

set limits, failure to teach empathy and compassion, failure to connect consequences to behavior, and a lack of moral education were all indicators of poor parenting.

Interestingly, parents realize that exposure to media violence desensitizes other children to violence but felt that their children could distinguish make-believe from real violence. Parents felt that they could help prevent exposure to violence but on the other hand were overwhelmed with raising children in today's society. All agreed that better parenting skills were needed, yet only half of the parents felt they should spend more time with their children.

On the other hand, our experiences in working with parents indicates that parents have given their parenting responsibilities to schools, day cares, government programs and others. Unbridled TV watching and computer use have put distance between the parent and his/her child. Parents are confused and worried, particularly when children seem to defy rules and mistake license to do whatever they please for freedom. They have a sense of losing control of their children. Dreikurs talked about this in 1964. More than 30 years have passed and we are still dealing with the same issues. Why?

Parenting takes time, effort and an understanding of children. Four components necessary in raising a capable child in today's environment are spirituality, ability, fairness and encouragement. These are the foundation of our SAFE parenting program.

SENSE OF EMPATHY

Spirituality, the most important task, is where a child learns values, empathy, purpose and morality. One consistent finding is that children who commit acts of violence lack a sense of empathy, respect and compassion for others.

The parent's task is to create a home environment that fosters belonging and a connection to the community through our sense of spirituality. If we avoid this parenting

task then we raise a child with a "self-centered me behavior."

Children also need to know that they have the ability to make decisions, and that along with these decisions come responsibilities. If parents fail to teach their children what freedom really means (choice, responsibility and consequence), then we foster children who take no responsibility for their actions and tend to blame others for their circumstances.

Fairness in the home creates a respect for order and cooperation. If children fail to learn fairness they develop a license to behave without respect for others.

Our fourth component of effective parenting, encouragement, teaches parents how to better communicate to their children that they have worth and ability to master life's challenges. Parents tend to lack skills in communication with their children. From our experience we know parents agree that communication with their children. From our experience we know parents agree that communication is extremely important in raising capable children.

Unfortunately, most communication is discouraging and directed at correcting or pointing out, a child's inability to meet expectations. Without encouragement, children become discouraged and find life tasks hopeless.

Dreikurs said it back in 1964: "Far too frequently, headlines give accounts of children in trouble." Are we, as a community, even interested in making an effort to reach parents? How many corporations are serious about their employees' families and the community that they support?

PARENTING CLASSES

Aon, a Chicago-based consulting firm, found that the most loyal employees worked for employers that encouraged a balance between family and job demands. How many places of business offer parenting classes during the workday? Government and school

systems say they want to do more, but do they?

How many school counselors are allowed to offer parenting classes at school or in the community as part of their duties? Shouldn't parents whose child is in trouble with family court or at school be required to take parenting classes to pay back to the community for having to take over the parents' responsibilities?

If we care about the child's welfare, why are divorcing parents not made to go to classes to understand the impact of such a decision on the child and how to develop parenting skills to offset some of the trauma?

How many churches require parents to participate in parenting courses? If we are all so concerned, how could parents refuse? Print and TV media have made millions off the tragedy in Colorado. Have you read or seen any sponsorship of efforts to improve parenting by the media?

And we ask the question, why? Will we be asking these questions 30 years from now? Hopefully these violent situations don't have to continue, but our responsibilities as parents do. We have a responsibility to our children to be good parents, and blaming the media, guns and schools won't accomplish what only we as parents can.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ANTHONY D. WEINER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 18, 1999

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 220, had I been present, I would have voted "no."