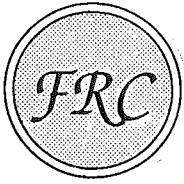


PASTORAL CARE NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY THE FAMILY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
OF PHILADELPHIA YEARLY MEETING



*For Overseers, Members of Ministry and Counsel, and others involved
in pastoral care and counseling*

Vol. IV, No. 1

September, 1996

Nurturing Quaker Parenting

by Harriet E. Heath

How can Overseers support parents as they seek to integrate Friends' beliefs, practices, and values into their family life? Quakers search for truth and for how to live by that truth in everyday life. Parenting is part of that search as parents seek to follow Quaker principles in living with and guiding their children. Viewing parenting as part of our search for truth offers Overseers another opportunity to support the spiritual journey of members of their meeting.

Our meetings are drawing attenders who are unfamiliar with Friends' ways. Among these new members and attenders are parents with young children. Many were raised in a very authoritarian manner. In their searching they are asking "What is the Quaker way of child rearing?"

Even those who grew up in Quaker homes have questions. "We learned anger was wrong, not how to deal with it. I still don't know how, and now my children make me so angry, I strike out. It certainly doesn't create the Quaker home we want."

"The child's first teachers are his [or her] parents. It is in the home that Friends' principles first become practices" (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*, 1972, p. 22). Parents ask how to follow Friends' principles when responding to a two year old having a temper tantrum or an adolescent cutting a parent off with a sarcastic remark.

What are the implications of Friends believing that "everyone is a child of God"?

What does it mean that "all must relate to one another in terms of the Divine Spark within each"? (*Faith and Practice*, p. 32).

This article explores ways Overseers can support parents' search for how to live with and guide their children. A discussion of integrating children into the life of the meeting can be found in an earlier issue of *PCN* (Vol. II, No. 3, March 1995). Here we will focus on the every-day situations that parents face. How they face them is what can make an experience of Quaker living.

We will discuss four areas in which a meeting can support parents: ~integrating Quaker faith and practices into family living ~guiding children according to values important to Friends, ~supporting parents concerned about a child, and ~dealing with



Harriet Heath & grandson

parents who may be neglecting, abusing or not guiding their child.

Integrating Quaker Faith and Practice into Family Life

Integrating our Quaker faith into our everyday life is a challenge for all of us. For parents the leap is great. They ask, "How do you become or stay centered in the midst of hectic family life? Take that five o'clock hour when everyone is tired and hungry, the children are squabbling and the adults are trying to get dinner on the table. How do you deal with that in a Quakerly way?" Or they ask, "How do you see the Inner Light in a child who knows exactly what to say and do to get you so angry?"

Providing parents an opportunity to raise their concerns is a first major step. Many parents feel that they struggle alone. They may

Many parents feel that they struggle alone.

feel they are asking questions whose answers are obvious to everyone but themselves. Learning that other families have struggles and questions legitimizes their concerns. This sharing gives many greater courage to face their struggles.

It is also helpful for young parents to hear from members who are farther along in their child rearing, even at the grandparent stage. It is reassuring to discover that some parenting issues are common to every generation. It also gives perspective on those issues that are new and need new solutions.

From this sharing with other Quaker parents can come ways of integrating Friends' practices into the struggles of parenting. Parents have offered such strategies as having a quiet time sometime during the day, learning to center during fleeting moments, reflecting on a recurring situation, learning to hold a child in the Light, keeping the Way open, and following leadings.

There are several ways Overseers can facilitate sharing among parents. For one-on-one sharing, Overseers can encourage parents to seek out members of the meeting with whom they would like to discuss parenting

issues, or they could set up a mentoring program teaming experienced parents with newer ones.

Sharing in a group setting such as a parents' support group or adult forum provides a more formal opportunity for parents to exchange experiences. Thought should be given to what structure would best serve the meeting's parents, a single session or a series of discussions on related topics. A meeting could choose an informal, self-led group, organize a group facilitated by a member of Overseers or other experienced meeting member, or invite a skilled person from yearly meeting.

Below are suggested themes around which discussions could be organized:

How can parents incorporate specific beliefs in their family life? What does "that of God in every person" mean? How does that belief relate to children? Where or when do we see that of God in our children? Is that of God there from birth and determining the child's behavior? If so, is there no need for parental guidance? Or is that of God a potential and the child can grow into goodness with the parent as the guide?

What are the Quaker principles on which home life is to be based? Are they Brinton's "community, harmony, equality and simplicity"? Or are there others such as tolerance? And how are these principles integrated into family life.? Does equality mean each person has equal say about how money is spent, the parents and the three-year-old?

How can parents respond to specific situations which concern them? The following outline may be useful:

- Describe a specific situation
- List as many ways of dealing with the situation as you can.
- Make a plan by selecting the ways listed which are most in keeping with Quaker principles.

Pastoral Care Newsletter is published quarterly by the Family Relations Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Lyle Jenks, clerk. Patricia McBee, editor. We are located at 1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102 Comments are welcome. **Please do not duplicate.** To obtain additional copies, contact Steve Gulick, at (215) 241-7068.

Save the Date!

Overseers Day

Effective Caring: From Vision to Action

Saturday, November 2, 1996, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm

at Swarthmore Meeting

Sponsored by
Family Relations Committee

Bring Bag Lunch. Beverages Provided.

An opportunity for Overseers to meet with members of the Family Relations Committee and counselors in the Friends Counseling Service to explore issues of pastoral care, to identify resources within and outside of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and to develop strategies for loving, effective action.

No charge; No advance registration.
Details will be mailed to clerks of overseers.

Friends Counseling Service

Trained counselors who are active Friends are available for individual, marital and family counseling. Deborah Cooper, coordinator of the Counseling Service would be happy to talk with you about ways the counseling service could serve members of your meeting. Call her at (215)988-0140.

Upcoming Events Sponsored by Family Relations Committee

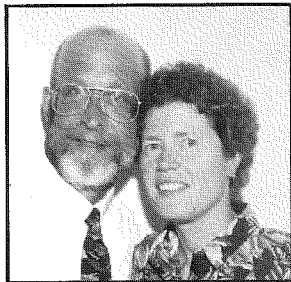
Retreat for Men: A Gathering to Explore the Healing of Our Lives, November 1-3, 1996, Cape May, New Jersey. Led by Brad Sheeks. Cost is \$110 per person. For information call Brad at (215)349-6959.

This is the fifth year for this very successful event. Please call it to the attention of men in your meeting.

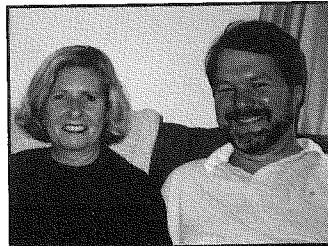
Couple Enrichment Retreat, October 4-6, 1996, Cape May, New Jersey. Led by Brad Sheeks and Pat McBee. Cost is \$240 per couple. For information contact Brad or Pat at (215)349-6959.

Brad Sheeks and Pat McBee will be taking a year off from couple enrichment leadership in 1997, so encourage members of your meeting to take advantage of this opportunity.

New Couple Enrichment Leaders



Jacob & Gretta
Stone



Dianne & Barry
Sloane

Two new couples are available to lead Couple Enrichment in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Barry and Dianne Sloane of Mickleton Meeting and Gretta and Jacob Stone of Doylestown Meeting have completed the Friends General Conference training program and are eager to share couple enrichment with meetings in PYM.

They would welcome invitations to lead retreats for your meeting or quarterly meeting. You can call them directly for more information: Sloanes (609)845-7682 and Stones (215)345-0575 or call FRC at (215)241-7068.



PENDLE HILL

A QUIAKER CENTER FOR STUDY AND CONTEMPLATION

*Autumn Workshop
for members of
Ministry and Oversight Committees*

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

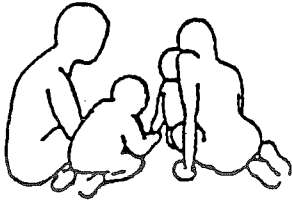
November 8-10, 1996

Come share successes and failures in "binding the meeting together" and join us in building a caring community during the weekend.

Betty Polster is co-clerk of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

David and Margaret Gray are lifelong English Quakers. Margaret has been an occupational therapist and is gifted with a "listening ear." David was a teacher of literature and Quakerism at Woodbrooke.

For more information on these and other programs, contact
Irene Ramsay at (800) 742-3150 or (610) 566-4507.
338 Plush Mill Road • Wallingford, PA 19086



Parenting Creatively Workshops

Led by Harriet Heath

Sponsored by Family Relations Committee

For the past 20 years, Harriet Heath has led a series of workshops for parents throughout Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Through **Parenting Creatively** parents have an opportunity to share concerns and experiences; to experiment with making and carrying out plans for their families, and then reflecting on the results; and to practice skills that facilitate family life.

A series of from three to eight sessions can be customized to meet the needs of your meeting.

For more information contact
Family Relations Committee (215)241-7068 or Harriet Heath (610)649-7037.

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them, approaching them with the concern. The visitor's major goal may be to lead the parent to talking with a professional counselor. Reaching that objective may take several visits of tender looking at the child's behavior and the parents' perspective. But, as with the issue of sexual abuse (PCN, June, 1996), can we ignore the cries of help of our young members? Can we ignore when a child seems to be hurting?

Overseers, concerned with the well-being of the members of their meetings, are in a position to support and guide parents' search for answers. To do so means being open to the struggles of parents. It means recognizing that their search to integrate their Quaker faith into their family life and into their nurturance of their children is part of their spiritual journey.

*Harriet Heath, Ph.D., is a member of Radnor Meeting. She is a licensed developmental psychologist and teacher. She leads **Parenting Creatively** workshops for Family Relations Committee. Harriet is an experienced parent as mother of three and grandmother of eight.*

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Quaker Publications on Parenting

Boulding, Elise. *One Small Plot of Heaven: Reflections on Family Life by a Quaker Sociologist.*, Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford, PA, 1989.

Heath, Harriet, *Answering that of God in Our Children.* Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA, 1994.

Heath, Harriet, *Parents Planning: A Manual.* Conrow Publishing Company, Haverford, PA, 1983.

Rutter, M., *A Measure of Our Values: Goals and Dilemmas in the Upbringing of Children.* Quaker Home Service, London, 1984.

Resources Available from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Friends Counseling Service of the Family Relations Committee serves parents and families. In deciding the right counselor for you it is important to find out about the perspective of the counselor and how s/he would work with the child, family, and meeting, if relevant. Call Deborah Cooper, (215)988-0140.

Nonviolence and Children Committee provides workshops and materials related to dealing with conflict nonviolently. Call Pam Moench (215)241-7239.

Friends Committee on Conflict Resolution provides workshops and materials related to dealing with conflict nonviolently. Contact Caroline Packard, (215)241-7029.

Children Zero to Thirteen and their Parents a committee of the Religious Education Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting provides workshops and discussion leaders on topics related to integrating family values into family living. Call Marty Smith, (215)241-7008.

When discussions become this specifically related to current child rearing issues, the facilitator needs to be aware of factors that will affect what can be done in a specific case. These factors include the developmental level of the children, the temperament patterns of all those involved, and each one's needs and feelings.

Guiding Children According to Values Important to Friends

Parents also ask about expecting children to live by Quaker values. Does living nonviolently mean always turning the other cheek? Never protecting oneself? What happens on the school playground if reporting an incident is seen as tattling and frowned on by both teachers and children? And what is simple living: no TV? no computer? organizing one's time to include family time? something else?

For several years now, members of the Zero to Thirteen Subcommittee of the Religious Education Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have been facilitating discussions at monthly and quarterly meetings searching with the participants for ways to integrate values important to Friends. They have found a series of questions helpful. First is to clarify what is meant by the value. *How do you define _____? What are the behaviors you would expect to see in a person living according to _____?*

Living nonviolently, as an example, is often defined as dealing with conflict by using mediation techniques and discussion instead of fighting or even name calling. Nonviolence implies a respect for the other person. A person equipped to live nonviolently would have mediation techniques, would be respectful of others, would know-how to divert a fight into a discussion of issues.

The second question is *What are different situations in which issues arise in attempting to implement this value?* Situations parents might cite could be conflict between children that might occur at home between siblings, on the playground, in the classroom, or on the bus.

Then take one situation and let parents see the possibilities of how to handle it by answering the question: *What are all the ways*

you can think of for handling this situation? And the next question, of course, is *Which ways of handling the situation would be in congruence with the value and would help the child learn to live by this value?* The leader may add relevant techniques that others have not offered.

The final question is *What are the implications for our children of living according to this value?* Will my child be safe? Will denying her all the toys her friends have make those toys so desirable she will resist choosing to live simply?

These questions can be used in parent discussion groups. The questions provide parents with a guide for integrating their values into family life.

Supporting parents concerned about a child

Parents may come to an Overseer because they are concerned about a child. The child's behavior is uncontrollable. The parents are at their wits' end. Or the school was reporting behavior the parents did not see. What should they do? Or the parents are ashamed or frightened by what the adolescent or young adult is doing: he's joined a cult; she's entering the military; they're on drugs; the significant other is a scary person.

How can Overseers respond when parents ask for help with concerns like these?

Listening may be the greatest gift a person can give to a parent. Many times parents will resolve the issue themselves just by having an opportunity to voice it. In other situations well placed gentle questions may help the parent. "In what kinds of situations does this

Listening may be the greatest gift to a parent

behavior occur?" "Does the behavior in school occur constantly or during certain periods or transitions?" And asking the parents, "What are ways you could deal with this situation?" and "What do you want your child to learn from this situation?" can help parents clarify their goals and next steps. The Overseer might ask "What are your fears about the life your child has chosen? How can we support you in the loss you are feeling?"

The Overseers may discover that an issue is beyond their skill and that professional help may be needed. An Overseer can help parents sharpen their grasp of the issue, and then help find a counselor with whom they can work effectively. If the parent is not open to professional help, Overseers can seek professional advice on how to proceed. Philadelphia and Baltimore Yearly Meetings maintain lists of Quaker counselors. Parents may also wish to work through their health insurance plan or local family service.

Dealing With the Child About Whom Overseers Have a Concern: What if You Suspect Neglect or Abuse?

A concern such as this usually arises out of incidents observed within the meeting. Perhaps the child looks neglected or behavior between parent and child at meeting are indicative of neglect. Perhaps you observe indications of abuse (see *PCN*, Vol. III, No. 4, June 1996). Or, maybe, the child's behavior at meeting is consistently inappropriate. Fortunately such situations are rare, but unfortunately they do exist and should not be ignored.

An Overseer in another meeting called wanting to explore whether to act, and if so how, in a case of apparent neglect. For over a year she had been concerned about a child, now five, whose parents are active, well-respected members of the meeting. At meeting the child's behavior is frequently out of control. He will grab a toy from another child. He will ride his bike into an area that is understood to be out of bounds. Though his parents may be present, they ignore his behavior. The Overseer has never seen the parents interact with the child except to give him directions such as, "It is time to go now, get in the car." What precipitated the phone call was that at the First Day School picnic the child had fallen and scraped both knees badly. He cried hard, the knees must have burned. His parents totally ignored him, did not even pause in their conversation. Someone else attended to his hurts. The caller felt the child wanted his parents. "Is this neglect?" she asked. "Can we, should we, let it go unmentioned?"

Or the child's behavior is unacceptable. One meeting reported how two brothers would

chase each other after meeting, running over the benches which have cloth covered pads. Overseers from another meeting were concerned about a child who talked loudly and

Some issues require professional help

did noisy projects during the whole adult meeting. The parent was proud that child stayed for the full forty-five minutes.

These are difficult situations that come to the attention of Overseers. It is delicate to approach parents. They may not be receptive to unsolicited advice on child rearing. And adults differ as to what is acceptable, even when it comes to racing around the meeting room.

When there is consensus among Overseers about their concern, they should give careful, and prayerful, attention to what would be the appropriate response. The task calls for great sensitivity toward the parents' position as well as that of the child. Action could involve a member of the meeting, who is close to the parents and/or respected by

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Questions for Reflection

1. How can we help parents find peace within that will guide them in living with their children? How can we help them to be centered in the midst of hectic family life?
2. Can we evolve queries that would guide parents as they seek to integrate their Quaker faith into their every day lives with their children?
3. Are we sensitive to the needs of parents and their children? Are we supportive to parents when they are going through a period of turmoil with their children? Are we able to recognize the needs of children from their behavior? Are we prepared to help children who have need of our help?
4. Do we give parents opportunities to raise questions and discuss concerns? Does the meeting discuss Quaker values as they apply to family life? Do we impart skills which can enable parents to integrate those values into their families? Do we help parents be realistic about the effect of Quaker values on children?