

DR. PAULA FELLINGHAM'S

Solutions FOR FAMILIES



Part of the **TOTAL LIFE EXCELLENCE** program

TO THE READER

For many years we've been defining the problems families face. Researchers have been busy listing causes for conflicts within the home. How about solutions?

Solutions For Families offers ways to strengthen family relationships. It begins with a Family Survey designed to help family members understand one another's honest feelings. Twenty-four lessons are then presented in a manner that every family can use. In each lesson the concept, activity, discussion and assignment are explained in easy-to-understand terms. All lessons relate to the statements in the Family Survey and include additional activities for family enjoyment.

When the material in *Solutions For Families* is used in homes with a desire for improvement, wonderful changes will occur. Families will experience increased love and peace, and relationships will be strengthened in powerful ways.

Strong families can build strong individuals, and those individuals can build the kind of world we all dream of.

The good news is that there *are* solutions.

It is time for solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of time families have sought solutions for life's challenges. Parents and children alike have searched for answers to myriads of questions and concerns created in the laboratory of the home.

A source of great joy in my life is seeking and discovering solutions for my family--solutions which I can then share with others. Many times during the writing of this book I wanted to sit right down next to you and talk face to face. I am sincerely interested in you and your family. I would delight in your successes, and I would like to help lighten whatever load you carry. With all of my heart I care about strengthening families--yours and mine.

As we begin the adventure of finding solutions, I would like you to feel secure in the knowledge of four things.

First, no matter how unfortunate your past has been--regardless of how many people have failed you in life--you can begin today to make choices which will result in secure, loving relationships.

Second, finding solutions to problems usually requires a willingness to change, learn and unselfishly do "whatever it takes." Change must come from the inside out. No set of rules or suggestions from a book will make a difference unless minds are open and hearts are soft.

Third, because families are groups of individuals, when each family member improves, the whole family becomes stronger. Finding solutions sometimes requires individuals to sacrifice for the good of the whole. Happily, the result of working together to reach common goals often creates "solutions" of improved harmony, unity and love.

Fourth, creating a successful family is a day-by-day (sometimes minute-by-minute) effort. Finding solutions to individual and family problems is a process which takes time and considerable effort. My heartfelt suggestion is to be kind to yourself and patient with your family on your solution-seeking journey. Don't expect immediate success. Remember that there is no perfect family--there are no perfect parents. The key is to learn from mistakes and to keep trying. The rewards of your efforts will be priceless.

How To Use Solutions For Families

It is my hope and desire that this book will be a blessing to your family...that you will become familiar and comfortable with it, and use it regularly in your home.

There are five parts to *Solutions For Families*: Getting Started; Introduction For Parents; Twenty-four Lessons; Solutions Through Stories and Poems; Message To Parents.

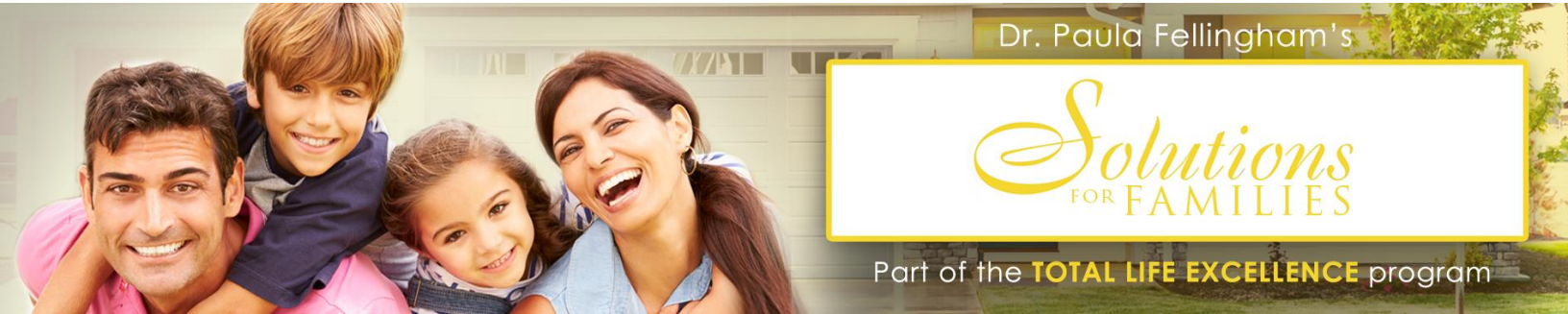
It is vitally important that you begin by reading the **Getting Started** section. To omit this part of the book would be like trying to build a home without a foundation. This first section has a detailed explanation about how to proceed on page __. There are four important parts of Getting Started: the Family Survey; the Family Contract; the Family Meeting; the Family Goals Statement. Take your time with these exercises. They can be powerful tools to help you build relationships and strengthen your family.

An **Introduction For Parents** is found at the beginning of each module. The Introduction For Parents introduces the subject of the module, and the four lessons which follow. It is an opportunity for me to speak to parents about the subject, prior to the lessons which they will teach the family. Parents can share information from the Introduction For Parents to enhance the lessons, if they so desire.

The **Twenty-four Lessons** in *Solutions For Families* reflect the twenty-four questions in the Family Survey. The lessons all follow the same format: follow-up from the previous lesson; a concept; family survey review; story and discussion; activity and assignment. The lessons are to be given by a family member, and ideally every person in the family should participate. As much as possible, family members should take turns giving parts of the lesson. For example, one person could read the concept, another family member could share the story and lead the discussion about the story, another could help with the activity and assignment exercises. Of course families can use the lessons however they'd like...there is certainly no wrong way to do it. The key is to meet regularly and use the lessons in whatever way is best for your family.

Solutions Through Stories and Poems are found at the end of each module. For most people, the story is a highlight in the lesson. Stories and poems are wonderful teaching tools. I thought your family might enjoy some additional stories and poems, for those evenings when you have just a little extra time to spend together. Or perhaps you might enjoy reading them instead of a lesson sometimes. Whatever you choose, the stories and poems are intended to be additional resources, designed to strengthen individuals and families.

A **Message To Parents** is found following the last lesson. There are many experts on family life whose contributions would enhance this book. However, in my desire to keep *Solutions For Families* “do-able” I didn’t want to present too much material. So I chose to share



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with you remarkable insights from two experts, Dr. Victor B. Cline and Dr. Kathleen S. Bahr, who offer outstanding suggestions for parents seeking solutions.



Finally, I wanted to share with you some thoughts about the research upon which this book is based. The research cited in the acknowledgments is entitled “Kindness and Unkindness in Families.” This research, developed by several university professors, declares kindness to be the single most important ingredient in a happy, effective family. They suggest that kindness “...is being gentle, caring, charitable, and concerned for the long-term welfare of others.” The study goes on to say, “Kindness and unkindness are not roles or tasks people have, but rather they are *ways of being*, ways people relate as they go about their various activities, tasks and roles.” This tells me that if we are “gentle, caring, charitable, and concerned for the long-term welfare of others” in our thoughts, words and actions, we will contribute to the happiness and effectiveness of our family, and be good examples of kindness for others.

Could it be possible that something as simple as kindness is the key to individual and family happiness? And yet, is being kind always an easy “way of being?” As we “go about our various activities, tasks and roles in life,” is kindness a virtue which pervades our thoughts, permeates our words, and is perceived in our actions? I understand that being kind is certainly not always an easy “way of being.” However, the idea that kindness is a foundation piece in a happy home causes me to believe that finding solutions for families *is* a reachable goal. I thought, “I can do kindness. I can learn to show kindness to my family and others.” And I am hoping you will feel the same way.

Now, let us begin the journey of finding solutions for the challenges families face. And please remember, during every step of the way, to show kindness to yourself, and patience with family members as you embark on the wonderful adventure of strengthening your family.

Paula Noble Fellingham