

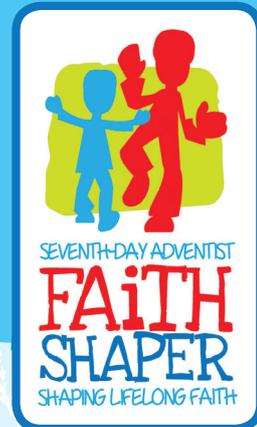
The faith shaper guide to

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Shaping Lifelong Faith Through: **Authentic Relationships**
children.adventist.org.au/faith-shaper



7 Essential Faith Experiences



For Home,
Church and School

- S** Service and Mission
- H** Homes Empowered
- A** Authentic Relationships
- P** Participation
- I** Intergenerational Connections
- N** Noteworthy Memory Events
- G** God Encounters

children.adventist.org.au/faith-shaper

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord
and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18, NIV)



AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to these notes on Authentic Relationships. One of the key foundational experiences for both healthy development and long-life faith is warmth and caring. Attachment and nurturing is essential. We do our best as parents to be good role models, but we also need to surround children with quality people from all generations – leaders, mentors, grandparents, and other young people – in as many settings as possible.

May you find some ideas in this booklet that will equip you to ensure a circle of authentic relationships around your child. I pray that they will receive the love and support that they desperately need.

Blessings

The Discipleship Ministry Team

South Pacific Division Seventh-day Adventist Church

“If you want to pass on a legacy to the next generation, it has to be transferred relationally.”

“One of the most powerful things a parent can do is learn to communicate in a style that values the relationship.”

Reggie Joiner, Carey Nieuwhof. *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*, p.104, 107



AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Julie Weslake

Biblical Mandate

“Encourage one another and build each other up.”

1Thessalonians 5:11

“For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers . . .” 1 Corinthians. 4:15

Authentic

The adjective authentic describes something that is real or genuine and not counterfeit - Something reliable, based on fact, and believable.

Family Relationships

- Everyone needs someone who can offer support and guidance and feedback
- Someone to give affection and love
- Someone to help them grow spiritually
- Someone to nurture beliefs, answer questions and assure them that they are valuable

“We think sometimes that poverty is only being homeless.

The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for, is the greatest poverty. We must start in our homes to remedy this kind of poverty.”

Mother Teresa

The relationships that the child experiences in the home are the foundational factors for faith development and resiliency.

However relationships in the home are being threatened and the home is in danger of no longer being a haven of protection or nurture.

- The challenge of consumerism v family time
- The challenge of competition v cooperation
- The challenge of individualism v community
- The challenge of technology

“Children need conversations more than connections.”

Search Institute

From research the Search Institute has identified significant, assets or key qualities for healthy development. These include:

Nurturing Relationships, Positive communication, Affection, Emotional openness, Support for sparks.

Attachment Theory

This is central to the emotional growth of the child and linked to the social development of empathy and trust.

“It is not just inheritance that determines human development. While genes determine much of how neurons link up with each other, experiences that activate genes also influences this linkage process. How we treat children changes who they are and how they develop. “

Seigel and Hartzell (2004) , Vivienne Mountain, *Children and the Church* p.56

Strong Parental Attachment:

- Aids healthy development
- Buffers children from tragedy
- Less drug and alcohol problems
- Less suicide
- Less violent behaviour
- Less early sexual activity
- Less “tough” attitudes brought on by peer betrayals, shunning mocking and bullying.

Gordon Neufeld, Gabor Mate, *Hold On To Your Kids*

“Mums and Dads need to see their parental role as a marathon, recognizing that building a relationship in which their child trusts them is even more important than whether they can trust their child.” Chap Clark, *Hurt*.

“The relationship between child and parent is sacred. Faced with the challenge of the peer culture, we need to keep our children’s attachments to us strong and to make these attachments last for as long as our children need to be parented.”

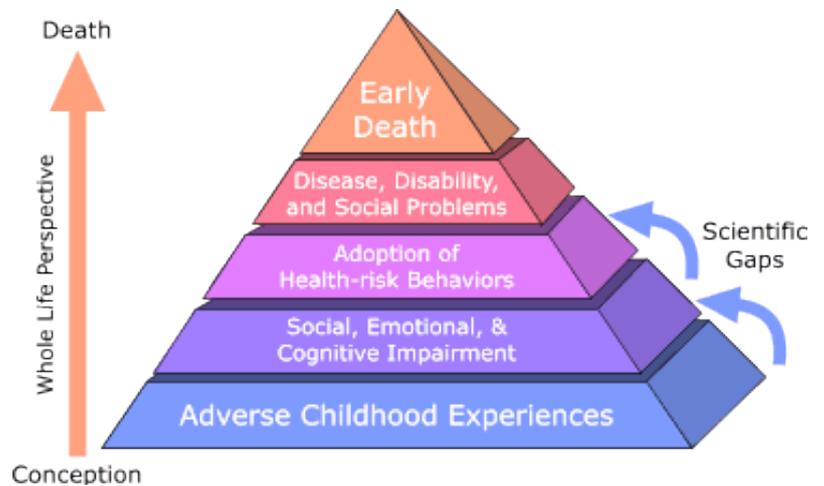
p196 Gordon Neufeld, Gabor Mate Hold On To Your Kids

ACE Study – Adverse Childhood Experiences

The ACE Study - 17,000 adults studied over 10 years demonstrated the broad and profound long-term impact of childhood experiences on adult:

- Mental health, Disease, Obesity, Risk factors, Addiction.

Major diseases in adulthood are determined in childhood, not by disease but by the number of Adverse Experiences the adult had in childhood. Basic causes of addiction are to be found in our personal histories. Sustained stress impacts brain and body.

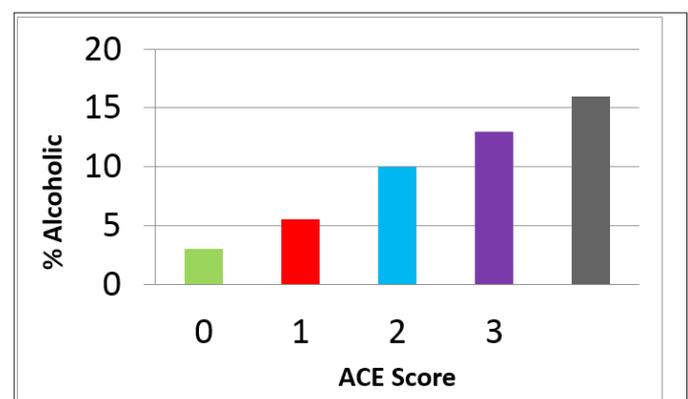


When prolonged stress occurs during infancy and childhood, the stress hormone cortisol is released throughout the young brain and body. These stress hormones compromise normal brain development and the immature immune and nervous systems

The ACE Study looked at three category’s of adverse experience:

1. Childhood Abuse, which included emotional , physical, and sexual abuse
2. Neglect, including both physical and emotional neglect
3. Family dysfunction, mother or stepmother being battered, parental separation/divorce or had a member of the household go to prison, chronically depressed, mentally ill.

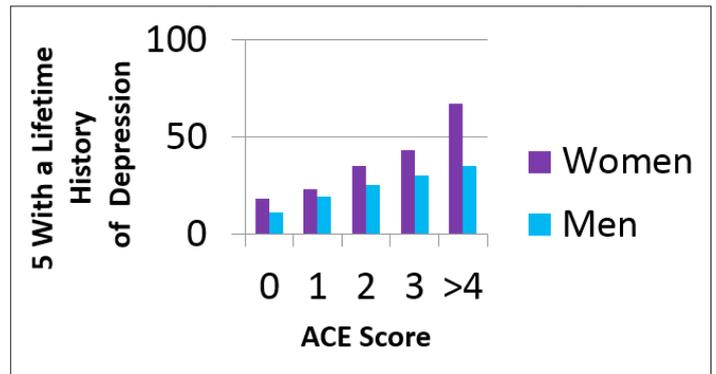
Childhood Experiences and Adult Alcoholism



Health Risks

- Cardiovascular, Cancer, High blood pressure, Stroke, Diabetes, Weight gain, Exhaustion, Reduced growth hormone, Compromised immune function, Bone loss

Childhood Experiences and Chronic Depression



Fight For Their hearts

- Communicate in a way that gives the relationship value.
- Don't get wound up when your authority gets challenged – we may win, but lose our kids hearts.

“If you want to pass on a legacy to the next generation, it has to be transferred relationally.”

Reggie Joiner, *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*

Give Unconditional Love

Make sure the child knows that they are special, wanted, significant, missed, and enjoyed.

- The warm greeting when you pick them up from school
- The twinkle in your eye and warmth in your voice

“Many adults in counseling still grieve the lack of warmth in their childhood.”

Gordon Neufeld, *Gabor Mate -Hold On To Your Kids*

Love in Five Languages - Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell

1. Physical touch
2. Words of affirmation
3. Quality time
4. Gifts
5. Acts of Service

Fill the Emotional Love Tank: Children's behavior gets worse when his love tank is low. They can be asking “do you still love me?”

- Think! What does my child need right now?
- NOT What can I do to correct his behavior?

If love tank is full ask:

1. Is this a physical problem?
2. Does my child feel sorry for what they have done?

Five Ways to Control Behaviour

1. Making requests
2. Issuing commands
3. Gentle physical redirection – swoop and scoop
4. Behaviour modification
 - positive reinforcement,
 - negative reinforcement
 - punishment; consequence
5. Love before and after

Faith Conversations

- Search Institute found that conversations about God with one's mother at ages 5-12 impacted faith maturity.
- Talking with ones father about faith ages 13-15 was a powerful impact.
- Interactions need to be non-threatening

“Relationships with parents that are felt to be close, warm and affirming are associated with higher religious transmission than are relationships perceived as cold, distant or authoritarian – regardless of the level of parental piety.”

Vern L. Bengtson, *Families and Faith*

“If family relationships are guided by the values of love, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation – these are the values of Jesus and the people who follow him – then those children will grow to be people who love God and love others more than themselves.”

Ivy Beckwith, *Formational Children's Ministry*

- You need to BE with your kids – physically, emotionally
- Develop conversation rituals like mealtime
- Driving and using teachable, incidental moments
- Bedtime, family worship

Encourage Conversations/ask questions/listen

Three key questions to ask:

1. What? Talk about what happened

2. So What? Reflect and interpret- What impact did it have?
3. Now What? Get personal to transform thinking and actions.

Thomas Groome, Peter Benson, Eugene Roehlkepartin – *Beyond Leaf Raking: Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn.*

Family Meals

1. Eating at least one meal a day together not only improved physical health but also emotional and mental health.
 - Less likely to smoke, use drugs or alcohol
 - More likely to perform better at school
 - Less likely to get pregnant as a teenager
 - Less likely to develop weight problems

2. Family Meals provide:

- Opportunities to practice social skills and table manners
- Improved family communication
- A greater sense of community and family values
- Stronger family traditions.

Parrott, L., Parrott, L. *The Hour that Matters Most, 2011*

Intergenerational Community

Search Institute identified Connecting to Community as significant developmental assets.

- Neighborhood cohesion – neighbors look out for each other
- Relationships with others – feel close to teachers, coaches and others
- Supportive resources – have people and places in their community they can turn to for help.

“A time will come when you and your children will need another adult in their lives beside you.”

Reggie Joiner, Carey Nieuwhof. *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity* p62

“Children need more than just a family that gives them unconditional acceptance and love; they need a tribe that gives them a sense of belonging and significance.”

Reggie Joiner, Carey Nieuwhof. *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity* p67

“The goal is for you to pursue strategic relationships so another voice will be speaking into your son’s or daughter’s life, saying the kinds of things you would try and say as a parent.”

Reggie Joiner, *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*, p.72



Big Verse:

"Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 6:7-9



1. When they first wake up:

How do you greet your child when they first wake up or as they are getting ready for the day?

- **Remember to say** "I love you and I'm glad that you are my son/daughter!" Go beyond the routine of just "Good Morning".
- **Compliment:** Praise is the act of expressing approval, admiration or complimenting your child. Doing this in the morning not only helps your child start out the day feeling positive and confident, it also provides them with the reassurance that you as a parent are proud of them and love them.



2. When they leave in the morning:

How do you leave your child in the morning? If you have only one smile in you, give it to the people you love.

- Speaking "life" into your child through "**Words of Encouragement.**" The word "encourage" means "to make courageous." When you speak words of encouragement you are giving your child that extra energy—extra courage—to take into the day.
- **Affection:** do you offer any kind of affection? A hug, high-five, kiss on the cheek, hand on their shoulder.



3. When they are gone during the day:

How do you connect with your child when they are gone during the day? Do you put notes in their lunch box, pocket or school bag for them to find. It is important to let your child know that you love and are thinking about them even when you are not there.



4. When they arrive home:

How do you greet your child when they arrive home? Whenever your child comes home greet them with the "big 4" affection, excitement, appreciation and empathy. This says to your child they are more important to you than anything else you might be doing when they walk in the door.



5. When they go to bed:

How do you say goodnight to your child right before they go to bed?

- **Gratitude & Appreciation:** By noticing and expressing what you value about your child you not only build their confidence but when you appreciate something you are putting extra value into it. The key is to notice and thank your child for something specific.
- **Prayer:** Should be the final words your child hears from you.

A meaningful "good night" can allow your child to fall asleep peacefully. It also reinforces the fact that you love, appreciate and care for them no matter what has happened during the day.

Mentors

5:1 ratio. Many parents include a web of at least 5 significant adults around each child.

“Through these relationships your kids are able to spend time with adults who are further along in their spiritual journey.”

- Be intentional
- Be explicit
- Develop a ritual
- Send your kids to work with friends
- Ask for experiences not gifts
- Exchange prayer requests

Powell and Clarke, *Sticky Faith*. Chapter 5

Intergenerational Relationships

- A church in which teenagers had at least one adult from church make a significant time investment in their lives were more likely to keep attending church.
- An even higher percentage keep attending church if they had 5 or more adults investing time in them. (p.12)
- Provide leaders who are genuinely care, are interested in nurturing children and model God's grace.
- Ensure all adults at church build relationships, welcome children, 'know their names, support, affirm, acknowledge, guide and include' (John Roberto p.9)
- Children and youth need to be able to count on adults for support, guidance and modelling. (Scales, p.9)
- The Influence of adult-youth relationships continues into the college years. (John Roberto p.11) Search Institute, 2007, *Grading Grownups. Generations Together*

How?

- Be trustworthy
- Small acts of attentiveness and interest. “I'm so glad that you are here.”
- Listening to their joys and disappointments.
- Asking questions and giving guidance.
- This is long term commitment.
- Ensure teenagers serve and build relationships with younger children.

“The students who had served in middle school or children's ministry while they were in high school seemed to have stickier faith in college.”

Powell, Griffin and Crawford, p.11, *Generations Together*

Grandparents:

- My grandmother/grandfather prays for me. She helps me go to the Lord. I have learnt to pray from my grandmother.
- They pass down family stories and traditions. They tell stories about how their faith in God has been so important to their family history. My grandfather talks about the Bible.
- They share unhurried time, attention and love.

Holly Allen, *Nurturing Children's Spirituality*, Chapter 16 - *God Across the Generations*

Prosocial Places/Peer Connections

- Children need to have environments where they can connect and build relationships with other children.

“Children who are rejected by their peers or do not build friendships among church peers, usually drop out as soon as they have that choice.”

Scottie May et al *Children Matter* p.145

Safe Environments

- Ensure that the children at your church are safe from all forms of abuse – physical, sexual, emotional
- Implement Child Protection policies www.safeplaceservices.org.au

Discussion

- Do you know the names of the children in your congregation?
- Do you think that children are loved and welcomed?
- How are you empowering families to build relationships.



WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO FAMILY MEAL TIMES?

Neil Marks

Whatever happened to the 1950's style, sit-down-at-the-dinner-table-meal?

This is the question posed by Les and Leslie Parrott PhD, in their excellent 2011 book, *The Hour that Matters Most: the surprising power of the family meal*.

Unfortunately it was the 1950's decade itself that began the demise of the family dinner-time ritual, for it was in those years that the McDonald brothers first opened a food outlet in Southern California that enabled people to drive in off the highway and buy food on the go, and it was also the decade that saw the advent of television and the first TV dinners. In one generation the meaning of the family meal was lost in the US, according to Eric Schlosser in his 2002 international best seller, *Fast Food Nation*, as dinners at home decreased by an amazing 33% between the late 1960's and the early 2000's.

Many meals today, not only in the US but around the world have become like fast food pit stops or food courts where people grab a bite to eat and then up and go. Reclaiming the family meal and the dinner-time ritual is what this article is all about.

Surprising power of family meal times:

Research has unearthed some surprising findings when it comes to the power of the family dinner hour, for numerous studies have shown that kids are less likely to smoke, drink, do drugs, get depressed, develop eating disorders or become overweight if they eat often together as a family. They are also more likely to eat their vegetables, have better table etiquette, improve their vocabulary, do well in school, delay having sex and feel that their parents love them.

In a Harvard study of 65 children over an 8 year period it was found that eating together around the dinner table meant that children consumed more fruit and vegetables, consumed fewer fried foods and soft drinks, and had higher intakes of such nutrients as, fibre, calcium, iron, folic acid, and other vitamins.

Research from both nutritionists and family life professionals shows families who eat together more than four times a week, reap the following benefits –

- More nutritious meals and knowledge of basic cooking skills
- Opportunities to practice social skills and table manners
- Improved family communication
- A greater sense of community and family values
- Stronger family traditions
- And for children who eat regularly at home the research showed they were
- Less likely to smoke, use drugs or alcohol
- More likely to perform better at school
- Less likely to become pregnant as a teenager
- Less likely to develop weight problems

The family meal however, is about more than food or even the conversation!

Making your home the best place on earth for your kids:

In the largest study ever conducted on family life, a University of Alabama professor was determined to find out what healthy families were doing right. Dr Nick Stinnett began his study in 1974, involved over 14,000 families and continued his study for over 25 years. The families involved were ethnically diverse, came from all over the United States and from 24 countries around the world.

The study found that even the healthiest of families had their setbacks, chronic illnesses and all the stresses and strains of daily life. In spite of the trials of life, Dr Stinnett found that healthy families made their homes a positive place to live, where the family members could count on each other for support, love, and loyalty. They united and pulled together to meet challenges and solve problems, they had a deep sense of belonging but encouraged each other's uniqueness and potential.

Dr Stinnett found six qualities that characterised healthy families:

1. Commitment: where members of strong families were dedicated to promoting the

- welfare and happiness of each other and where they prized their family relationships.
2. **Appreciation and Affection:** where family members were thankful for each other and didn't take their special relationship for granted.
 3. **Positive Communication:** Members of strong families spent a lot of time talking freely with each other, always seeking to understand or be understood.
 4. **Time Together:** Healthy families spent generous amounts of time with one another creating memories and building bonds.
 5. **Spiritual Well-being:** Strong families had a sense of a greater good that gave them strength and purpose as a unit, irrespective of whether they attended religious services or not.
 6. **The Ability to Cope with Stress in a Crisis:** Members of strong families were not fragmented by tension or trouble. They used such experiences to learn and grow.

According to Les and Leslie Parrott, who are both marriage counsellors with PhD's, countless studies have shown that if parents had only one practical option available to them to develop these six qualities, their best choice would be to establish a regular family meal time. But, how do we do this?

Recovering the lost art of eating together.

Eating together as a family has the potential to be one of the most beneficial activities that a household can engage in, but if your place is like many, the family meal may not always be the positive experience you hope it to be.

Meal times have become harder to arrange with the pace and structuring of modern life as many other pressures compete for everyone's time and attention. How can we then reclaim the family meal time so that it generates an atmosphere of warmth and closeness and fun?

- Keys to making mealtime memorable:
- Create 'buy in' by sometimes letting the children help choose what to have for dinner, prepare part of the meal and set the table.
- Set some easy to keep rules around the table such as: we wash our hands before coming to the table, we take our dirty dishes to the sink, whoever sets the table gets to choose where to sit, we don't talk with food in our mouths, we ask before we get up from the table, there are no 'put downs' allowed, we bring the food up to our mouth rather than our mouth down to the food, we don't slurp anything, we don't reach for an item if it is not in front of us but rather ask for it to be passed, we don't start until everyone is seated etc.

- Turn off the TV and ban electronic devices from the table
- Ban topics of conversation that lead to conflict at the table
- Learn the art of effective communication by employing such techniques as: active listening, clarifying and reflecting back to - help promote understanding
- Learn to really empathize with your children so you can be more attuned to their world
- Listen with 'the third ear' to understand the message behind your children's words and pick up on the nuggets of emotion they share
- Enjoy more laughter at the dinner table by maybe bringing the occasional joke and celebrating all sorts of milestone achievements or events
- Foster the encouraging and complementing of one another so children learn to be glad for the successes of others and not sad for themselves,
- Create opportunities or activities around the table for expressions of gratitude and the counting of blessings,
- Try a, 'You-are-special-plate' for those times when a family member is to be honoured for reaching a milestone or achievement,
- Begin the meal by family members taking turns to say grace and include praying for each other and also remembering the cook,
- Share the 'highs' and the 'lows' of each person's day or use discussion starters such as tins of 'talk triggers' or 'TableTalk'
- Have occasions where each member is asked to say something positive about the meal
- Have certain times when candles are on the table, the special dinner set is used, a special menu is prepared, a favourite CD is played in the background, some flowers on the table etc.

Some Hot Tips: from www.theparentingplace.com

Avoid:

- Using every meal to focus on manners
- Hijacking what the children are sharing to growl or correct them
- Being negative about the food – children pick up your labels and adopt them
- Serving too much food on the plate – Start with smaller servings and allow them to ask for more if still hungry

Include:

- An opportunity for children to make selections from serving bowls on the table
- Allow children to have a few items they do not have to eat – "You are allowed to leave one food that you do not want to eat today"

- Some involvement with the meal – helping with the shopping, finding a recipe, picking some herbs or veges from the garden, chopping or mixing, serving the food, pouring the drinks, setting the table, clearing the table etc.

Reclaiming the family meal hour could be one of the most important things you ever do for the sake of your children, as the research clearly shows that it is one of the most powerful ways to pass on the values, the traditions and the beliefs of the family.

Once again let us finish with some wisdom from Solomon when it comes to the family meal table.

Better a meal of vegetables where there is love, than a fattened calf with hatred.

Proverbs 15:17 NIV

Better a dry crust eaten in peace than a house filled with feasting – and conflict.

Proverbs 17:1 NLT

Neil Marks

Health Director and School Chaplain

Seventh-day Adventist Church South Queensland

Sources:

- Parrot L. PhD, & Parrot L. PhD., 2011, The Hour that Matters Most: the amazing power of the family meal, Tyndale House Publishers, USA
- Family Meal Times, www.theparentingplace.com

Encouraging Meaningful Discussions and Conversations

Jolene Roehlkepartain

(Vibrant Faith Ministries, Faith Formation Learning Exchange.net)

No matter how we do faith formation, we usually have discussions and conversations. Yes, it's important to get people talking, but how do you get them talking in ways that really matter and make a difference?

“Questions and questioning activities are likely the key pedagogy to encouraging learners in critical reflection, thought,” writes Thomas Groome in *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*. “Encourage learners to reflect on their life in the world. In a sense, having people ‘look at’ their world and bring it to ‘expression’ already entails substantive reflection; one cannot express experience without reflecting on it.”

The Three Key Questions to Ask

Building on the work of Thomas Groome, Peter Benson and Eugene Roehlkepartain developed the three key questions of reflection in their book *Beyond Leaf Raking: Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn*. These incorporate the elements of observation, meaning, and application. These three questions include:

Question 1: What?—Talk about what happened. If you're reflecting on a service project, talk about the service that was done. If you read or studied something, talk about that. “The important task,” Groome writes “is to elicit a personal statement on present action rather than a statement of theoria based on what ‘they say.’”

Question 2: So What?—Once people have identified and talked about their experience, they can begin to reflect on it and interpret it. What impact did this reading have on me? What difference did it make that I read aloud to young children in my volunteer project? Why did we do this? We can talk about why we did what we did and what our hopes were in doing this.

Question 3: Now What?—This question, if you don't lead it well, can often turn into generalities, such as “people should...” and “people need to realize.” It's tempting to focus on what others can do or think, rather than making it personal. Yet, by encouraging people to think about this question personally often can help to transform their thinking and their actions. Even if people are disappointed or frustrated with what happened, you can ask, “What are you going to do differently now that you've had this experience?”

Principles for Asking Questions

Even when we ask the right questions, we may miss important questions (and opportunities for questions) if we ignore some key principles. Barbara Varenhorst, a pioneer in peer counseling and peer ministry developed six principles with meaningful discussions.

Principle 1: Have a clear purpose for the discussion—Instead of merely thinking of some questions to ask, be clear about why you're having the discussion in the first place. Don't lead people with the answers you want them to find. Encourage them to grapple with questions that matter. For example, do you want people to re-examine their beliefs and thinking? Do you want the discussion to build community among the people present? Do you want people to take action? Have a clear purpose for the discussion.

Principle 2: Make the discussion meaningful and relevant—How does the discussion apply to people's lives? How can they find meaning in it? How can the conversation encourage people to talk honestly and openly while being respected and heard?

Principle 3: Use specific, understandable questions—The most important rule here is to ask one specific question at a time. Give people time to think before they answer, and work on making questions distinct and understandable.

Principle 4: Respond the comments respectfully and seriously—Create a safe environment by setting boundaries about what's acceptable for responses and what's not. Laughter is acceptable if a comment is meant to be funny. Laughter is unacceptable if people are laughing at a person who clearly becomes uncomfortable and shuts down. You want to create a culture of caring so that people can feel vulnerable to share their deepest thoughts, if they choose to do so.

Principle 5: Encourage people to respond to each other—You don't want to have the dialogue to be between the leader and the participants only. You want to encourage participants to respond to each other, to create a richer dialogue. The role of the leader is to stimulate the conversation and to ensure the safety and culture of the conversation so that many people can participate.

Principle 6: Pace the discussion—Find ways to have discussions so that people have adequate time to talk but don't become too bored or feel too rushed. Take into account the attention span of the people in your group. The younger the person, the shorter his or her attention span. It often helps to create an activity than a discussion then another activity and then another discussion rather than doing one long activity and ending with long discussion.

Different Types of Helpful Questions

Thomas Groome contends there are three different types of questions that can be useful in discussions. These three types of questions encourage meaningful conversations, but they can take the discussion in different directions, depending on what your goals are for the discussion.

Critical reason questions—These questions focus on what's present in the world. It's about looking at the positive and negative aspects while searching for meaning. In *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*, Groome says these questions may include:

- What do we think this means, and why?
- What is life giving here and why?
- What is not life giving here and why?

- Whose interest is being served?
- Who is suffering?
- What are some of the reasons for this present state of affairs?
- Can you explain some of your own attitudes?

Analytical memory questions—These questions examine how things got to be a certain way and what their history is. Groome says these questions may include:

- Where did this come from?
- How did this present situation arise?
- What is the history—personal or social—behind it?
- Whose interests brought things to be this way?
- What memories does this hold for you?
- What are some of the roots of your own attitude?
- Can you share some of the story behind what you're saying (or feeling or doing)?

Creative imagination questions—These questions encourage people to look beyond what is and imagine what could be. These questions are about change and how that change could occur. Groome says these questions may include:

- What are the likely consequences of this?
- What should be the outcome here?
- What can we do on behalf of what is best for all?
- What changes can we make that are fitting?
- What consequences would we prefer?
- How do we help to shape the consequences we prefer?
- How do you feel called to respond?
- What would it mean to act for life for all?

When we take the time to be intentional about the discussions we lead and the questions we ask, we can help people grow spiritually. We can help them examine their beliefs and discover what's holding them back and encouraging them to move forward. "I am thinking of questions and reflective activities that encourage people to bring together their lives and the legacy of learning and to listen to their own interiority as they discern what is true, good, and beautiful, writes Thomas Groome in *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*.

Questions matter. The way we ask questions matter. By developing thoughtful questions, we can encourage meaningful discussions and conversations that keep people talking long after we've starting asking the questions. This is what faith formation is all about.

The Importance of Mentoring

Shannon Kelly

(Vibrant Faith Ministries, Faith Formation Learning Exchange.net)

Our parents have a huge impact on our lives and the kind of person we grow into being. We know this from experience and we know this from studies that have been done that prove this. However, positive role models can also have a huge impact on us as we are growing up and discovering who we are and where our passions lie. When I was growing up, I had the advantage of having both. My parents were very supportive of all that I did and wanted to do. My mentors, both official and unofficial, those adults who cared about me and took an interest in what I was to become were the people who helped mold me and encouraged me into becoming the person I am today. Many of those mentors still play a role in my life even though I am now an adult. Mentors do not take the place of parents and parents do not take the place of mentors. Each has a unique job that can enhance a young persons life as they are discovering who they are and what life means to them.

There have been many studies on the power of mentoring. The Search Institute has research studies and resources on mentoring: https://www.searchinstitutestore.org/category_s/183.htm.

Why is Mentoring Important?

When you are mentoring a young person, you are an adult in their life that is giving them your time and many young people do not have quality time with adults outside of their families. Whether you are a coach, youth minister, confirmation mentor, volunteer, or family friend, you are giving that young person another adult who they can turn to, who they can trust, and who they can look to for advice or support when they need it. You are giving them a great gift as you embody positive and authentic relationships. Young people need mentors so that they have many adults in their lives who care about them and who challenge them to do their best. As a mentor, you are given the privilege and responsibility of helping guide a particular young person along their journey.

Chosen and Committed

As a mentor you have chosen (or been chosen by the young person) as someone who will walk with a young person for a period of time and maybe throughout his or her life. If you were chosen by the young person or if you chose to volunteer does not matter. What matters is that it was a choice and it is a commitment. Make sure when you say yes that you can really commit to what this means. Your time commitment might vary depending on the time of year, the kind of program it is, or the duration of the program. Be clear about how much time you can give to the relationship so that expectations are clear. Make sure you have carved out the time so you can faithfully walk with this young person on their journey.

Being a Mentor

Depending on the program that you have signed up to mentor in, you will be given specific tasks or you will be given some basic guidelines (hopefully) so you know where to begin and so you know some of the best practices. Here are a few pointers for you and your mentee:

1. Be Consistent.
 - Make sure you show up to your meetings on time and ready to go.
 - Maintain healthy boundaries and be clear with them.
2. Be honest about who you are in order to gain mutual trust and respect and encourage them to do the same. There are so few places where youth can truly be themselves so this may be a challenge for them at first.
3. Let them lead the conversation with things they want to talk about rather than forcing a conversation.
4. Listen. Truly listen rather than thinking of what you are going to say back to them. Use active listening to help them hear what they are saying and so that you can be clear about what they are trying to tell you.
5. Ask questions and then listen some more. Ask questions to find out more about them and then listen again.
6. Challenge them to do hard things. Encourage them to go outside of their comfort zone just a little so they can learn and explore.
7. When they come to you with a problem, help them explore it but do not solve it (or try to solve it) for them. Remind them that they can do hard things.
8. Learn from one another. Youth and adults are different. Always have been, always will be because of our developmental stages, and that doesn't mean that we can't learn from one another. Share what makes life meaningful to you, ask them what makes life meaningful to them. What are they passionate about? Who do they admire? Where do they want to travel? What do they want to see or experience?
9. Show up to important events and support them.
10. It's not about you and how busy you are or what you are going through in your personal life. It is about the youth and walking with them.
11. Have fun together – most teenagers don't have an adult they can have fun with on a regular basis. Maybe their parents or extended family, but so much of family life is about doing homework, going to practices, going to events, etc. that simply having fun together will be new.

The Foundation of Being a Mentor in a Christian Setting

There are many things that can be a foundation of mentoring, and depending on the organization in which you are becoming a mentor, you may be given guidelines as to what you are to accomplish. If you are functioning in a church or faith-based setting, you may want to explore how using the Vibrant Faith Frame can enhance your time together.

If you are able to frame your mentoring relationship on the Five Principles from Vibrant Faith Ministries, you will be giving that young person a gift of looking at their faith and life together. Let's look at each of these and mentoring.

1. *Faith is formed by trusted relationships.* Take a moment and think about the people who most influenced your faith life. What qualities did you look up to most? What did you value? You are being called upon to be in a trusted relationship with a young person. It is in these trusted relationships that young people can learn about faith not by your preaching, but by being who you truly are and learning from you through your relationship.
2. *The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and ministry of the home.* As a mentor you are a part of the partnership between your church and the home. You are a connection and a mentor as a young person walks their faith journey. You cannot take the place of the congregation nor can you take the place of the home. You CAN take your place, which is as someone who faithfully walks with a young person on their journey.
3. *Where Christ is present in faith, the home is church too.* As you walk this faith journey with a young person, you are called to point out where Christ is present and when you can call Christ into your midst. Some of the most powerful moments are not about formal prayer, but by experiencing a moment together and recognizing that God is already there in your midst. As a mentor you can point to where Christ is, you can encourage faith practices in the home, and you can equip the young person to explore their faith journey not just at church but also in the home.
4. *Faith is caught more than it is taught.* This might be a key one for mentors to remember. Many times when I have been recruiting mentors or preparing them for their new responsibilities, I get people saying, “but I don’t know enough,” or “what if I don’t know the answers?” It is not about knowing the answers or knowing everything there is to know about Jesus and faith and the world (because then none of us would be qualified.) It is about being a person of faith, just as you are, doubts and all. It is about sharing your faith journey and not being afraid to talk about Jesus, the Bible, prayer, and where you experience God. It is not about teaching, but about being.
5. *If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults.* Every one of us has someone we look up to. It could be someone that we have met, it could be someone we dream of meeting. Regardless, we look up to that person for one reason or another. In being a faithful adult mentor to a young person, you are giving them a model of how to become a faithful adult. Again, you don’t have to have all the answers. You need to be willing to share your faith journey with others and invite them to share theirs with you.

Practical Way of Practicing Faith the Others

There are many ways to practice your faith. I want to offer some basic categories from the Vibrant Faith Frame as a way to invite you to think about how you might embrace each of these on a regular basis. If you are able to embrace each of these regularly with your mentee, you will be modeling for them a healthy faith life upon which to build as they continue to grow.

1. *Caring Conversations*: Invite ways to have caring conversations with your mentee. You can use Faith Talk Cards, you can talk about where you saw God today, you can invite conversation around what is important to them or troubling them. Check in with them and see where they are struggling and where they are celebrating.
2. *Devotions*. Sharing prayer with them before meals, before a meeting, praying for people that are sick or hurting, praying for one another, reading the Bible together, looking at the Sunday lesson together – these are all great ways of creating simple devotion time in your mentor relationship. It could be as simple as asking, “How might I pray for you today?”
3. *Service*. Talk to the young person about what they would want to do for service. What are opportunities in your area? What are things that would match with their passion and interests? Are there service needs in your own congregation? Can you choose something they can also invite their friends to do?
4. *Rituals and Traditions*. In your meeting times, in your gathering, as you spend time together, be mindful of creating ritual and traditions. Do you always open with prayer? Do you close with prayer? Do you light candles at given times of the year? How do you mark the church year together calling into mind Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost? Where are the places you can share in rituals and traditions to teach them and learn from them what is important and meaningful as they strive to connect with God in a deeper way?

The key is to be mindful and creative as you approach your new mentoring relationship. Show up and be yourself. Call God into your time together and if you are struggling with anything in the mentoring relationship, reach out to the leader of the program, to the church leaders, or to the other adults who are mentors. You are not in this alone and neither are the youth. We are a community, supporting one another as we walk our journey of faith.

Resources on Mentoring

http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1109.pdf

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-moment-youth/201301/mentoring-youth-matters>

http://www.megamentors.org/documents/VMP_Tools_for_Mentoring_Adolescents_Packet.pdf

40 Developmental Assets® for Middle Childhood (ages 8-12)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as **Developmental Assets®**—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



External Assets

- Support**
 - 1. **Family support**—Family life provides high levels of love and support.
 - 2. **Positive family communication**—Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child feels comfortable seeking advice and counsel from parent(s).
 - 3. **Other adult relationships**—Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s).
 - 4. **Caring neighborhood**—Child experiences caring neighbors.
 - 5. **Caring school climate**—Relationships with teachers and peers provide a caring, encouraging environment.
 - 6. **Parent involvement in schooling**—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.
- Empowerment**
 - 7. **Community values youth**—Child feels valued and appreciated by adults in the community.
 - 8. **Children as resources**—Child is included in decisions at home and in the community.
 - 9. **Service to others**—Child has opportunities to help others in the community.
 - 10. **Safety**—Child feels safe at home, at school, and in his or her neighborhood.
- Boundaries & Expectations**
 - 11. **Family boundaries**—Family has clear and consistent rules and consequences and monitors the child’s whereabouts.
 - 12. **School Boundaries**—School provides clear rules and consequences.
 - 13. **Neighborhood boundaries**—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the child’s behavior.
 - 14. **Adult role models**—Parent(s) and other adults in the child’s family, as well as nonfamily adults, model positive, responsible behavior.
 - 15. **Positive peer influence**—Child’s closest friends model positive, responsible behavior.
 - 16. **High expectations**—Parent(s) and teachers expect the child to do her or his best at school and in other activities.
- Constructive Use of Time**
 - 17. **Creative activities**—Child participates in music, art, drama, or creative writing two or more times per week.
 - 18. **Child programs**—Child participates two or more times per week in cocurricular school activities or structured community programs for children..
 - 19. **Religious community**—Child attends religious programs or services one or more times per week.
 - 20. **Time at home**—Child spends some time most days both in high-quality interaction with parents and doing things at home other than watching TV or playing video games.

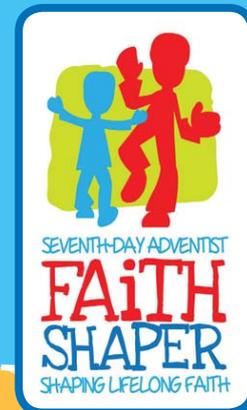
Internal Assets

- Commitment to Learning**
 - 21. **Achievement Motivation**—Child is motivated and strives to do well in school.
 - 22. **Learning Engagement**—Child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning at school and enjoys participating in learning activities outside of school.
 - 23. **Homework**—Child usually hands in homework on time.
 - 24. **Bonding to school**—Child cares about teachers and other adults at school.
 - 25. **Reading for Pleasure**—Child enjoys and engages in reading for fun most days of the week.
- Positive Values**
 - 26. **Caring**—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to help other people.
 - 27. **Equality and social justice**—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to speak up for equal rights for all people.
 - 28. **Integrity**—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to stand up for one’s beliefs.
 - 29. **Honesty**—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to tell the truth.
 - 30. **Responsibility**—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to accept personal responsibility for behavior.
 - 31. **Healthy Lifestyle**—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to have good health habits and an understanding of healthy sexuality.
- Social Competencies**
 - 32. **Planning and decision making**—Child thinks about decisions and is usually happy with results of her or his decisions.
 - 33. **Interpersonal Competence**—Child cares about and is affected by other people’s feelings, enjoys making friends, and, when frustrated or angry, tries to calm her- or himself.
 - 34. **Cultural Competence**—Child knows and is comfortable with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and with her or his own cultural identity.
 - 35. **Resistance skills**—Child can stay away from people who are likely to get her or him in trouble and is able to say no to doing wrong or dangerous things.
 - 36. **Peaceful conflict resolution**—Child seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
- Positive Identity**
 - 37. **Personal power**—Child feels he or she has some influence over things that happen in her or his life.
 - 38. **Self-esteem**—Child likes and is proud to be the person that he or she is.
 - 39. **Sense of purpose**—Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life.
 - 40. **Positive view of personal future**—Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.

7 Essential Faith Experiences

A Authentic Relationships

Role models and mentors; positive peer communities



“Recognizing the powerful influence of other adults in their kids’ Sticky Faith Web, many parents include mentoring in their 5:1 plan (5 significant adults to 1 child). Through these empowering relationships, your kids are able to spend time with adults who are further along in their spiritual journey. (Sticky Faith, Kara Powell and Chap Clarke, 2011)

- Provide positive role models and mentors from all generations.
- Equip parents as role models and mentors.
- Ensure leaders of programs build quality relationships and model God’s grace.
- Provide pro-social places for positive peer connections.
- Ensure safe environments and implement child protection policies.



“Encourage one another and build each other up.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

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