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Parents – Who's Looking Out For You?

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

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PARENTS – WHO'S LOOKING OUT FOR YOU?

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

I couldn't stop thinking about Marcy after my phone session with her. I was really worried about her.

"Marcy, " I had said in our session, "Your voice sounds drained of energy and your life force feels really low. What's going on?"

"I just have no time for myself at all. It seems like between work and driving my kids to all their activities, there's nothing left. I'm feeling really discouraged – like I'm never going to get to do anything with my life for me. It all seems to be for everyone else. Sometimes I feel like I'm dying – and sometimes I even want to die."

This was not good. Something had to change – and soon.

As we explored the problem, it became apparent that Marcy was doing way more for her kids than necessary. She was doing things for them, especially for 12 year old Andrea, that they needed to be

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doing for themselves.

"Every morning I go into Andrea's room at least 15 times before she finally gets herself up. Then I make their breakfasts and lunches. The other day I felt really upset because Andrea was just sitting around while I was getting breakfast and making their lunch. When I asked her to help, she just rolled her eyes and got upset. I'm exhausted before I even get started. Then, on the weekends, they want me to take them here and take them there. There's just not enough time in a day! When I try to get them to understand my needs, they just don't seem to care."

"Marcy, Andrea has your number. She knows if she gets upset you will back off. This is not good for you or her – you are allowing her to be a spoiled brat out of your fear of her not caring about you. They are not going to care about you until you care about yourself. They are treating you the way you treat

yourself. If you want compassion and understanding from them, then you need to first give yourself compassion and understanding."

Marcy and I developed a plan: she would get Andrea an alarm clock and let her know that she had to get herself up – and that if she didn't she was responsible for the consequences if she missed school. Marcy would also ask her children to take responsibility for fixing their own breakfast and lunch. She would also expect them to help clean up in the evenings, and would make it clear that if they didn't help her, she would not be so available to drive them around all the time. In addition, she would set aside some time just for her each weekend to work on her own creative projects. This was a hard one for her. Marcy believed that taking care of herself was selfish – that being loving meant putting herself aside for her family. She really wanted to be a good mom – but she was not being a good mom to herself.

We talked about the definition of "selfish." I told her that I believed that Andrea was being selfish when she expected Marcy to give herself up for Andrea, and that Marcy was fostering this selfishness in her children by not taking care of herself.

"Marcy, are you being a good mom if you are so unhappy all the time? Don't your kids need to see you being a role-model for personal responsibility – which includes taking good care of yourself? How are they going to learn to make themselves happy if they never see you making yourself happy? You are teaching them that they need to take care of others well-being and that others need to take care of their well-being, which is the definition of a codependent relationship. Don't you want them to know how to take care of themselves – how to take responsibility for their own well-being? Taking care of yourself is not selfish – it's self-responsible! You're not being a good parent if you just take care of your children but don't take care of yourself."

Marcy got it and immediately went about making changes. She was like a new woman when I spoke with her the next week, with much more power in her voice. She was beginning to see that the problem was not so much not being cared about by her family, but not caring about herself. She could begin to see that how her family treated her was a mirror for how she was treating herself.

I breathed a sigh of relief – Marcy was getting her life back!

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?", "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By My Kids?", "Healing Your Aloneness", "Inner Bonding", and "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By God?" Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course: <http://www.innerbonding.com> or <mailto:margaret@innerbonding.com>

4 Parenting Styles

By Dana Goldberg

Every grandmother and grandfather will tell you hilarious stories of their children when they were first born. And for every funny and touching story they have, they will be able to tell you another for every hardship they encountered. Parenting is something that is done in many different ways by each parent. The following are four general styles employed by parents.

Authority: Authoritarian parents rule on just that: authority. Commands are given to children that they must follow regardless of the circumstances. If these commands are not followed, harsh punishment will ensue. These parents do not welcome feedback from their children. In fact, it is met with severe punishment. The children tend to be quiet and unhappy. They have more of a fear than a love for their parents. Male children have trouble dealing with anger and female children have trouble facing adversity due to their heavily structured life where nothing ever changes.

Indulgent: Indulgent parents tend to be described as lenient. They allow immature and childish behavior. These parents expect the children to learn from their mistakes and to fend for themselves in most times of need. These parents tend to be democratic and allow for feedback from their children on issues. They will hear both sides of an argument and usually make a compromise. Indulgent parents usually avoid confrontation with their children by all means, but do tend to be more involved and emotionally closer to their children.

Authoritative: Authoritative parents are a combination of the two styles previously mentioned. They are the happy medium. While expecting proper behavior from their children, they welcome feedback and questioning on certain issues. They're able to demand things of their children but are also able to respond to what their child says, questions and requests. These children tend to be the happiest, most confident and self-assured of all the mentioned parenting styles. It is very difficult to be a purely authoritative parent.

Passive: Passive parenting is being completely uninvolved. These parents may never be home due to immaturity, work or the like. These children are usually raised by grandparents, older siblings, babysitters or themselves. There is no parental involvement at all.

We wish you many happy stories!

D. Goldberg is the owner of Parenting Spirit. Free parenting tips on children's behavior, activities for children and parenting resources for families and professionals.



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