. When people arrive at parenthood without high self-esteem themselves, they have new opportunities to gain it as they guide their children.

Many of us parents still suffer from the low self-esteem we learned growing up. It can be a bit of a bind when we ask ourselves to teach what we were never taught. However, the fortunate part is that self-worth can be reshaped at any age. Once one discovers one has low self-worth, is willing to acknowledge that condition, and is willing to change, one can achieve high self-worth. Developing self-worth takes time, patience, and the courage to risk new things. Investing in these efforts means we can

Parenting Tips for Raising the Birth- to Six-Month-Old Infant

- I. The job of the infant is being. Jason needs to establish a relationship with his caring adults so that he can begin to learn three things.
 - A. He needs to learn to trust them.
 - B. After which, he can learn to trust himself—"I can cope and get my needs taken care of; it is OK for me to be."
 - C. After which, Jason can learn to trust his world—"My environment will respond to my needs and take care of me. This is an OK world for me to be in."



- II. The job of the caring adults is to care for the baby in such a way that the baby will decide to be—to live, to enjoy being the sex he is, to get his needs met. The enormous time and energy that the adults give are an investment in vitality for the infant's entire life. Jason feels and expresses needs but doesn't yet think about how to get those needs met or how to make judgments. This means the adults must think for the baby.

- A. The adults think for Jason, respond to him, figure out what he needs after he has indicated his needs. Jason may need food, sleep, more stimulation, less stimulation, dry clothes, to be warmer or cooler. He may need movement, to be rocked or walked, or protection from overwhelming stimuli. When Jason cries or roots and the adult figures out what he needs and cares for him, he experiences that he can get his needs taken care of, that it is OK for him to be.
- B. The adults nurture and protect Jason. They care for the baby in a gentle, loving way that encourages him to be joyful. It will be easier for him to learn to take good care of himself and others, to become independent and responsible, at a later age if he is allowed to be dependent while he is an infant. He needs time to experience having his needs met in a loving, protected environment before he is expected to learn to please other people. Parents start laying the groundwork for independence and self-responsibility by allowing the baby to come to a full cry or to root vigorously and then by giving immediate response to his needs. Babies who receive marshmallow parenting at this age are cared for before they make their needs known. Babies whose needs are anticipated may expect to be taken care of when they grow up. This is often done to girl babies who are treated as if they are more delicate than boy babies. Another way of encouraging children to be passive is

to ignore them. Criticism or even demands are not appropriate for this age child. When Jason cries and is told to be quiet or when no one responds, the message he hears is "My needs are not important. I can't get them met." He may even have difficulty learning to know what his needs are.

- C. The adults affirm the baby's being by doing the thinking for him, by nurturing and protecting him, and by verbally saying the affirmations for being. They visualize Jason as if he has already accepted the affirmations.

III. The job of the caring adults is to take care of themselves. Meeting the full-time needs of a completely dependent human being is a huge task. Mothers often feel depressed and fathers often feel rejected, so it is important for both of them to get lots of strokes from other people, from themselves, and from each other. They sometimes need reassurance that they are capable—that they can learn to care for an infant. Since adults recycle their own early experiences as their children go through each stage of development, adults also need to hear the being affirmations. If the adults have unresolved problems about being, they should help themselves or each other or get outside help. They should not use the infant to help them work through those problems. The father who buys a catcher's mitt or the mother who gets pink ballet slippers for an infant should resolve their sexual identity or achievement needs another way and leave the infant free to become

who he or she wants to be. Separating sex and nurturing is especially important during this period. Satisfying sexual activity may not be restored for some time after the birth of a baby, and couples who depend on sex alone for intimacy will deprive themselves of needed support. Often both parents need extra nurturing while they adjust to an infant, and they should arrange outside sources of support to supplement what they offer each other.

Remember that your parents did the best they could. You have done the best that you could. If you want to use these new tools, it is never too late to start.

Parenting Tips for Raising the Six- to Eighteen-Month-Old Creeper and Toddler

- I. The job of the toddler is doing. Jan needs to explore (see, touch, smell, taste, chew, hear, push, pull, grasp, and later drop) her environment. She needs to expand her sensory experiences. Being asked not to explore is like being asked not to eat at this stage. The toddler needs an environment in which she is free to explore and experiment so she can do three things.
 - A. She can begin to trust that she can experience her environment for herself. (Example: She may find out how wood tastes.)
 - B. She can continue to trust herself to get her needs taken care of (example: learning to feed herself) to lay the groundwork for the independence that will allow her to break away from her parents later.
 - C. She can start to learn that there are options, that life is not all win or lose, and that not all problems are easily solved. (Example: Calling Mom or biting won't stop the pain of a new tooth pushing through the gum.)
- II. The job of the caring adults is to care for the toddler in such a way that she will decide to do as well as to be. The exhausting care that adults give during this period is an investment in Jan's ability to achieve, to become independent, to use her senses, and to think. Since six- to eighteen-month-old children think with their whole bodies, the adults will do seven things.
 - A. They will provide protection.
 1. They will provide the baby with a safe environment. They will baby-proof part of the living area and put the knickknacks up—store the delicate, fragile, precious, dangerous items and let "herself" explore! She is too young to learn self-discipline, so teaching her not to touch is taking precious energy away from her job of exploring and thinking. Inhibiting her exploration invites passivity and lack of motivation later in life.
 - B. They will protect the child from other people who want her to sit up, be neat, be cute, be toilet trained. (Let her sit on the pot if she insists, but wait until her sphincter muscles are ready before you expect her to perform.)
 - B. They will provide experience.
 1. They will provide the baby with a variety of things to experience—different textures, colors, shapes, sizes, temperatures, odors, flavors.
 2. They will provide her with doing tasks she can experiment with. (When she wants to feed herself, offer soft, finger foods instead of baby food. For the six to eighteen month old, "Messy is beautiful")
 - C. They will offer options.
 1. They will limit no's to important issues.
 2. They will use two yesses with each no. (Examples: "Don't bite your brother, chew on a biscuit or this rubber duck. . . . You can squeeze the ball or the doll, not the cat. . . . You can play in the water in the kitchen sink or the bathtub, not the toilet. . . . Color on the paper or the box, not the wall.")

- D. They will say simple words, such as *milk, nose, block, hot, sticky*, to identify or describe whatever the toddler is interested in at the moment.
- E. They will play with the baby when she initiates play.
- F. They will not expect her to share since she is too young.
- G. They will affirm the toddler's being and her doing.
 1. They will visualize the baby as if she has already accepted the affirmations.
 2. They will give positive strokes for doing. (Example: "Look, Jim, Diane is starting to feed herself!") They will also give positive strokes for being. (Example: "I love you!")



The job of the caring adults is to take care of themselves.

- A. They will protect their own health. Meeting the needs of a creeper or toddler can be a more exhausting job than caring for an infant. Adults

arrange for a good diet and for time off, so they can rest and play while someone else cares for the busy toddler.

- B. They will protect themselves from their own guilt. Adults put aside demanding household standards and go on temporary "Messy is beautiful" standards. They keep Jan out of certain parts of the house, or they go out to some orderly place to satisfy their own neatness needs. Adults also keep a framed picture of a baby food magazine ad to look at when they want to see a neat, clean baby. They allow themselves to feel comfortable seeing their own baby that way for only short periods of time.
- C. They will find ways to protect the toddler and themselves at the same time—a playpen is convenient. An adult can sit in a playpen to get away from the explorer and still be able to watch her.
- D. They will remember that they will be recycling their own exploratory needs. If adults feel restricted, they can take a class in photography. If they feel locked in a power struggle with the busy little miss, they can create situations where both people's needs get met.
- E. They will get lots of strokes—from others, from self, from spouse. They will continue separating sex and nurturing. Adults who do the demanding job of nurturing toddlers need nurturing themselves.

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Parenting Tips for Raising the Eighteen-Month- to Three-Year-Old Child

- I. The job of the eighteen-month- to three-year-old child is thinking. Carrie needs an environment in which she is free to assert herself and to express anger. Being asked not to be angry at eighteen months to three years is like being asked not to explore at six to eighteen months. She needs caring adults who are starting to demand cause-and-effect thinking so that she can do many things.
 - A. She can learn to think for herself.
 - B. She can learn about using feelings, especially anger, and start to separate feeling and thinking.
 - C. She can start to separate from her parents, become independent, and learn to say no.
 - D. She can continue to be dependent when she needs to be.
- II. The job of the caring adults is to take care of themselves by setting limits and to continue to care for the child while demanding that she start to think for herself. The energy and self-control that the adults expend during this period of assertion is an investment in Carrie's independence and preparation for smooth separation during her teenage years. The eighteen-month- to three-year-old child needs to learn to think, to say no, and to learn about feelings.
 - A. Adults will encourage thinking.
 1. They will provide reasons, how to's, and information. (Example: "The puppy runs away and hides when you hurt her. I'll show you how to hold her gently.") They will use "do's" instead of "don'ts."
 2. They will provide limits. (Example: "I want you to stop hurting the puppy. If you don't stop, I'll insist that you sit by yourself until you're willing to control yourself.")
 3. They will provide time and space for Carrie to start to organize her own thinking.
 - a. They will allow Carrie to play near other children without expecting her to play with them. They will not expect her to share. She needs time to experience ownership before she can be expected to share.
 - b. They will tell her about activities ahead of time. (Example: "We are going on a picnic.")
 - c. They will limit television time.
 - d. They will demand that Carrie start caring for herself. (Example: "You carry your teddy bear.")
 - e. They will let Carrie think for Carrie and will not invite her to take care of the adults. (Example: Don't say "I'm so unhappy with your daddy I could cry, but you'll make me smile, won't you, Ryan?" Say instead, "I'm sad because I had a scrap with your dad, but he and I will solve that tonight. What are you building?" Don't say, "I'm going on a business trip. Be a big boy and take care of Mommy while I'm gone." Say instead, "I'm going on a business trip. Mommy will take care of you while I'm gone, and I'll be back soon." Don't say, "Shame on you!" Say instead,

"Don't do that; because . . . ;
do this instead.")

- B. Adults will encourage learning about feelings and separating thinking and feeling.
1. They will accept Carrie's anger and label it. (Example: "You look angry.")
 2. They will show her how to handle anger by being open about their own anger.
 3. They will start negative strokes for doing poorly and insist on thinking. (Example: "I feel angry when you kick me. Either figure out how to climb up beside me without hurting my leg with your foot or don't climb up, or ask me to move. Now, try it again.")
 4. They will keep their emotions separated from the child's. (Example: "I am sad because Carrie is so negative; I must not be a good mother," shows that Mom needs to get her OKness separated from Carrie! It's better to say, "I am a lovable, capable person. Carrie's no's bug me if I'm tired, so I make it a point to get enough sleep.")
- C. Adults will encourage separation which will lead to independence.
1. They will expect Carrie to say, "No. . . . I won't. . . . I can't. . . . I don't care. . . . I don't want to."
 2. They will set reasonable limits. (Example: "You may not eat on my bed; you may eat your lunch at the counter or on the table.") Carrie will repeatedly test; adults will repeatedly remain firm.
 3. They will show Carrie where people put body wastes and expect her to put hers there also.

Toilet training sounds like a program to train toilets. In fact it is usually a program to train mothers. A two-and-a-half- to three-year-old child is able to think enough to use a pot if she is allowed to see adults use one and is told in a matter-of-fact way that adults expect her to do the same.

4. They will assure Carrie that she will be cared for when she needs care, and they will continue positive support with a loving attitude
- D. They will affirm the child's thinking. They will visualize her as if she has already accepted the being, doing, and thinking affirmations.
- III. The job of the caring adults is to take care of themselves.
- A. They will remember not to attempt to get their own positive self-esteem from producing a positive two year old. Forget it! It's not supposed to be!
 - B. They will play (some of the time away from Miss Two), dance, eat, sing, make love, but will do no extensive travel—Carrie's separation is just starting. Instead they will wait until after she is three.
 - C. They will get nurturing! Adults who take care of eighteen-month- to three-year-olds deserve it!
 - D. They will remember that they will be reworking feelings about separation, dependence, independence, and anger. It is better to get any problems sorted out now than to wait until Carrie is a teenager.

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Parenting Tips for Raising the Three- to Six-Year-Old Child

- I. The job of the three to six year old is learning who he is. Matt is focusing on himself in relationship to other people and to his world.
 - A. He needs to establish his identity in relationship to other people.
 - B. He needs to expand his imagination and differentiate between reality and fantasy.
 - C. He needs to acquire information about the world, himself, his body, his sex role.
 - D. He needs to start to practice socially appropriate behavior.



- II. The job of the adults caring for the three to six year old is to provide a support system that will continue to nurture him while it allows him to explore his expanding world of people, things, ideas, and feelings. The energy and trust that adults expend during this period of "Why? How? What for?" is an investment in Matt's self-confidence and positive personal power.

- A. Adults will help him establish his identity.
 1. They will continue to give positive strokes for being. (Example: "I love you!") They will continue to provide loving nurturing.
 2. They will encourage him to enjoy being male while insisting that females are also OK.
 3. They will expect him to make connections between thoughts and feelings and to say how he feels. (Example: When he says, "That big dog doesn't scare me. Boys don't get scared," the adult responds, "All people get scared sometimes. Scared feelings tell you to think how to take care of yourself.")
 4. They will put limits on his behavior that will allow him to explore his relationship with other people without fear. (Example: When he says, "Mommy, I love you. I'm going to lock out your boyfriend and marry you," the adult responds, "I love you too, Matt! But if I marry, it will be to someone my own age. And I'll still love you and take care of you. And I will not let you lock Jim out.")

Adults will encourage his imagination.

1. They will encourage his fantasies and separate fantasy and reality. (Example: When he says, "I am going to be a nurse when I grow up," the adult replies, "Nurses do important work. That's great." Or, when he insists, "I am a nurse now," the adult responds, "I like watching you pretend to be a nurse.")
2. They will provide him with fantasy props—a huge cardboard box makes a great spaceship, boat, house, store, car, and encourages imagination while a commercial toy spaceship makes money for the toy manufacturer.

C. Adults will help him acquire information.

1. They will provide safe surroundings that continue to invite him to explore, touch, manipulate.
2. They will provide lots of information about his environment and will correct any misinformation he has as many times as necessary.
3. They will continue to require him to think about cause and effect.
4. They will give answers to his questions—no teasing or ridiculing at this age.

D. Adults will expect and reward socially appropriate behavior.

1. They will compliment him when he behaves appropriately.
2. They will give negative strokes for inappropriate behavior with reasons and expectations. (Example: "Don't do this, because, do this instead.")
3. They will give clear behavior requests. (Example: "Pick up your

blocks" rather than "Be a good boy." "Finish eating" rather than "Don't play with your mashed potatoes.")

E. Adults will affirm Matt's learning to know who he is in the ways practiced earlier in this section and will visualize him as if he had already accepted the affirmations.

III. The job of the adults is to take care of themselves.

- A. They will keep their own stroke levels high.
- B. They will resolve any of their own identity problems that bubble up as they watch Matt grow.
- C. They will remember that some days it is hard for the adults to keep their WHY buckets filled and that adults need to go out and play by themselves for a while.

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Parenting Tips for Raising the Six- to Twelve-Year-Old Child

- I. The job of the six- to twelve-year-old Lucy is to do things in her own way. Lucy needs an environment in which she is free to test rules, in which her worth is affirmed, and in which the rules and structure she is incorporating are constantly challenged. In order to decide upon her own way of doing things she needs to do several things.
 - A. She needs to explore rules—what they are for, how they are made, how to get around them, the consequences of disobeying them, and how her family rules differ from the rules of other families.
 - B. She needs to try out her own values and ways of doing things to get her own needs met.
 - She needs to incorporate her own rules into her own head solidly enough to enable her to take care of herself.
 - D. She needs to disagree with others and find out that they won't go away.
 - E. She needs to separate reality from fantasy.
- II. The job of the adult who cares for Lucy is to continue to care for the child while she internalizes her own rules. The energy that adults spend explaining, defending, and challenging rules is an investment in Lucy's independence and responsibility. Since Lucy needs to test rules, the adults will do the following:
 - A. They will provide a firm and loving environment in which Lucy can test rules. They will listen to her, expect her to think, and explain their own values to her. They will make clear which family values and rules are not negotiable. They will react to her challenges with both thoughts and feelings.
 - B. They will help Lucy find her own values and ways of taking care of herself.
 1. They will hassle and argue with Lucy in order to get her to use adult thinking about how her new rules are related to her wants and needs. (Example: She may say, "I am never going to wear rain boots." The adult could respond with "Is that so? Why do you plan never to wear rain boots? What will you do if they are required for your Girl Scout camp-out?")
 2. They will stroke her for thinking logically and creatively and for arguing well. (Example: "You thought of lots of good reasons during that argument.")
 3. They will offer Lucy problem-solving rules.
 4. They will expose Lucy to many new experiences and encourage her to acquire many new skills, and they will not compete with her or dominate her activity.
 - C. They will help Lucy incorporate her own rules and ways of doing things. They will support her, continue to expect cause-and-effect thinking, and allow her to experience any nonhazardous natural consequences for her ways of doing things.
 - D. They will continue positive strokes for being and give assurances to Lucy that they will continue to care

for her even when she disagrees with them.

- E They will help Lucy separate reality from fantasy by encouraging her to report accurately, and they will do the kind of teasing that requires her to separate fact from fiction and that leads to positive strokes.
- F They will affirm Lucy in the ways practiced earlier in this section and will visualize her as if she has already accepted the affirmations.

III. The job of the caring adults is to care for themselves.

- A. They will keep their own stroke levels high so that they will have the energy to maintain their own good humor while Lucy tests and while they hassle her new rules.
- B. They will use the hassle time with Lucy to rethink some long unexamined rules and ways of doing things.
- C. They will start their own separation from Lucy, and then will nurture the parts of their lives that are separate from her.
- D. They will not discount their own needs while over-providing for Lucy.

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Parenting Tips for Raising the Thirteen- to Nineteen-Year-Old Child

- I. The job of the thirteen- to nineteen-year-old Bryan is to separate from his family. He should emerge as a separate, independent person with his own values, a person who is responsible for his own needs, feelings, and behaviors.
- II. The job of the adults caring for Bryan is to allow him to rework each previous stage with the added dimension of sexuality. They will continue to give positive strokes for being and doing well and negative strokes for behavior of which they disapprove.
 - A. They will remember that:
 1. Thirteen (going-on-infant) Bryan is sometimes independent and sometimes wanting to be fed and cared for.
 2. Fourteen (going-on-two) Bryan is sometimes reasonable and competent and then suddenly engaged in a rebellious outburst.
 3. Fifteen (going-on-three and hassling) Bryan is sometimes doing admirable adult reasoning and suddenly arguing every unimportant detail.
 4. Sixteen to nineteen (going-on-birth-to-twelve-years) Bryan is adult and responsible with sudden short journeys back into one of the younger behaviors.
 - B. They will realize that his separation may be slow or sudden or that he may engage in the one behavior (whatever that is in his family) the adults won't tolerate so that they will force him out.
 - C. They will be ready to re-engage with Bryan on an adult level.
 - D. They will admire and enjoy his sexuality without being seductive toward him or allowing him to behave seductively toward them. They will remember that his developing sexuality has a special set of needs and that he will not be ready to give up all of his dependent needs.
 - E. They will affirm his independence by doing the separation affirmations practiced earlier in this section. They will visualize Bryan as if he had already accepted the affirmations.
- III. The job of the caring adults is to take care of themselves.
 - A. They will prepare new time and stroke structures to fill the holes left by the separation.
 - B. They will remember that areas where they experience the most discomfort with Bryan will indicate that the adults haven't resolved those particular issues for themselves. They can do that right now, before the nest is empty.

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QUESTION 2:

HOW DO ADULTS LEARN AND HOW CAN I FACILITATE ADULTS' LEARNING?

• WHAT MOTIVATES ADULTS TO LEARN?

Adults who want to learn are motivated in a specific or in a general way. A vague dissatisfaction and a wish to do something better are general motivations. People with general motivation say things like, "I just want to talk with other adults about what they do with a kid who has low self-esteem," or "I would like to learn to communicate better."

Specific motivations come from internal pressure generated by a specific life situation. Examples of specific motivation are: "I'm upset because my spouse and I don't agree on discipline, and I want to learn some new ways." "I don't know what to expect of a two year old, and my boy turns two next month." "I feel like hitting my child so often it scares me, and I need to learn some things to do instead." In each of these cases the learner states an internal feeling or expectation that is motivating him to learn something specific. Sometimes specific motivation to learn comes from outside the learner. The need for academic certification or pressure from a boss are examples.

People who come to meetings because they are motivated by outside pressure are often resistant learners. I do not recommend the learning meetings in this book for someone who is coming because a spouse insists, and I do not accept people in my groups whose expressed purpose in attending is to change a spouse or a coworker. This series was not designed for people to attend under duress. The meetings are invitational and rely upon self-motivation and self-evaluation. I do not expect them to be successful in institutions where attendance is mandatory or where even subtle pressure is put upon people to attend. The meetings, however, are being used in a therapeutic setting. They have become an integral part of the treatment program in the Mental Health Unit at Mercy Medical Center, Coon Rapids, Minnesota, where patients are not pressed to attend parent education class and are involved in the process of group assignments. In that setting, minister/therapist/educator Bruce Pederson successfully co-leads the meetings in an ongoing cycle.

• WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN ADULTS' LEARNING PROCESS?

STEP 1 WHERE ADULTS GET INFORMATION

Once motivated to start toward a learning goal, adults seek help at some point. Some get information from friends or co-workers, some go to the library or find other sources of written material, some use television or other film sources, and sometimes adults attend meetings in order to learn. Adults who attend meetings often expect—

- to learn helpful concepts and skills offered by the facilitator
- to be offered visual helps such as books, charts, films
- to learn from the collective experience of the other people in the group

Since adult learners prefer to be in charge of their own learning, it is important for the facilitator —

- to present material and then leave the decision about the material and the life application up to the learners
- to be sure that the visual material is available, clear and readable
- to structure ways in which the learners can tap the resources of other people in the group

When adults attend the meetings outlined in this book, they have the help of the book *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair*, the concepts offered in the meeting plans, and the collective experience of everyone in the meetings available to them.

STEP 2 HOW ADULTS ORGANIZE LEARNING MATERIAL

Some adults organize learning material by first getting an overview of the material, a big picture, and then seeing where various parts fit in.

Some adults organize learning material in another way. They search about for bits and pieces, or even large chunks, from which they create their own view of the big picture. Other adults like both the big picture and lots of concrete pieces to fit into it.

The people who need the big picture first are often goal-oriented. They are uncomfortable being asked to do something unless there was an explanation first indicating how the activity contributes to the larger goal. They like to have the abstract theory and then the direct experience that illustrates it. They like to learn the basic principle and then how it applies. They want to hear a synopsis before they study a single scene. They are eager to get the feeling for the whole project before they start doing the individual task. They read ahead. They feel uncomfortable when they do not

know what content and methods will be included in the meetings, and they say things like:

- "I really don't get it."
- "I don't know what you are driving at."
- "I don't understand how this fits."
- "What does this have to do with me?"
- "I don't see why you are going to do this."

It is as if they are not part of the learning—as if something is happening to them. If they don't get the structure they need to become part of the learning process, they are apt to leave.

Once they have the big picture, they join the learning process and make judgments about how individual pieces fit into the big picture. Then they say things like:

- "I see how that fits."
- "I think this piece makes more sense if we use it this way."
- "I have an idea that relates to what we are talking about."

Now they are in charge of their learning and are helping make things happen.

People in the second group, those who like to build from small pieces, organize their learning experiences in a different way. They like to see a play without having caught the last scene on TV first; they prefer to hear a story from the beginning without being told the ending ahead of time. They are comfortable learning each step of the dance and then putting it all together. They start to assemble a toy before they read the directions. They enjoy taking a lot of direct experiences and putting them together to see if they suggest an abstract theory that will fit them all. When they aren't offered enough separate pieces or concrete experiences they say things like:

- "Too much lecture."
- "The explanation was too long."
- "I like it better when we jump right in and do things."
- "Too boring."

After they get the pieces they need, they regain their enthusiasm and make remarks such as:

- "This is beginning to fit together for me."
- "I like how this builds on what we did at the last meeting."
- "I think I am getting the picture."
- "This makes sense."
- "We did something at work this week that fits in with something we are doing here."

Now they are in control of their learning and are contributing to the process.

Since most groups include people who want to see the big picture from the beginning, people who want to build the big

picture for themselves, and people who want some of both, be sure to—

- state the goals for each meeting clearly and post or hand out a printed sheet
- present separate pieces of information clearly

Besides the fact that some people prefer to start learning experiences with abstract theories or big pictures and other people prefer to start learning with smaller pieces, there is another reason for the facilitator to take care to include both theory and experience for each learning objective: People do not use abstract theory to change behavior until they translate the theories into concrete experiences. Conversely, learning from one concrete experience is not transferred to another experience until the learning has been related to some abstract theory or made symbolic. The words "love for all humankind" are symbols. They represent an abstract theory. They are, in fact, carbon on cellulose. The person who writes about the importance of love for all humankind and beats the four year old who interrupts the writing hasn't connected the symbols with the experience. Not until the person has connected those symbols with some concrete love experiences such as willingly caring for a child, or experiencing unexpected help from a stranger, can the person start to behave in ways that express love for all humankind. On the other hand, the adult who devotes time and energy to providing tender, loving nurturing for one child and sees no need to spend tax dollars installing a traffic light at a hazardous school crossing hasn't connected the isolated concrete experience of expressing love to a child with the theory of love of children.

Each of these eight meeting plans relates new theory to the overall goals. Theories are presented briefly and are followed by specific activities that illustrate concrete ways in which the theory can be experienced in daily behavior. For example, in Meeting 3, the leader explains one part of the theory that words can encourage or discourage responsible behavior. The leader says "One way to encourage responsibility in children and in ourselves is to remember that things and situations are not responsible for behavior; people are responsible for behavior." That is followed by the Things are Falling Into Place exercise, which gives people a chance to examine and rewrite common communications. Then people are asked to notice whether they use words at home that invite irresponsibility, and if so, to consider substituting other words.

Therefore, in order to honor the various ways in which adults organize learning materials, it is important at every meeting for the facilitator to—

- present the theory clearly
- point out how the new theory relates to the overall goals
- include the specific activities that illustrate concrete ways in which the theories can be experienced and evaluated in daily behavior

STEP 3 HOW ADULTS TAKE IN INFORMATION

You are ready to present abstract theories and concrete experience. How will you do that?

Adults seem to get most of their information in four ways: through their eyes, their ears, their bodies, and their intuition. Some adults use all four.

Some people have a strong preference for taking information through their eyes, or visually. They like to read, to look at people when they talk, to see pictures, diagrams and charts, to watch films. They turn on the light before they answer the phone. They say things like:

"I'll look into it."

"I'll see what I can do."

"Look sharp."

"Are you beginning to see the light?"

Some people prefer to collect information through their ears, or audibly. They would rather listen to the news on the radio than look at the newspaper. They are uncomfortable when background noise is so high it interferes with the auditory cues they are accustomed to depending on. They would rather listen to a story than read it. They use tape cassettes or CB radios to collect information while they are driving. They would rather have verbal directions to a friend's house than use a map or follow the road signs. They say things like:

"Tell you what I'll do."

"Lend me your ear."

"Now listen, here is the word!"

Other adults learn best with their bodies, or kinesthetically. They like to "walk through things." They are impatient with lectures and they move their toes and their fingers while they think. They like to go for long walks to think things over, or they make decisions while they are jogging. While they think, they may "walk purposefully" around a room in a way that is different from "anxiously pacing." They say things like:

"I'll run through some possible solutions in my mind."

"Let's find out if anyone came up with a new idea."

"I think I have a handle on it now."

Taste and smell are important ways in which people can collect information, but these ways are often discounted or ignored

when planning group learning experiences, except in food and beverage preparation classes. How much do you think the learning in a group is affected if the room smells fresh or musty, or has the lingering odor of lilacs or of over-used kitty litter?

Many learners do not depend on one sense but like to use all of their senses to collect information. Maybe these are the people who are most intuitive.

So what is the leader's responsibility to provide for the different ways adults take in information? Leaders should remember that no matter what their personal learning style preferences are, the following elements are important:

- attractive, readable visuals
- clear spoken messages
- learning exercises that involve moving the body
- adequate ventilation

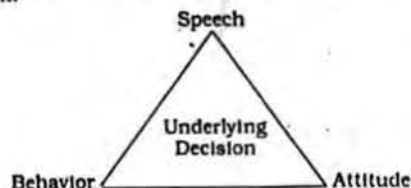
These are all significant ways to facilitate the learning experiences in groups.

One way to be sure that a variety of senses is stimulated is to identify the body involvement in each separate learning experience. I identify learning units on a check sheet to be sure that I am not appealing too greatly to any one sense. Repeatedly I notice that the learning units that get the best responses in the group are the ones that show marks all across the page. The sample on page 25 shows a listing for Meeting 3.

STEP 4 HOW ADULTS START TO MAKE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES

When people make changes in their lives in a certain area, they may start by changing the way they talk about that subject, how they act about it, their attitude toward it, or an underlying decision concerning it.

Let us say that you are facilitating a group in which Julia has announced that she is going to stop spanking as a method of discipline. Julia can start to make this change in her life by first changing her words, her attitudes, her behavior, or her basic decision.



Julia may take the first step by changing the way she speaks about her child. She will say, "Logan needs discipline," instead of "Logan needs a spanking." Or Julia could take the first step by changing her behavior. When she feels like spanking Logan she will move him off to sit in the corner instead.

She could examine her ideas of discipline and change her attitude from a flippant "Spare the rod and spoil the child," to a thoughtful "It is my responsibility to socialize my child without using violence."

Julia may even change an underlying decision. Suppose, for example, she had accepted the idea that women are powerless. She, therefore, did not expect and demand certain behaviors from Logan but let him do whatever he wanted. When his behavior became intolerable to her, she hit him. After Julia changes her belief about herself as a woman, claims her power and her ability to model, she expects and demands appropriate social behavior. Logan's behavior improves so that she no longer finds it intolerable, and therefore she doesn't spank.

If any one of these four changes (speech, action, attitude, or underlying decision) is made deliberately and conscientiously and consistently, in time, the others will usually follow.

STEP 5 HOW ADULTS LOOK, ACT, AND SOUND WHILE THEY ARE LEARNING NEW SKILLS

While they are making changes and practicing new skills, many adults look and feel awkward. As they practice and refine the new skill, they become graceful. Other adults seem to burst forth with new behavior as suddenly as if they had put on a new hat and the hat had changed the way they walked. Often those people are not exhibiting behavior that they decided to change only a minute ago, but are showing the results of a period of thought, decision, or practice in fantasy. It is as if they had gone through the awkward period internally or in private. It is probable that all adults experience some awkwardness while learning a new skill, just as children do. Some adults find learning new skills exciting and don't mind the clumsiness; others confuse awkwardness with insincerity and feel tempted to stop practicing the new behavior. They may say something like, "I want to give more compliments, but I just didn't sound sincere; so I stopped doing it. I'm afraid my voice sounds phony."

Therefore, it is important to create a climate in the meetings where—

- people get support for achievement
- it is safe for people to practice
- it is safe for people to be awkward

- It is safe for people to try out a new behavior before they choose to keep or to discard it

QUESTION 3:

HOW IS EACH MEETING DESIGNED TO HELP LEARNING HAPPEN?

Warmth, enthusiasm, indirectness and cognitive organization are the four qualities of an effective teacher of adults. You may say, "I'll bring the warmth and enthusiasm, but what about indirectness and cognitive organization?" Indirectness and cognitive organization are built into the learning activities in the meeting plans of this manual.

INDIRECTNESS

Indirectness is allowing people to discover for themselves what they need, rather than insisting that they learn what you think is good for them.

There is an old adage about teaching that says, "First you tell them what you are going to teach them, then you teach them, then you tell them what you taught them." Right? No, not if you are teaching adults! That direct teaching is called *pedagogy*. It is the way most children are taught.

Adults prefer to learn indirectly, to have an active part in the goal setting and in the process of the learning situation, and to reach their own conclusions. The new adage is—

- first you and they set the goals
- then you tell them briefly what you have to offer and how it relates to the goals
- then you provide the opportunity for them to experience and share
- then you ask them what they learned

You are responsible for the teaching and the structure, but you cannot control what people learn, what insights they glean. For you to set learning goals for people discounts their ability to learn what they need to learn for themselves. It is patronizing or "one-up" teaching. If you insist upon trying to control the learning, you teach that people must give the response you want or suffer negative consequences. When that happens, people are displaying compliant behavior, and you do not know what personal learnings or insights they have gained. Their learnings may have been the opposite of your teaching goals.

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