

Dear Colleagues,
WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO
ANDREW, THE WELSH
CHILD?

Do you remember in the
0-6 Parenting Programme how the
Welsh family and their son
Andrew went through a helpful
intervention at the Maudsley
Hospital? Some of you may
know that a recent Jeremy Kyle
TV chat programme featured the
family and showed that Andrew
(now 21) is a troubled young man
with many difficulties.



SO HOW EFFECTIVE WAS
THE MAUDSLEY SUPPORT?
Does this raise questions about
the effectiveness of the Maudsley
intervention? I don't think so –
though the media sometimes
draw their own conclusions
which are not necessarily
scientific ones. The skills the
family were being taught at the
Maudsley are the same skills as
those being taught in scores of
parenting programmes today, and
their effectiveness has been
proven over and over again in
scientific evaluations. What this
does show, however, is the need
for ongoing support for families
especially those facing acute
difficulties or with troubled
backgrounds. A single
intervention is hardly going to
have an enduring effect. We all
tend to slip backwards, especially
in crisis, and our Trust has
always maintained that, even for
'normal' families, a course is
much more effective when it is
followed up at intervals with
another injection of support –
that is one of the reasons why we
have developed different courses
that can support families at
different stages of the family life
cycle.

CHILDREN WHO BROKE
THEIR PARENTS' HEARTS
Besides, there is no magic bullet

for parent education – I think all
of us know of parents from every
social background who did all the
right things and – whether
because of genetic tendencies or
different peer-influences – some
of their children have broken
their hearts. This does not in any
way invalidate the whole range of
positive parenting skills that are
embedded in our courses at every
level and which, for the greater
majority of parents, have proved
effective in helping them raise
their families calmly and
respectfully.

IF YOU WORK WITH SCHOOLS

If you work with schools you
may be interested in the NFPI's
recently published *School-parent
partnerships: Emerging strategies
to promote innovation in schools*,
by Anne Page and others. It
looks at building more effective
partnerships between schools and
parents, and it includes real-life
examples, case studies, etc. It
can be ordered, cost £15, through
their website,
www.familyandparenting.org

Wishing you every success in
the New Year in the excellent
work you are doing for families.

With best wishes,

Michael Quinn

ON YOUR WEBSITE

Good to read your latest newsletter – it made me re-look at your website and I read particularly the Home page with interest.

One thought I have had several times: would it be possible for the newsletter to be put on your website as a pdf document? It could then be downloaded and forwarded to other interested people including parents. It would be good to share your thoughts more easily with others in that way

Rosie Novis, Billericay Parents' Forum

Editor: We've just done that – thank you for the suggestion.

RELUCTANT TO CHANGE

I have used the Family Caring Trust pack for a number of years now, with the charity "Parents and Children Together", based in Wimborne. I find the ethos, exercises, the use of the DVD, small groups, plus manual, applies to all types of parents. Thank you for that.

Our local education authority and other funders have looked at other courses, such as Triple P, Strengthening Families, Incredible Years, etc., but I was reluctant to change to another course, as yours fits us well, so I was glad to see that your programmes have now been independently reviewed by NAPP.

Mary Marsh, Wimbourne, Dorset

NEGATIVES & POSITIVES

I am attaching some feedback from our recent 'Fives to Fifteens' parenting course. I am most encouraged by the effect the course has had on this group of nine parents and will shortly be holding another Open Morning to recruit a new group.

Negatives were: "I found the presentation a little patronising at times."
"I'd have liked more time for group discussion on issues I needed help with."

And the positives included: "Very positive effect. I am calmer and have more patience, which has been the key to managing a challenging child better –our relationship has improved considerably."

"I've learnt that I have very high expectations of myself and that I've been putting too much emphasis on being a 'good' parent."

"I enjoyed the freedom to discuss problems openly and frankly."

Charlotte Carver, Malvern



Feedback

Feedback from a recent facilitator-training led by Sue Tym, Sheffield

"Thank you; I really enjoyed the whole course. If I'm half as good as you at delivering the parenting course I will be more than happy. You've given me the confidence to do it."

"Thank you for all your work in running the training course. I'll be running my third course for parents shortly – which I never thought I'd be able to do this time last year."

"Thanks again for a wonderful training. And I have thoroughly enjoyed delivering the parenting course. My confidence has more than doubled because of this, and I know I could not have done it without your thorough training. I don't think any tutor will ever teach me as much as you did about the subject and about myself – you've spoiled me forever."

Plus Feedback from parents on their courses:

'I have learnt to stand back and not get in to a battle.'

'I was at my wits end and sceptical that anything would work, but these skills really do make a difference – thank you.'
Listening and paying attention to her feelings has made her a happier child – and I 'm happier too.'

'Our family is now functioning like a well-oiled machine.'

'What was good about the parenting course? Everything! I didn't want it to end.'

'In the last few weeks I have seen my children in a different light – and it's a brighter one.'

Sue Tym

.....BUT HOW DO YOU CHANGE THIS YOUTH CULTURE?

But how do you change the powerful culture that impacts the family? This is a key question, given statistics like the recent 80% rise in drinking among girls aged 11-13. An article by Rowenna Davis in a recent JRF magazine 'Search' looked at seven case studies and found four things that work in getting young people to change risky behaviour.

1. POSITIVE MESSAGES

Campaigns in the past did not work when they focused on the negative consequences – the dangers and shocking facts about speed, smoking, sex, etc. All 7 case studies of successful campaigns were positive, even using humour and irony, like Australia's successful campaign that linked speeding with questions about the speeder's manhood! It makes you question the value of negative images in our own TV ads.

2. TACKLE UNTRUTHS HEAD ON

A second helpful factor took into account the powerful lobbies and companies promoting cigarettes and alcohol. Young people may know the risks of smoking but these companies promote the message that cigarettes or drink are cool, are about self-expression, about rebellion against the 'safe' path adults advise. The 'Truth' campaign in Florida tackled this untruth head on by showing that lighting up wasn't rebellious but

was conforming to the powerful tobacco industry that spends £10bn + on tobacco ads each year. (And the message came across as credible rather than preachy in that it used young people themselves to challenge the distortions of the lobbyists.)

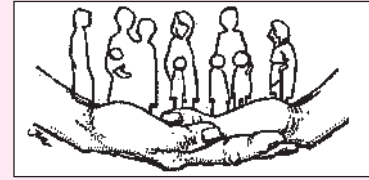
3. DEBATE TACKLES STIGMA

A third factor tackled stigma. Knowing the damage that binge drinking does will count for little when there is a stigma from your peers to saying no to another drink. A Swiss government 'Stop Aids' campaign was deliberately explicit in order to get people talking and start a public debate – which immediately began to lower embarrassment and lessen the stigma. There is a lesson in that for other risky behaviour.

4. GOOD MARKET RESEARCH

The final lesson from the study of successful campaigns highlighted the need for market research to find out why people are resistant to change and what might help to change attitudes. In Seattle researchers found that emphasising the cost and congestion of private travel had little impact. The same people did care, however, about improving their health by increasing cycling and walking. And that research led to a successful campaign to reduce private travel – again note the emphasis on the positive rather than on the negative!

A column for those promoting the courses as part of ministry in their own faith tradition



FAILURE AS A PARENT

Some fundamentalists believe (and have written numerous books to try to convince people) that God gives you happiness, wealth and success if you live according to certain laws and conditions.

Few thinking people accept that. There is certainly a deeper peace in having your own integrity and being true to your principles, but there are no guarantees of material success – nor are there guarantees that we will enjoy the civilised, warm, disciplined family life that many of us would like to have!

Family life is challenging for a great many people, perhaps more than ever today because of our new awareness of children's right to greater freedom of expression. We struggle to get the balance right between freedom and loving discipline – and parenting courses certainly help – but we will never get it all together. Accepting the chaos and messiness of family life is essential to our spirituality.

For the truth is that genuine family spirituality, loving and caring for our children, will tend to draw us out of our comfort zone and challenge us profoundly. It forces us to change and grow as we enter into a kind of death and resurrection. That is the challenge and vision of faith.



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