

KOSCIUSKO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

"WHAT'S A KID TO DO?"

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JUANITA STONE

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May 21, 1985

Each year thousands of young people suffer from stress. The singlemost reason for some form of stress is abuse. Stress can be divided into two major categories -- physical and mental. Physical abuse is not as difficult to pinpoint because the evidence is available to the eye. Since the physical abuse of children is being dealt with openly on a national level it will not be addressed here. The purpose of this project is to increase the awareness of the public regarding children who suffer from emotional abuse (which cause wounds that last a lifetime and never heal) and to provide a summary of programs available for both these young people and their parents who are in need of help.

We began this project because all three of us have been involved in some way with a young person having emotional problems. In order to find a method for helping these young people we first had to determine a common cause of their emotional problem; an incident which gave force to their reason for being troubled.

We had personal experience on which to rely, and we thought we knew the singlemost cause for emotional problems, but we needed to validate our hypothesis.

According to an article in the February issue of Reader's Digest titled "Emotional Child Abuse: The Invisible Plague",

emotional abuse falls into four major categories known as the "four Ds". These are deprivation, distancing, depreciation and domination. Abusive parents may use one or all of the four Ds to play out their own psychological conflicts and avoid facing up to the real pressures of child rearing.¹

Deprivation and distancing means that the parent is psychologically unavailable to cuddle a crying baby or express much interest in the child's development or needs. Children who must deal with these types of conditions do not develop a secure attachment to their parents and, in turn, find a secure relationship later in life very difficult.

Depreciation involves verbal abuse, which discounts the child's achievements and blows out of proportion every sign of misbehavior. In some families parents "team up", where other families will have one active abuser while the other is a silent partner. In either case the effect is the same; the child can do nothing right in the parent's eyes.

Domination finds a child completely dominated by one or both parents, often being threatened if he does not comply with the parent's orders. Experts point out that there is a big difference between domination through education for the good of the child and domination through cruelty.

Since the project involved young people, the first step in helping to determine how widespread emotional problems were lies logically with the schools where young people spend most of their time under the watchful eye of professional

people. Thus, interviews were set up with school administrators and teachers first, then later with juvenile authorities and an expert at Bowen Center. After we met several times and before the interview process began, we determined that our personal dealings with young people having problems was because of divorce in their family.

Experts say that children react differently to the stress caused by divorce. Whether they feel it is their fault, that neither parent cares any more or that they simply cannot cope with the issue, the feelings are basically the same; confusion and disappointment.²

We determined that each interview would include early in the discussion the question, "Do you see problems most frequently from young people whose parents have gone through a divorce?" In all thirteen interviews their answer was always YES. "They tend to flock together," stated an administrator at Warsaw's Middle School where our first interview took place. "It happens quickly--within the first few hours of school--and they stay together throughout the year."

In September of 1984 there were 900 students enrolled at the Middle School. Of these, 271 or 30% were living in single parent homes, nearly all a result of divorce.³ The attendance officer for the Middle School visits about 1% of the total school population. In this 1%, about 92% are broken homes. Visits are made to the homes because the student is having problems either with attendance or a

particular illness.⁴

The symptoms evidenced by young people having problems were consistent in all interviews. They suffer from headaches, upset stomachs, poor concentration, poor or failing grades, behavior problems at school and a general feeling that they are to blame for what is happening in their lives. The child who is a loner often suffers the same feelings.

There is no doubt that these young people are under a great deal of stress, especially if they feel they are to blame for the difficulty between parents. Often times these parents are having so many problems themselves they tend not to recognize emotional stress in their own children.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, during the 1980s forty to fifty percent of all children under age 18 will live with only one parent.⁵ Each will deal with the situation in his own way. There are, however, a surprising number of common emotions and problems. For example, their immediate reaction is likely to be a mixture of anger, guilt, disbelief and a deep hurt.

Donna Cuneo, the Columbus, Ohio-based advisor to International Youth Council (a network of support groups for teens in single-parent homes) says that anger is a normal reaction. "They are angry that their parents can't make a go of their marriage."⁶ Experts also stress that if young people feel guilty about their parents' divorce, they should understand that even if they did act up, their rebelliousness could not break up a good, strong marriage between two adults.⁷

"Parents may have argued ABOUT their children but those arguments only indicate that they were not able to communicate well with EACH OTHER."⁸

Once young people are able to accept the divorce as well as realize it is not their fault, they can start to deal with the hurt -- and the inevitable changes in their relationship with both parents. Dealing with the situation becomes much more complex when parents begin to bad-mouth each other and the child is caught in the middle. This puts children in a precarious position and they are often at a loss for words. Ms. Cuneo advises saying "Mom, that's my father you're talking about (or vice versa). Maybe you feel he was wrong but he's still my dad."⁹ This helps the child avoid taking sides and puts them on more neutral ground. Neutral ground or not, young people are still under a great deal of stress when their parents are going through divorce. As mentioned earlier it affects the way they function both in and out of school. And children of all ages are finding it difficult to cope.

Because they spend over 34 weeks of every year in school, many times teachers and administrators must find a way to deal with symptoms resulting from stressful situations brought on by divorce. For children in the elementary grades there is little help available. An interview with an elementary principal in the Warsaw School System proved without a doubt for us that there are just as many emotional problems among elementary students as there are junior high and high school

students. "I have a ten-year-old who wants to kill his mother and another who is so emotionally unstable it disrupts the entire class," he stated. "We deal with this type of problem every day and there is no counseling available."¹⁰

At the Leesburg Elementary School (due to a small grant from the state of Indiana) there is, however, a program for counseling young students to help them deal with emotional problems. Both children and parents are involved and counseling takes place after school hours conducted by teachers. The program is new and the results of working with these youngsters cannot yet be seen. The final results will probably take years.

A full-fledged program for all elementary schools will probably not be seen for another four to five years, based on the school system's five year plan. Our interviews pointed to the fact, though, that it would be beneficial and it is necessary for children, no matter what age, to have someone to talk to and help them deal with their problems. We do understand that the school system finds more and more falling squarely in its lap and that it cannot be a cure-all for everyone and everything, but the schools seem to be the most logical place to begin.

We based this opinion on information gathered from our interviews with school administrators. Our findings indicated that elementary students do not seem to flock together as a result of emotional problems as they do in middle school. The middle school years are ones filled with a great amount

of peer pressure and perhaps they need friends with similar problems. By the time students reach their freshman year, they seem to form groups based on academics, attitudes, and interests rather than stress-related problems. It would be difficult to deal with emotional problems at this level because there is only one counselor for four hundred students. Here again, physical symptoms are dealt with rather than the real issue. When students are having problems they are evidenced by the same symptoms seen in other students under emotional stress; illness, attendance problems, etc. In dealing with students who are experiencing emotional stress schools tend to get more cooperation from two-parent homes. Administrators at all levels pointed this out to us.

By the time students reach senior high they seek friends for what they are and not who they are. Their values begin to change and they are better able to cope with their problems. Most students who are having severe emotional problems are from divorced parents, though. Counselors concentrate their efforts on trying to help these students and are encouraged to always put the kids first; the paperwork can be completed as time permits. One member of this writing team found that the high school staff was most helpful in working out a solution for a niece with emotional problems.

If the child of a single parent does experience more emotional problems than those of two-parent families then Kosciusko County certainly has its share. During 1982 the Kosciusko County Clerk's office recorded 237 divorces granted

to residents. In 1983 there were 301 and in 1984, out of 412 filed 280 were granted. According to the clerk's office, approximately 95% of divorces granted involved children.¹¹

One of the few available community resources for assisting young people with emotional problems is Bowen Center. Dr. William Mason, Youth Services Therapist, sees anger, guilt and confusion in young people who are suffering from the effects of divorce. He feels the answer is not just treating the children, but educating the parents on the overall effects of divorce. "Parents need to know what is going to happen to both them and their children BEFORE they decide on divorce," he states. "Otherwise we are merely treating the symptoms, not getting to the root of the problem which is the parents." And Bowen Center does offer classes on parenting as well as counseling for parents considering divorce.

This interview put us back to square one. How many parents seek counseling for both themselves and their children when divorce is being considered?

Another option open to parents and students alike is their minister. The local ministerial association does not have a formal program for counseling parents who are going through a divorce, but they do offer counseling through their individual churches. But what about the children? What about the countless young people who need help and do not have a minister to turn to because they do not attend church? For these young people as well as the youth who have a home church, Jerry Landrum, Director of Youth For Christ, is always there.

His work with youth in our area communities has certainly had an impact.

Detective Sargeant Jerry Laurien often wishes he could send young people to a home church minister but few have one. For example, in dealing with 22 juvenile cases ages 7 to 17, thirteen were living in single parent homes and only 5 listed a church.

In November of 1984 nineteen juveniles were arrested ranging in age from 12 to 17. Twelve of these were living with only one parent and one was living with neither parent.¹² This points to a definite problem for young people who have only one parent. Detective Laurien also felt that it all comes back to the parent and how he or she handles divorce and being a single parent.

A program recently implemented to help young people from a single parent home is Big Brother-Big Sister. Part of their justification for a program in Kosciusko County came from the 1980 census data for this county. These statistics showed that 2,500 children aged 6 to 17 are from one parent households. These children are four times more likely to drop out of school, 6 times more likely to come before the courts, and 8 times more likely to divorce.¹³

There is also the International Youth Council mentioned earlier in this paper. The primary purpose of this program is to bring teens from single parent homes together to share ideas, inspiration and special problems with kids their own age. An arm of Parents Without Partners, their goals are to develop

leadership through full participation in school, community, clubs and sports and to accept differences of their peers who live in two-parent homes.¹⁴

In the Lawrence School Corporation (Warren Central High School in Indianapolis) the local ministerial association began a counseling program which is backed by the school board. This program is successfully providing a place within the school building where ministers who are experienced in counseling talk to young people who need to share their problems. The young people either seek this help on their own or they may be referred by the Dean, their teachers, or other students. During the first semester of the 1982-83 school year, out of 112 conferences 78 were initiated by the students themselves who felt they needed to share their concerns.¹⁵ The students and parents are made aware of the program at the time of enrollment.

After all our research was completed we each felt very strongly that divorce and emotional problems in young people go hand in hand. Our original premise was borne out time and time again and was supported by our statistical data. We wanted to find an answer to the problem, not merely a way to treat the symptom. But we have to admit that there isn't one. The only avenue we have is to provide a way for young people to seek help in working out their problems which so often are caused by others. AND IF WE CAN REACH ONE PARENT WHO WILL HELP THEIR CHILD THEN ALL THE TIME AND ENERGY EXPENDED ON THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN WORTH IT.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEWED

Warsaw Middle School

Don Losier - Principal
Bill Landrigan - Assistant Principal
Sid Ellis - Attendance Officer

Warsaw Freshman High

Elten Powers - Principal

Warsaw Senior High

Dick Kline - Principal
Jerry Seese - Assistant Principal
Rick Dill - Dean of Students

Leesburg Elementary School

Jan Haymaker

Bowen Center

Dr. William Mason - Youth Services Therapist

Atwood Elementary School

Pardee Gunter - Principal

Washington Elementary School

Millie Paxton

Jefferson Elementary School

James Kilgore

Kosciusko County Divorces

Jeanne Weirick - Kosciusko County Clerk

Detective Sargent Jerry Laurion:

Case histories - example, 22 cases
children living with both parents
all in school

Crime: shoplifting, theft, runaway, battery, auto theft,
resisting arrest

Another example: Now, 1984 - 19 juvenile arrests
ages: 12-17

Single parents - 12

Both parents - 6

Friend - 1

Crime: illegal consumption, false reporting of a crime,
theft, public intoxication, shoplifting, vandalism,
burglary, auto theft, conversion, fleeing
a police officer

Majority of all cases seen by Laurion are from separated
homes.

Deb Heater: KLA Member - Big Brother/Big Sister Board Member

1980 Census Data - Kosciusko County

2500 children - age 6-17 -- one parent household

These children:

4 times more likely to drop out of school

6 times more likely to come before the courts

8 times as likely to divorce

Warren Central High School

Dee Caldwell - Counselor

Mike Coffman - Principal

ENDNOTES

¹Susan Jacoby, "Emotional Child Abuse: The Invisible Plague," Readers Digest, February 1985, p. 87.

²Marisa Pine, "When Parents Divorce," Young Miss, January-February 1985, p. 47.

³Report from Middle School statistic report and from interview conducted at Middle School.

⁴Interview at Middle School with Sid Ellis the attendance officer.

⁵Pine, p. 46.

⁶Ibid., p. 47.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Interview with elementary principal in Warsaw Community School System.

¹¹Statistical report from Kosciusko County Court House.

¹²Interview with Jerry Laurion.

¹³Interview with Deb Heater.

¹⁴International Youth Council (Bethesda, Maryland: Parents Without Partners, Inc., 1974), p. 2.

¹⁵Correspondance and interviews with Deb Heater - Counselor, and Mike Coffman - Principal from Warren Central High School.

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Without Partners, 1974.

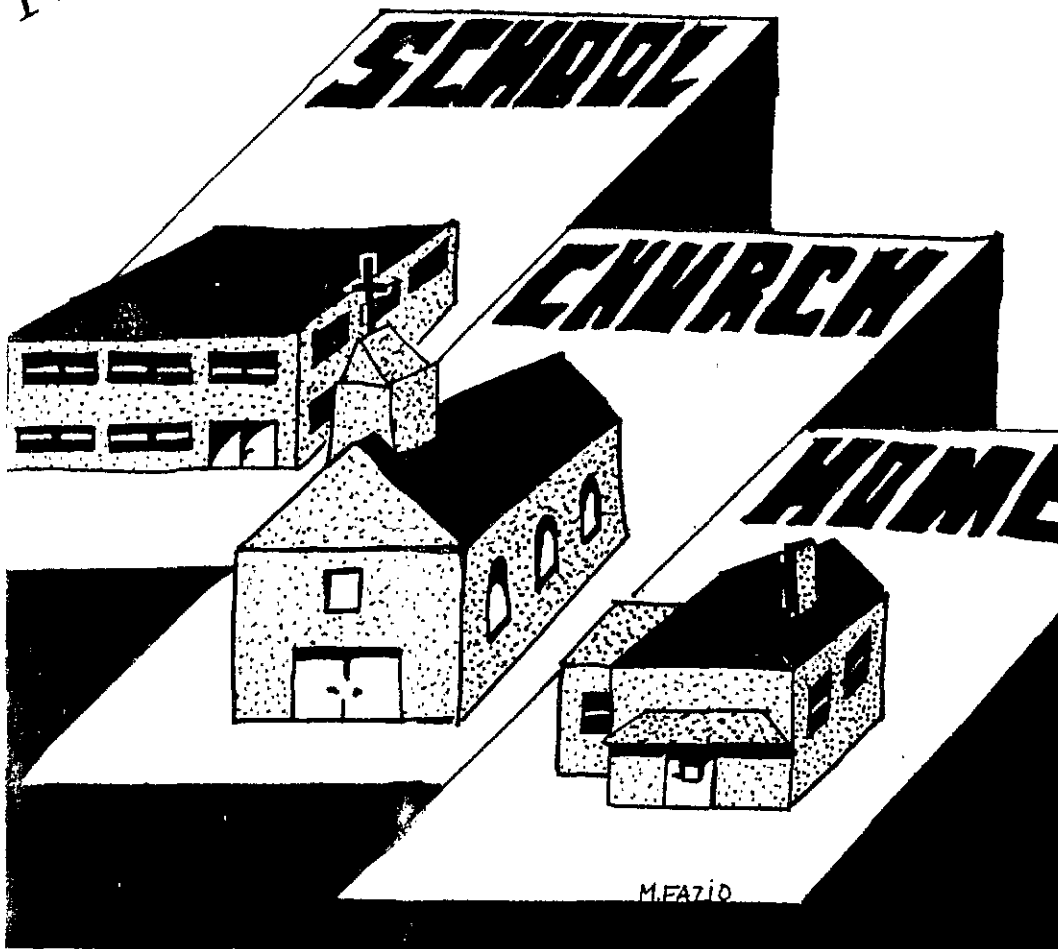
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pp. 46-47, 72.

**WARREN TOWNSHIP
COUNSELING**

PASTORAL

84 - 85

SERVICE



**SPONSORED BY:
SUBURBAN EAST
MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION**

HISTORY

In September of 1980, a unique program was created in the secondary schools of the Metropolitan School District of Warren Township. This program effectively integrated the efforts of the church, the school, and the community to offer a specialized service for junior and senior high school students.

Dr. Donn Kaupke, past Superintendent, initiated this Pastoral Counseling Service by contacting the Suburban East Ministerial Association for their help. With the approval of the local school board and the pastoral group, ten guidelines were adopted to assure the program a successful foundation. The acceptance and trust level of the pastors by the students, the school staff, and the community have created an ongoing program of needed services for today's youth. Founded on the principles of voluntary participation, cooperation, and trust, the Pastoral Counseling Service of Warren Township Schools continues to attract the interest of other school corporations and ministerial groups.

"It seems entirely natural and fitting that three of the strongest spheres of influence on a child's life should come together to assist children when they need it most. Those three spheres--home, church, and school--come together in Warren's unique Pastoral Counseling Program for students. The program, in existence since the Fall of 1980, represents the combined efforts of many people in our community. Its purpose is to provide a voluntary counseling program to students in the Warren Schools. The counselors are the dedicated men and women of the clergy here on the far Eastside. We all owe them a special debt of gratitude for the service they render on behalf of our young people."

Superintendent, MSD Warren Township

"For the students the presence of clergy on a regularly scheduled basis during school days offers an opportunity to speak with someone from outside the school about problems or up-coming decisions, as well as to enlist a perspective that goes beyond the academic or secular culture."

"The faculty and administration benefit from the regular presence of clergy in the school in that they can make referrals that augment the effectiveness of the Guidance and Counseling Department and the Deans' Office. They are also provided the opportunity to elicit outside profession opinion about subject matter and/or problem areas that arise."

"The clergy also gain from this program, to which I can certainly attest from personal experience. Our involvement as voluntary counselors in the school gives us contact with students we might otherwise know only from a Church context or not at all. It also gives us access to young people, their needs, their values, and their hopes for the future, all of which enrich our ministry."

President, Suburban East Ministerial
Association

GUIDELINES

The following guidelines have been adopted by the Board of School Trustees, building principals and the Suburban East Ministerial Association.

1. Members of the Ministerial Association who are serving as counselors, will establish the same time each week for counseling services.
2. The exact time and place for counseling will be planned with the building principal.
3. Student participation is strictly on a voluntary basis.
4. No record should be kept of the counseling sessions.
5. Members of the Ministerial Association who are counseling will be very sensitive in not attempting to convert students to their particular church congregation.
6. Counselors will be careful to work with the student's personal problems and leave school matters that relate directly to school operation, to school people.
7. We realize that there will be some overlap of personal/school related problems with students. We do encourage members of the clergy to discuss with building principals suggestions they might have for improving our school programs.
8. In instances of serious cases which involve a family problem, the counselor is urged to inform the building principal before any contact is made with the student's parents.
9. In the event a counselor cannot make his/her appointment in the building, he/she should make every effort to contact the building principal or the pastoral counseling liaison.
10. The counselors will work in close cooperation with the Principals, Deans, Guidance Personnel, the School Improvement Council, the Dean for Student Services, and the teaching staff.

These guidelines have adequately served for two years and have been adopted for the continued operation of the program.

1984 - 1985
M.S.D. Warren Township
Pastoral Counseling Schedule

WARREN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Monday 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Bill Smith
Tuesday 10:00 - 12:00 p.m.	Charles Simons
Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00 p.m. 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Larry Kleiman Joe Culpepper
Thursday 10:00 - 12:00 p.m.	Wm. Munshower
Friday 10:00 - 12:00 p.m. 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Jim Witty Ken Padgett

CRESTON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Monday 9:00 - 12:00 p.m.	Glen Clarkson
Friday 9:15 - 11:15 a.m.	Mark Jaberg

STONYBROOK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Tuesday 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.	Dennis Charles
Thursday 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.	David Kineman

Alternates: Roger Johnson, Harry Allemang

Steering Committee: Jim Witty, Coordinator
Bill Smith, Warren Central
Glen Clarkson, Creston
Dennis Charles, Stonybrook

Pastoral Liaison: Jim Witty

M.S.D. Warren Township Liaison: Mike Copper

PASTORAL COUNSELING

First Semester
1983-1984

GRADE LEVEL

10 = 5
11 = 22
12 = 7
Grad = 1
Staff = 4
? = 3

Total= 42

TYPE OF REFERRAL

Dean = 8
Counselor = 0
Teacher = 3
Student = 0
Walk-in = 27
Other = 1

REASON FOR CONTACT

Family Concerns=10
Reinforcement = 6
Get Acquainted = 6
Religion = 2
Grief = 2
School = 2
Future = 4
Personal Prob. = 9

DAY

Monday = 7
Tuesday = 2
Wednesday = 7
Thursday = 8
Friday = 8
? = 10

PASTORAL COUNSELING

Second Semester
1982-1983

GRADE LEVEL

10 = 39

11 = 61

12 = 16

Grad = 2

Staff= 21

Total=139

TYPE OF REFERRAL

Dean = 25

Counselor = 0

Teacher = 3

Student = 3

Walk-In = 102

Other = 4

Reason for Contact (general)

Keeping in touch = 33

Family Concerns = 42

Peer Concerns = 16

Religious Questions = 7

Personal Concerns = 35

Pastoral Counseling Contacts
Semester I 1982-83

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Number</u>
Monday	12-2	21	9	1
Wednesday	10-12	21	10	11
Wednesday	12-2	33	11	47
Thursday	10-12	13	12	17
Friday	10-12	7	Grad	2
Friday	12-2	15	Staff	10
Sub		2	Unknown	1
		112		112

Referred By:

Dean	15
Counselor	
Teacher	7
Student	6
Walk-in	78
Other	6
112	

Reason for Contact:

School Problem	1
Runaway	1
Suicide contemplation	1
Suicide of sibling	1
Death of relative	2
Family problems	18
Depression	2
Behavior	3
Nothing indicated	2
Concern for friend	4
Difficulty in dealing with staff child	1
Religion	19
Keeping in touch	24
Boyfriend's problem	4
Parent referral	1
Absenteeism	1
Fear of death	1
Girlfriend problem	2
Drugs	5
Future Plans	3
Job hunting	1
Spiritual help	1
Prayer Concern	1
Social	8
Personal	7
Problem with friend	1
Class presentation	3
Personal Relationship	3
Fear of surgery	1

Review Digest: Oct. '85

Condensed from GLAMOUR

AS I WAS LEAVING my gym one morning, I overheard a mother berating her daughter for refusing to put her face in the water during a toddlers' swim class. "You're such a little coward," she told the sobbing child—who could not have been more than three years old. "It's the same every week. You always make your daddy and me ashamed. Sometimes I can't believe you're really my daughter."

Although my stomach churned



with rage on the child's behalf, I said nothing. After all, I rationalized, the mother would just tell me to mind my own business. But I had no doubt that what I had witnessed was in many ways as bad as a brutal beating. It was emotional child abuse.

"The bruises don't show on the outside, so there are no statistics on how many children are victims," says Dr. Elizabeth Watkins, chief of pediatric primary care at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center in New York City. "But anyone who works with children knows that the problem is widespread."

By SUSAN JACOBY, GLAMOUR (OCTOBER '84)
340 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
PHOTO: PHOENIX DUNN

Emotional Child Abuse:

THE INVISIBLE PLAGUE

Nobody knows the number of those afflicted. But awareness is growing among mental health experts that the youngster deprived of attention and affection may be even more damaged than one who is battered.

SUSAN JACOBY

University of Minnesota psychologist Byron Egeland, who has conducted extensive studies on parenting and early-childhood development, says the effects of emotional child abuse may be at least as devastating as those of physical abuse. Research conducted by Egeland and his colleagues suggests that emotionally abused children suffer an even greater decline in mental and psychological development as they grow older than do physically abused children.

This is because, according to authorities on child development, emotional abuse involves nothing less than the systematic destruction of a child's self-esteem. The key word is *systematic*.

The mother I overheard used words that indicated a sad pattern: "It's the same every week. You always make your daddy and me ashamed. . . I can't believe you're really my daughter." These weren't simply the remarks of a harassed mother having a bad day; they were those of a woman who made a habit of attacking her toddler.

Emotional abusers are prompted not by children's misbehavior, but by their own psychological problems. Whether abusive parents come from low-income or affluent families, they are usually people who received inadequate love and nurturing from their own parents.

Nearly all are unable to see that a child's behavior may not be related to anything the parent has done or failed to do. An abusive parent may feel, for instance, that an infant is crying not as an expression of hunger or fear, but because the baby is "bad" or "out to get me."

Dr. Jay Leifer, a New York psychiatrist and former editor of the newsletter for the Society of Adolescent Psychiatry, refers to the "four Ds" of emotional abuse: deprivation, distancing, depreciation and domination. Abusive parents may use one or all of the four Ds to play out their own psychological conflicts and avoid facing up to the real pressures of child-rearing.

Deprivation and distancing. When five-year-old Sally broke her arm in a playground accident, her kindergarten teacher didn't realize the child was hurt until she found her weeping silently in a corner. At the hospital, where the teacher met Sally's mother, the little girl didn't turn to her mother for comfort. Instead, she went off quietly with a nurse and didn't seem to notice when her mother ignored the nurse's invitation to accompany them. "Rather than put her arms around her child, the first thing the mother did was look for a coffee machine," said the teacher. "I could see why Sally didn't tell me she was hurt. She was accustomed to being ignored."

Psychologically unavailable parents rarely cuddle a crying baby or express much interest in the infant's development. As a result, their babies fail to develop what psychologists call a secure attachment to their parents. When securely attached children need reassurance, they know they can get it from their parents—and, eventually, from other adults who care for them. "A physically abused child will avoid the caretaker for fear of being hit," says psychologist Egeland. "An emotionally abused child does the same thing to avoid the dis-

appointment of not being accepted. "Unavailability is shattering because a child doesn't get any of the usual emotional rewards for curiosity, growth and accomplishment," continues Egeland. "Think of a normal parent's reaction when a child takes a first step: it's a celebration, a reason for praise and excitement. But in a home where emotional unavailability is the standard, the milestone is ignored. If the parent notices at all, it's with irritation. After all, a child who can walk will only demand closer supervision and attention."

Depreciation. In some families, parents "tear up" in deprecating a child, using a steady stream of verbal abuse that discounts the child's achievements and blows out of proportion every sign of misbehavior; in other families, one parent is the active abuser and one is a silent partner. Words like "always" and "never"—implying that a child invariably fails to live up to a parent's expectations—are keys to distinguishing a consistently abusive parent from one who criticizes occasionally in anger or frustration.

Sara, a 26-year-old computer programmer who says she has never enjoyed a satisfying relationship with a man, grew up with a father who constantly undermined her self-esteem. "He had a chant," she recalls, her voice quavering, "that he used to repeat at least a dozen times a day: 'Pimples and fat, pimples and fat, no boy will ever be seen with that.' To this day I find it almost impossible to believe it when a man gives me a compliment. I still hear my father's voice."

In ambitious middle-class families, one of the most common forms of emotional abuse is the denigration of any achievement that falls short of perfection, such as when a child is punished for bringing home a B instead of an A. Jerree Pawl, director of the Infant-Parent Program at San Francisco General Hospital, observes that "perfectionist" parents may display irrational expectations. "They have completely unrealistic ideas about how long an infant or toddler should wait to be toilet-trained, or be expected to be quiet," she notes. "So normal behavior is seen as a deficiency on the part of the child, and a failure on the part of the parent."

On a recent cross-country flight I saw an example of this type of behavior when I sat across the aisle from a young couple traveling with a year-old baby. The cabin service was slower than usual, and the flight attendant had failed to warm up the baby's bottle in time for his feeding.

The baby, predictably, started to cry—and the father refused either to hold him while the mother went to find the stewardess, or to look for the bottle himself. "That kid can't wait five seconds for anything," the father said (apparently oblivious to the loud complaints of adult passengers about the lateness of their dinners). "If you think I'm going to bother the stewardess because that kid is spoiled rotten, you're crazy. There's something really wrong with him."

Domination. Four-year-old Tommy was recovering from a routine tonsillectomy in the children's ward of a hospital when the nurses noticed he was unusually withdrawn.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Am I constantly angry at my child?
- Do I see characteristics in my child that remind me of how much I dislike someone else in my family?
- Do I compare my child unfavorably with other people's children? With brothers and sisters?
- Am I indifferent when someone else praises my child?
- Do I often feel ashamed of my child?

If you answer yes to these questions, you may need professional help. Local mental-health organizations, hospitals (especially those associated with universities) and your child's pediatrician are the best resources for finding an experienced family therapist in your area.

He refused to speak to anyone. When Tommy's pediatrician suggested that his mother discuss her son's behavior with a staff psychologist, she became furious. "I've told him never to talk to anyone—children or adults—if I don't know them," she explained. "I'm not going to spoil his training just because he's in the hospital." Later, the pediatrician learned that Tommy's mother had in fact told the boy he would die if he talked to strangers.

The use of such extreme threats to stifle a child's natural curiosity is a common form of emotional abuse, according to psychologists and pediatricians. "We're talking about the kind of domination in which a parent tries to take control of a child's every action," says Dr. Watkins. "Instead of putting up a real boundary—like a fence to keep a child from running into the street—a parent creates invisible walls. The child is told that terrible things will happen if he explores and violates the parent's orders."

Dr. Lefter notes that all parents try to dominate their children in certain respects—by setting standards of conduct and trying to instill parental

Footnote

values. "But there's a big difference between domination through education and example and domination through cruelty," he says. "The abusive parent gets his or her way by terrifying the child into following his or her wishes."

FOR SOME YOUNG ADULTS, the experience of having been emotionally abused as children has made them determined to become good parents themselves. But the problems of many "second-generation" child abusers don't surface until they already have children of their own.

The best hope in such cases, experts say, is therapy that involves every member of the family. "When a child is being emotionally abused," says Dr. Lefter, "the problem cannot be successfully treated in isolation. Once a parent realizes something is wrong, this can open up the whole matter of how the family works. And other family members can be brought into the therapeutic process."

Looking beyond the immediate family, experts say that emotional child abuse is abetted by the reluctance of outsiders—including friends

READER'S DIGEST

and relatives—to confront abusive parents. "Many children who are remorselessly denigrated by their parents think they deserve it," notes psychologist Paul. "The silence and inactivity of other adults help convince the child that it's true: he really is worthless, evil or a coward."

I asked each of the professionals I interviewed whether I had done the right thing in keeping silent when I overheard the mother calling her child a coward. All felt I should have spoken up and said something like, "Everyone is afraid of some things. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

I asked one psychologist if she thought that a challenge from another adult might not have made the

mother treat her child even more harshly. "That's possible," she replied, "but at least the child would have understood that not every adult agrees with her mother. That's important, because we know sometimes children are able to survive abuse if they find someone—a teacher, an aunt or uncle—who makes them feel valuable and worthwhile in spite of what their parents say."

"People shouldn't mind their own business when a child's life is in danger—and that means the heart and mind as well as the body."

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Caught in Passing

Man to neighbor: "Of course my mechanic is good. If he wasn't, would I keep going back to him every week?"
—Tom Collins, Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Wife to spouse: "I don't want to brag, but here it is February and I've kept every one of my New Year's resolutions. I've kept them in a manila folder in the back of my desk."
—Orson's Current Comedy

In the elevator: "I'm what you might call a negative socialite—I want to be invited but I don't want to go."
—James Dent in Charleston, W. Va., Gazette

At the beauty parlor: "I would never have believed that story about Edna if I hadn't started it myself."
—"The Girls," News Group Chicago

In the pub: "I'm really discouraged financially. It used to be just I.O.U.—now I owe everybody!"
—Philip Lazarus

Tourist at a Caribbean resort: "She shouldn't complain about her sunburn. After all, she basked for it."
—Sidor Goleb, quoted by Bob Herzpath in Chicago Sun-Times

At a party: "Is he indecisive? The only thing he ever takes a stand on is the bathroom scale."
—"Kup's Column" in Chicago Sun-Times

Fashionable woman on a spending spree to friend: "My Jerry's worked hard all his life. I deserve it."
—Herb Caen in San Francisco Chronicle

You're not fat, but neither are you quite thin enough. Here's a weight-loss plan that can make the critical difference, without the perils of crash dieting



Condensed from WOMAN'S DAY
ANN ALLEN

YOU HAVE ONLY five pounds to lose—those stubborn five pounds that tighten your waistband, add slight bulges to your thighs. No one, not even you, thinks you're *fat*. Maybe that's why it's so hard to say no to cheesecake. When you set out to drop five pounds, the first thing you have to fight is ambivalence. Is being a size smaller important enough to find the

spirit to follow a weight-loss plan? The commitment is up to you. But here's a scheme for not only dropping five pounds but also keeping them off. It consists of five principles you should be able to stick with for the rest of your life.

Avoid Fad Diets

Quick-fix diets that promise to banish extra fat can appear so sim-

young Miss. Jan 1st, 1955

when parents

D

IVORCE

By
Marisa
Pine

On a summer morning a few weeks before my sixteenth birthday, I was lounging on the living room sofa, still in my nightgown, when my father walked in. The look on his face was unmistakable—it was an expression of utter misery. My first thought was that someone had died.

"What's wrong?" I asked, quickly sitting up. "What's happened?"

A long moment passed before he answered. "I'm leaving your mother," he said in a dead-flat voice—and for the first time in my life I saw his eyes fill with tears. Not being very courageous, I turned my head away. By evening, he had packed his bags and moved to a Holiday Inn.

These days, there is nothing unusual about such a scene. We've seen it in the movies and on TV a thousand times. And in real life, divorce is so commonplace that in the 1980s, 40 to 50 percent of all children under age 18 will live with only one parent, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. But numbers aside, when it's your own folks who are leaving one another, the pain

can be immeasurable—it doesn't matter whether everyone else's parents are divorcing as well.

In the Hollywood version of divorce, the children usually cry their hearts out or at least act bewildered. In my case, I took pride in playing it cool. I did not sob, run to a girlfriend for comfort, or beg my parents for explanations. I considered myself an adult: I knew that my parents fought often and bitterly, and that not every story has a happy ending. When relatives offered sympathy, I shrugged my shoulders. I didn't want anyone's pity.

The truth, though, came out in a small green diary, a diary that, ironically, I had bought out of summer boredom two days before my father's departure. The first eu-

try describes the Italian food we had for dinner and the mild crush I had on a girl friend's brother. The second entry—and the following 363—are a record of the confusion and anxiety I felt after my parents' break-up.

Reading the diary now, I see that I was wise enough to know my life was changing drastically and irreversibly, but foolish enough to think that I had to grapple with all of the issues alone. I turned up my nose at the thought of "expert" advice, support groups, and the like. Now I realize that, while no two situations are alike, there's much to be gained from listening to mental health professionals and, even more, to other teens whose folks are divorced. There are a surprising number of common emotions and problems.

For example, your immediate reaction is likely to be a mixture of anger, guilt, disbelief, and deep hurt. Explaining these feelings, Donna Cuneo, the Columbus, Ohio-based advisor to International Youth Council (a network of support groups for teens in single-parent homes; see sidebar), says first that anger—that your parents can't make a go of their marriage—is a

asked my mother if it was my fault," one girl told me, "and she was surprised I could even think that. I felt better after she assured me the problems were between her and Dad."

Experts say that if you feel guilty about your parents' divorce, you should understand that even if you did act up, your teenage rebelliousness could not break up a good, strong marriage between two adults. Your mom and dad may have argued about *you*—but those arguments only indicate that they weren't able to communicate well with *each other*.

While some girls feel anger and guilt, others are unable to accept that their parents' divorce is for real. They fantasize about their parents reuniting and may even deny that anything has happened. Nancy, 17, from Palisades Park, New Jersey, was not yet a teen when her parents divorced, and she says she couldn't face that truth for nearly a year. "I made my mom swear not to tell anyone what had happened. I remember the day my dad came to get his clothes. My neighbor's father asked me: 'Where is your dad going with all those clothes?' I said, 'He's going to

How to deal with the disbelief, the guilt, the anger, and the hurt

normal reaction. For a girl who is "just starting to see boys in a new way," she explains, the failure of her parents' marriage can threaten her ability to trust and her confidence about forming her own relationships.

"Many girls also feel they're the cause of their parents' splitting up," Ms. Cuneo continues, especially if their attempts at independence have resulted in a lot of arguing at home (about anything from homework and chores to friendships and curfews to more critical issues). Although I didn't feel guilt, I know that my older sister, who was often the center of domestic controversy, did. And several teens I spoke with admitted they believed their behavior had caused their parents to argue. "I finally

the cleaner's.' Then he said, 'How come he's never home?' I said, 'He works odd hours.' My close friends knew what was going on, but I forbade them to talk about it."

Nancy explains that, at the time of the divorce, she was attending a parochial school where there were no other kids from broken homes. These days she goes to a public high school, and the fact that she's not the only one with divorced parents helps a little. She also feels that "opening up, rather than keeping it in, helps you heal faster. It helps to get involved in a support group like International Youth Council and compare experiences with other people."

Once you are able to accept the divorce as

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Custody: Sorting It Out

Custody is a highly charged emotional issue, one that can make you feel confused, rejected, caught in the middle. In the vast majority of divorce settlements, *sole custody* is awarded to the mother. This means she is legally responsible for all decisions concerning you and that you will live with her, although your father will probably have visitation rights. (In some cases the father is awarded sole custody, but this is rare, especially for girls; it occurs when the mother is unable to take on the responsibility.)

Joint custody arrangements, however, are becoming increasingly common. *Joint legal custody* means that although you live with just one parent, both parents are responsible for decisions concerning your welfare. *Joint physical custody* means that you commute between your parents' homes: You may spend six months with your father and six with your mother; summers with your father and the school year with your mother (or vice versa); or alternate week by week. In this arrangement, one parent is legally responsible. In a *joint legal and physical custody* agreement, your parents are jointly responsible for all major decisions, and you live with both of them, commuting back and forth.

There are advantages and disadvantages to every arrangement. With *joint physical custody*, for example, you're able to spend lots of time with each parent but must move back and forth between two addresses and adapt to two households.

Dr. Robert Weiss is one expert who advocates joint legal custody but not necessarily joint physical custody. "For teenagers, friendships outside the family are extremely important," he explains; so, if commuting between parents means having to switch schools and/or communities and leaving special activities and friendships for periods of time, it can be a tremendous burden.

Of course, every situation is unique, and you and your parents will have to decide what will work best for *you*. Here are some pointers.

1. Be as open as possible. Let your parents know what's on your mind—tactfully—and ask what's on theirs. For instance, if you strongly want a joint custody arrangement but fear your mother will be hurt, you might say to her, "Mom, I love you a great deal, but I

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WHEN PARENTS DIVORCE

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as an insulting form of bribery: The more goods he gave me, the less good I felt about him. I realize now that he sincerely loved me and was trying hard to show it, but at the time I felt he was attempting to "pay me off."

"Parents are often insecure and afraid they'll lose a child's affection," Ms. Cuneo explains. "A lot of them try buying loyalty with gifts and outings. Your father may take you out for the weekend and spend a lot of money on you, while your mother screams about the clothes lying on the floor and disciplines you. That way, Dad comes off smelling like a rose." But, she emphasizes, just as parents shouldn't bad-mouth one another, you should avoid playing one parent against the other.

Moreover, if you commute between parents in a joint-custody arrangement, it's unwise to make verbal comparisons. Granted, it's tough if your father sets an earlier curfew than your mother or if one parent is pickier about neatness. But if you say, "At Mom's house, I get to stay out till 1 A.M." or "Dad doesn't care if I leave my sneakers in the hall" or "At Dad's, we get to eat out," you're apt to cause a blow-up. It's a far better strategy to talk calmly to your parents about the *issue* of curfews or neatness or meals without mentioning the other parent.

All of these changes in your home life and in your interactions with your parents require a big adjustment, and as if that weren't enough, your social life may be affected, as well. As Dr. Weiss points out, some girls may feel they need to "latch on to a boy" for security. Others may be turned off to dating. Given that all teen girls feel some anxiety about boys, if your parents have recently split, you're likely to be all the more apprehensive.

For my own part, I avoided dating: I feared that the minute I gave my heart to a boy, he'd be sure to break it. Instead, I immersed myself in homework, my job at the Dairy Queen, the ski club, the school paper, household chores, 1,000-page Russian novels—anything that would make me too busy for romance.

Meantime, my mother was becoming the belle of the ball. A beautiful woman, she'd often go on five (count 'em, *five*) dates in one week, and then say, "Isn't it funny that I'm dating and you're not?"

Debbie says that she, too, has some

fear of rejection when it comes to dating, but that she's learned to accept her mother's social life. "At first, whenever a man would come to pick up Mom, we kids would have a really negative attitude. But now she's dating someone whom I really like. He tries to include us."

Debbie has also adjusted to her father's new wife, although it wasn't easy. "I used to resent her," she says. "I got very upset and cried a lot when I found out they were getting married. Then I realized there was nothing I could do about it. We've finally become friends. We've come a long way."

Sometimes, however, a parent's remarriage can put a great strain on your relationships. The parent who's still single may become resentful, while the parent who has a new spouse may seem to have less time for you or may move away.

Amy, 17, of New Brunswick, New Jersey, says that her father's second marriage caused a major rift. Amy and her sisters live with their mother, but the girls were used to seeing their dad twice a week.

"The night my father told me about the divorce, I put a note on the seat of his car saying good-bye," Amy recalls. "When he saw the note, he explained that he wasn't leaving us kids—just my mom."

But a year-and-a-half later, he married again, and "first the Wednesday visits stopped, then the Sunday visits," Amy remembers. These days, her two sisters never see or talk to their father. Amy makes the effort to visit even though she feels she's treated badly by her stepmother. "The way I think of it," she explains, "no matter

what he did, he's still my father." Her advice to other girls in this situation is, "Try to understand where your parent is coming from, and don't put the blame anywhere."

Ms. Cuneo agrees that, no matter what the circumstances, it's best to still try to communicate. "Keep spending time with your parents. Get them to listen to you," she advises.

In the long run, there *are* things to be gained from your parents' divorce. Nancy says she gets along better with both of her parents; likewise, I became better friends with my mom and dad. Not overnight, mind you, but over the course of years of arguing, questioning, and sorting out the feelings that come up in the aftermath of a crisis.

Many girls also learn from their parents' mistakes, Ms. Cuneo reports. "They want to be sure their own marriages will be strong, so they do a lot of thinking about what went wrong."

Of course, no one would claim that a divorce is an event to rejoice at. It's best to give yourself permission to feel bad about it, and to air your feelings as much as you can. Talk to your friends, your parents, and other adults, anyone who's a good—and trustworthy—listener. "I even talked to my cat," says Debbie. "It helped just to hear myself talk. Realize that life goes on," she adds. "The pain doesn't last forever."

What Debbie says is accurate. In the ten years since my father left the house on that summer day, both of my parents have remarried, happily. We all faced a great many adjustments, and we all are different people for the experience. To be honest, I would not want to relive any of it. And yet, looking back, I have very few regrets. □

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really need my dad, too." Remember, both of your parents are feeling vulnerable at this time.

2. Talk over the pros and cons of various arrangements. If your folks are on speaking terms, get the whole family together for a discussion; otherwise, discuss your options with them separately.

3. If one of your parents states that she or he *doesn't* want custody and you feel hurt and rejected, ask for an explanation. It may turn out that your father loves you very much but fears he wouldn't be able to spend much time with you, or that your mother would love to have custody but can't handle it emotionally. This is a painful situation, but having some answers can help.

4. If you feel you're caught in a power struggle between your parents, you have a right to object. You might say to them: "I understand there are bad feelings between you, but I need to know that you really care about what's best for *me*."
5. Keep in mind that you may have to be flexible. Your needs may change, and one or both parents may change jobs, remarry, or move, any of which can affect custody arrangements.
6. If the going gets very tough, seek help from a professional counselor or support group. For information on International Youth Council (a network of support groups for teens in single-parent homes and an offshoot of Parents Without Partners), call 800-638-8078 toll-free. Or call your local branch of Parents Without Partners (listed in the phone directory). □