

Well-Being

INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS

A businessman shared what he learned about well-being when he told this story:

“I started my adult life with a bang, you might say. My parents were moderately well-to-do and gave me a good start in my own business. It flourished and things looked rosy for ten years or so. Then the economy went sour at about the time I had made some risky investments. One by one those went down the tubes. In the end we lost everything--house, cars and the business.

My wife and I sat out by the lake one night and talked until the sun came up. I remember feeling like I had been stripped of everything--like I had been robbed. ‘Why try again?’ I asked her. ‘We may work and work only to lose it.’ We struggled with that a long time. Finally, we decided that we had been thinking wrong. The purpose of life isn’t to accumulate money, swimming pools, cars and fur coats. The purpose of life is to enjoy life because it is a precious gift--to cherish your family and friends, to become a better person intellectually and spiritually and to help other people. The investments of time and effort I make in family and friends, in charitable work and in improving myself can never be lost. Things in the mind and heart can not be taken away.

We did start over again and have enjoyed success. We’ve replaced many of the material things we lost, but most importantly, we have changed our thoughts. The job, the possessions, the money are no longer an end in themselves. They are a means of making life pleasant and serving others. If I lost them all tomorrow, I would still feel rich.”

Total well-being is an ideal state when a balance is achieved in the six areas of life: physical, mental, social, emotional, financial and spiritual. Realistically, however, seldom do individuals or families enjoy well-being in every area at the same time. For example, even though we may enjoy total physical well-being, if we are stressed financially, we don’t have peace of mind. The reverse can also be true. If we have financial independence, but we are burdened with serious ill-health, we don’t enjoy total well-being. Achieving a balance in all areas is a process and a goal.

The wisest course individuals and families can follow is to make the kind of choices that will insure well-being in as many areas as possible.

Families who enjoy well-being:

1. Demonstrate love and respect for one another. Where love is, harmony exists. Parents and children make sincere efforts to unselfishly maintain peace in the home.

2. Have a positive outlook on life. Positive attitudes are contagious. In families we have incredible power to affect one another with our attitudes--in positive and negative ways. A saying that I heard once was posted on our refrigerator for years: "Be wise if you can, be pretty if you are, but be cheerful if it kills you!" Optimism and a sense of humor are virtues every family needs in large quantities.

3. Help one another live the values they believe, and reach the goals they set. There truly is strength in numbers. When we, in our families, openly discuss our values, and together set rules and goals, there is strength. We can feel the unity and power of our family, and it's a good feeling.

4. Work toward reaching their individual potentials within a caring, supportive environment. What a difference it makes when our family supports us in our interests and activities! We're usually happier and more successful when our family is "there for us" when we need them.

5. Build strong relationships with one another. People aren't best friends just because they were born into the same family. Strong relationships require time and effort. Usually good relationships result from years of speaking and acting in ways which demonstrate concern and affection. Family members have countless opportunities to build strong, long-lasting relationships. That's one of the blessings of being a family.

6. Live a healthy lifestyle. When we're free from illness and pain we can more easily work on reaching our mental, social, emotional, financial and spiritual goals. Health is a gift we should work daily to protect.

7. Encourage the mental development of each family member. Strong families help one another with school and work assignments, read books, share uplifting music, and encourage all intellectual growth.

8. Promote and teach social skills. Through example and precept parents can teach many of the social skills that will benefit their children throughout their lives.

9. Attain an emotional balance. Families who enjoy well-being discuss problems

before they get out of control. They have learned that extreme reactions are not productive.

10. Achieve financial stability. They recognize the difference between a “need” and a “want.” They live in such a way that money doesn’t become a source of conflict.

11. Cultivate a level of spirituality. Many strong families have a belief in a Supreme Being which strengthens and sustains them.

12. Recognize problems and conflicts, but focus on their ability to deal with the problems and grow from the challenges. With most family problems the entire family should gather together, discuss the problem and possible solutions. After every family member has shared his or her opinion, a solution is chosen and the family works together to solve the problem. During family discussions and after problems are past the crisis stage, ask questions like, “How can we learn from this?” or, “What can we do to prevent this from happening again?” Strong families learn and grow closer from their challenges.

It is apparent that there are serious problems in this world. Many people stand in need of help. However, it is also true that there is much happiness and well-being in the world. When individuals enjoy well-being and are members of strong families, those individuals can encourage well-being in others, and can contribute to the success of communities and nations.

Just as we grow and develop one day at a time, so individual and family well-being is a process. Creating things of worth usually takes time and much effort. We need to be kind and patient with ourselves, and with our families, as we strive to achieve well-being.