

F O C U S

VISTA PSYCHOLOGICAL & COUNSELING CENTRE

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO DISCIPLINE AFTER DIVORCE

Divorce is always hard, but when children are involved, the transition can be even harder. Although our household may now be divided, you can still be united in guiding and supporting your kids. Even if you and your ex-spouse have different parenting styles or rules, you can effectively discipline your children when they're in your home. "The most important thing you can do is to always put the children first," said Geoffrey Putt, PsyD, director of parenting and family support services of Akron Children's Hospital. "Remember that it's about the children and not about you as individuals who had a conflict." While divorced parents may share the same values and goals for their children, specific discipline

styles can vary. "Having the same goals for your children is the ideal, whether it's making sure they are respectful or that they finish their homework so they can move ahead academically," Dr. Putt said. If different rules exist in each parent's house, children will learn to adapt. "Consider how individual schoolteachers have different classroom rules or expectations, or that the math teacher is more strict than the science teacher yet children adjust depending on the environment," said Dr. Putt. It's more important that the rules and expectations you set for your home are consistently enforced. Although your children may complain, established rules, however unpopular, actually give kids a sense of security. To

provide effective discipline after divorce, Dr. Putt also recommends parents: **Find the best way to communicate with your former spouse.** Whether it's email, texting or talking on the phone, use the method you find most comfortable, so you don't end up in an argument or using your child as a messenger. **Keep things in perspective.** While it's easy to be stressed out or frustrated if your ex is more lax or strict with your kids, think about what you can control. As long as your kids are safe and are not being exposed to dangerous or inappropriate things, recognize there will likely be differences. These differences would probably have surfaced even if you were still married. **Have a plan.** Make sure the rules you set

are clear and predictable. Established rules, such as those regarding homework, chores or what TV shows your kids are allowed to watch, will help prevent you from being manipulated. **Talk to other parents.** Half of all marriages end in divorce, so there are many other parents who have faced these same issues. Discuss what worked for them, as well as what pitfalls to avoid. While there are many challenges, if you make the kids your first priority and are consistent, you can effectively discipline your children after divorce and give them guidance and the support they need.

Source: Inside Children's Winter 2013.
www.akronchildrens.org/

NAVIGATING MARITAL STRESSES

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE MEND OF THE AFFAIR	2
TIDES OF LONLINESS	2
PLACEBOS WORK BETTER FOR NICE PEOPLE	3
TOO MUCH STRESS CAN MEAN MAJOR HEALTH ISSUES	3
LAUGHTER BASED EXERCISE FOR OLDER ADULTS	4

When romantic relationships hit a rough patch, does being mindful help? Recent research offers positive clues. In one study, Heidemarie Laurent and colleagues in Wyoming asked 88 couples to each spend 15 minutes hashing out an unresolved conflict. Their levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, soared—but maintaining a mindful awareness and openness during the argument seemed to provide a buffer. In cases where a partner reacted with coercive or angry behaviors, or simply withdrew, participants with greater mindfulness either showed a faster recovery of their cortisol levels, or didn't experience the impaired recovery that usually follows such negative interactions. Another study in Baltimore examined how trust, emotional attachment, and mindfulness influenced interactions in recently married couples who discussed a marital transgression, such as unfaithfulness. Spouses with less trust of their partner and lower levels of mindfulness were more disengaged, compared to those with higher mindfulness.

Source: Mindful, October 2016, volume 4, number 4, page 14. www.Mindful.org.

THE MEND OF THE AFFAIR

The couple came into the marital counselor’s office exhibiting some of the problems that landed them there. They argued. He made jokes bordering on criticism. She didn’t talk about her feelings until halfway through therapy, when she dropped a bomb: She was having an affair.

Her husband was devastated. But as they discussed her confession, the couple began to talk more openly than they had in years. In fact, the wife’s revelation, say marital researchers, may have saved the marriage.

Couples who are grappling with infidelity may benefit more from marital therapy than other couples—provided that the unfaithful partner comes clean either before or during therapy. In a recent study of marital therapy, men and women who had had affairs and kept the fact from their spouse—but disclosed it to researchers in anonymous questionnaires—failed to make much progress after several months of counseling. The outcomes were “lousy,” says David Atkins, professor at Fuller School of Psychology in California. In such cases, the therapy probably fails because one partner is not committed to the process. Even when the affair is over, secrecy indicates a continuing lack of trust and openness. At least 25 percent of men and 15

percent of women have had an affair, data suggests. Although Atkin’s study, published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* was too small to draw large conclusions, it is one of the first to quantify the value of confession. And it fans the flames of a long-standing debate among therapists: Is coming clean the only way to save a marriage?

Atlanta psychiatrist Frank Pittman, author of *Private Lies*, takes an adamant pro-disclosure stance. “It’s exceedingly difficult to salvage a marriage when one person is trying to protect the guy under the bed,” he says. An unfaithful partner can’t participate fully in a relationship when guarding information that he or she believes is dangerous.

Pittman finds few exceptions to the spill-beans-rule. An unfaithful wife “confronted at night by a drunk husband with a machine gun might do well to lie,” he notes. He’s skeptical of people who feel that they might prefer not to know about a spouse’s transgressions. Sure, they might spare themselves pain, but they lose out on the closeness that open discussion can bring.

Psychologist Janis A. Spring, author of *After the Affair*, contends that some people are actually better off not knowing whether a spouse has been unfaithful in the past. For instance,

a disclosure might trigger insecurities in a spouse with a history of emotional problems.

The benefits of coming clean varies from couple to couple, says Spring, who knows happy couples on which one spouse hasn’t disclosed a liaison. “what is most important is that the unfaithful partner address why he or she had the affair,” says Spring. If an unfaithful husband enjoyed being open and vulnerable with his lover, for example, then he should try to bring those qualities into his marriage.

Of course, a secret can always be found out. Some therapists, such as the late psychologist Shirley Glass, a pioneer of infidelity research, hold that marriages fare better after a voluntary confession than after an unwanted discovery. In some cases there’s a medical issue—a hidden affair may put a partner at risk for sexually transmitted disease.

If and when an unfaithful partner chooses to tell, he or she must decide how. Experts suggest a candid, detailed discussion that steers clear of X-rated minutiae.

Source: Lauren Aaronson, Psychology Today, September/October 2005.

TIDES OF LONLINESS

Many of us assume that the older we get, the more likely we are to be lonely. An analysis of a large survey in Germany shows that the true relationship between age and loneliness is more complicated. Psychologists Maike Luhmann of the University of Cologne and Louise C. Hawkey of the University of Chicago analyzed the responses of more than 16,000 people to

questions about how frequently they missed the company of others and felt left out or isolated. Rather than increasing steadily with age, loneliness rose and sank across age levels. Young adults under 30 were among the loneliest, surpassed only by people over the age of 80—many of whom face the death of loved ones as well as physical limitations that can

inhibit social life. Controlling for a number of factors, the researcher found that the higher numbers of single people in the youngest and oldest groups may partially explain the peaks. Old age, however, does not in itself guarantee loneliness, and the amount of isolation experienced by the oldest respondents varied greatly. **Source: Guy Winch, Ph.D., Psychology Today, October 2016.**



PLACEBOS WORK BETTER FOR NICE PEOPLE

Having an agreeable personality might make you popular at work and lucky in love. It may also enhance your brain's built-in painkilling powers, boosting the placebo effect.

Researchers at the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina and the University of Maryland administered standard personality tests to 50 healthy volunteers, identifying general traits such as resiliency, straightforwardness, altruism and hostility. Each volunteer then received a painful injection, followed by a placebo—a sham painkiller. The volunteers who were resilient, straightforward or altruistic experienced a greater reduction in pain from the placebo compared with vol-

unteers who had a so-called angry hostility personality trait.

The difference was not just psychological. The researchers, led by Jon-Kar Zubieta of the University of Michigan, used PET (positron-emission tomography) scans to measure levels of mu-opioids—the brain's own painkilling chemicals—in the volunteers' brains during the placebo procedure. The brains of volunteers with "more agreeable" personalities, according to Zubieta, released more of these natural painkillers, thus enhancing the placebo effect.

"The regions where we see these changes are all engaged in taking sensory information from outside, integrating it and giving it an emotional

content," Zubieta says. "Personality traits like straightforwardness and altruism are part of an overall capacity to be open to new experiences and integrate the information in a positive fashion. That's probably what drives the placebo effect." The findings could help make clinical trials for new drugs, which depend heavily on placebo testing, more accurate.

Source: John Pavlus, Scientific American Mind, March/April, 2013

TO MUCH STRESS CAN MEAN MAJOR HEALTH ISSUES

In today's busy world, stress is something we all face to some extent, yet most of us have little understanding of what stress is or of the problems it can cause.

Stress is actually a combination of two separate things. The first is the "stressor," the situation that triggers the physical and emotional reactions that we feel. It might be a family problem, a money issue or just that traffic jam on our way to work. The second part of stress is our "stress response." This is our body and mind's natural response to a stressor, including increases in our breathing, heart rate alertness and muscle response. It's a reaction inherited from our ancient ancestors. For them, survival meant reacting quickly to threats they encountered, what we call the "fight or flight" response. Back then, if the stress source was a wild animal or other life-threatening situation, that was a good reaction. But today's problems are seldom so immediate or quickly resolved. In-

stead, we often face prolonged or repeated stress over which we have little or not control.

For many of us, repeatedly facing stressful situations can leave us feeling constantly nervous or exhausted, and can result in very real physical and emotional ailments.

It shouldn't be hard to recognize when stress is negatively affecting your life. The warning signs can include changes in both behavior and physical well-being.

Stress-related behavioral changes might include sudden anger or impatience over relatively minor things, you might find yourself unable to relax, anxious almost all the time, sleeping poorly and experiencing sexual problems. Major changes in eating, whether no appetite or constantly overeating, are also common reactions.

Excessive stress can make it difficult to make decisions or set priorities. You may make more mistakes or become accident-prone. Physical ail-

ments, such as frequent headaches and neck or back pain, can also be stress-related symptoms. You might find yourself suffering from frequent indigestion, diarrhea or constipation. Shortness of breath, heart palpitations, or skin problems like acne or psoriasis can also occur. Excessive stress is not a problem to be ignored. It has been linked to a variety of serious health and emotional issues. If you find yourself facing high levels of stress that are affecting your health or overall quality of life, seek help. Your family physician or professional counselor can offer assistance to help reduce or cope with unhealthy stress in your life.

Source: "Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to: ACACorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

Vista Psychological & Counseling Centre



1201 South Main St.
Suite 100
North Canton, Ohio 44720

Phone: 330.244.8782

Fax: 330.244.8795

Email: info@vistapcc.com

Website: www.vistapcc.com

Welcome to Vista!

*We offer the very best
in psychological and counseling services.*

*Established in 2008,
our staff is committed to helping you
achieve greater emotional wellness and adjustment
through individual, child/adolescent, couples,
family, and group therapy.*

*We are available to you Monday thru Saturday
with day and evening hours for your convenience.*

LAUGHTER BASED EXERCISE FOR OLDER ADULTS

Incorporating intentional laughter into an exercise program could improve older adults mental health, suggests a new study from Georgia State University (GSU). Apart from making older adults more likely to participate in more exercise classes and activities, laughter-based exercise may boost older adults' mental health and aerobic endurance reveals the GSU study.

In their study, researchers at Georgia State University found that forced-laughter exercise techniques added to a strength, balance and flexibility fitness program markedly improved seniors' performance in an exercise program and gave quite a significant boost to their enjoyment, motivating them to actively take part in physical activity and classes quite often.

"We want to help older adults have a positive experience with exercise, so we developed a physical activity program that specifically targets exercise enjoyment through laughter," said lead author of the study, Celeste Greene, who is researcher at Georgia State University's Gerontology Institute. "Laughter is an enjoyable activi-

ty and it carries with it so many health benefits, so we incorporated intentional laughter into this program to put the fun in fitness for older adults."

For the study, Greene and colleagues assigned older adults residing in four assisted-living facilities to participate in a moderate-intensity group exercise program called LaughActive, which incorporated playful simulated laughter into a moderate-intensity strength, balance and flexibility workout.

LaughActive describes itself on its website as "a moderate-intensity group exercise program that intersperses endurance-enhancing laughter exercises within a dedicated strength, balance and flexibility program for older adults. Participants laugh abundantly and achieve health benefits of laughter without requiring a sense of humor or even a reason to laugh—and get a full workout at the same time."

During the six-week course of the study, participating seniors attended two sessions of 45-minute exercise every week. The program included

eight to 10 laughter exercises lasting 30 to 60 seconds each.

When asked about their experience with LaughActive exercise program, the participants said they experienced improvement in mental health aerobic endurance and outcome expectation to exercise, with 96.2 percent of them saying laughter made traditional exercise more enjoyable, 89.9 percent saying it made exercise more accessible and 88.9 percent saying it enhanced their zeal to participate in additional exercise classes or activities.

"The combination of laughter and exercise may influence older adults to begin exercising and to stick with the program," Greene said.

The researchers, however, acknowledged more research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms of laughter and its associated health benefits.

The GSU study was published in the journal, *The Gerontologist*.

Source: HEALTHNEWSLINE.net, New Developments in Healthcare, Life Sciences & Medicine, Wednesday, September 28th 2016.