

Parents Need Support

By Barbara King

It happens all too often that modern society points an accusing finger at the adult who abuses a child physically, verbally or emotionally. But anyone who has a child or works with children would attest to the fact that there are times when you are ready to crack and you really cannot be patient, sympathetic, caring, loving or anything else to the child who is demanding your attention. All you want to do is to get them out of your hair, your way, your room or your equipment.

It is not that you are cruel and heartless. It's just that you have too much on your plate and you cannot cope with anything else. At such times the easiest thing to do is to hit or shout. In the mind of the hassled and pressured it is the quickest way to get a break. Under normal circumstances you may be the most loving and understanding person, but under stress you can become a monster.

The saying that it takes a village to raise a child has never been truer than today. In our society many families are isolated, with grandparents and other relatives living on the other side of the island or even in a different country. As such, there is little or no support for the primary parent, or the single parent, in the day-to-day task of raising a child.

For some parents there is a routine of being transport manager twice a day, as they take children to and from school and then on to lessons or after-school activities; fitting in a work schedule or around that, plus the arrangement of domestic work and bill paying, perhaps some attempt at personal health maintenance and, if there is time to think of it, the task of nurturing and maintaining a personal relationship with your mate. Along with that there should also be (but rarely is) some time and space to attend to one's personal development and sanity. All to be accomplished with little reliable or lasting support.

Managing a family sometimes seems an impossible task and because it is so for many, we get instances of children who are physically, emotionally or verbally hurt repeatedly. This common pattern will continue to exist until we, parents and care-givers, recognise that reliable support systems must be set up if we are to function anywhere near our best in all areas of our life.

We have to accept that it is totally in our hands and that we cannot expect government, organisations or anyone else to do it.

So what resources are there? Family, friends, neighbours are the obvious first choices. Are we on such good terms with these people that we can confidently entrust our precious children to their care with the confidence that they will provide loving, attentive care? Unfortunately for some of us the answer may well be “No”. Some people are in this isolated position for the reason that they are very particular about whom they leave their children with. They fear abuse, mistreatment or simply the repetition of what they went through as children. So they have ended up taking the whole show alone. Whatever the cause of the isolation, concessions must be made if we are to get good support.

It has to be accepted that there is no perfect person out there to take care of your child. That is a fact. What we can do is find someone who has the most important feature we seek and train them to do things the way we want them done.

We have to accept that if partner or spouse has not been pulling their weight up to now, it is unlikely that they will start now. That being the case, someone has to be found to fill that gap, even if you have to pay them. This might mean hiring someone to do the maintenance work around the home that there is never enough time to do.

You may have to systematically and cold-bloodedly go about the task of creating a network of people in your life to enable you to have a more rounded, stress-free existence. That means putting in place people who will allow you to develop as an all-round being, rather than just make parenting or domestic life easier.