

HOW TO RAISE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

Recollections From Childhood Selected Responses

INSTRUCTIONS: For **each** of the five critical needs listed below, **check each statement** which suggests to you some behavior you might want to change.

CHANGE may involve any of the 3 statements below:

- A. Something you **now do** that you might want to **stop doing**.
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- C. Something you **now do** that you might want to **change (do more, less, or differently)**.

RESPECT

Not Feeling Respected

- 1. When I experimented with clothes, my folks made fun of me.
- 2. I was constantly interrupted before I could finish my thoughts.
- 3. When my mother took me shopping for clothes, she would end up shouting at me in public because I didn't like what she wanted to get me. I felt humiliated.
- 4. Sometimes I was embarrassed by comments that were made about me in my presence, as though I weren't there.
- 5. They showed me off, wanted me to be impressive to other people, never asked if it was okay with me. When I balked, they were upset and called me stubborn.
- 6. When I was little, my mother changed my pants outdoors after I spilled something. I was embarrassed.
- 7. When someone asked me a question, my mother or father would jump in and answer for me. It was very annoying.

Feeling Respected

- 1. My mother never opened my mail—she always respected my privacy.
- 2. When we misbehaved, our parents did not yell, or call us names.
- 3. If I didn't want to eat something, I was not forced to as long as I would try it.
- 4. My father did not like how some of my friends dressed, but they never stopped me from inviting them to our home.
- 5. My mom would apologize for losing her temper with me and sometimes explained what set her off.
- 6. When an uncle made fun of my long hair and referred to me as a girl, my mother asked him not to do that.
- 7. My parents didn't nag me about doing my homework. They just asked me to let them know when it was done.

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IMPORTANCE

Not Feeling Important

- 1. It seemed I was frequently being told not to do something.
- 2. My father was an unhappy person. He would often tell me that I would never amount to anything. For a long time I believed him.
- 3. When my sister had emotional problems, my parents never discussed it with me. Because she was ill, she got most of the attention. All through my childhood, I felt she was important and I wasn't.
- 4. We were never part of decision making. For example, when we moved from Chicago to Tucson, my parents didn't ask our opinion or how we felt about changing schools.
- 5. When my mom got on the phone, my sister and I could not get her off to answer a question or talk to us; she was on the phone a lot.
- 6. When I placed second at a swim meet, my parents didn't seem enthusiastic and told me that I would have to work a lot harder to win. I was made to feel like a failure.
- 7. When I gave my opinion, my parents scornfully told me to keep quiet because I was too young to understand.

Feeling Important

- 1. They made time in their busy schedules to sit down and listen to me.
- 2. They occasionally shared with us what was going on in their lives.
- 3. Since I was a young child, I always worked in my father's office on weekends or vacation time. Although I started with simple tasks, I always felt very grownup to be allowed to spend time with my father in his world.
- 4. As an older sibling, my parents trusted me to watch over my sister as an early teen. They also allowed me to care for other young children and infants at an early age.
- 5. After my first semester at college, my parents let me prepare a budget for each semester. I had my own bank account and total control over all expenditures. They trusted that I would live within the budget and not confront them with emergencies.
- 6. My father worked at home as a cap-maker. I read articles to him from an adventure magazine while he worked. His enjoyment gave me a lot of pride and pleasure.
- 7. My parents gave me choices about clothes, food, friends, etc. When they didn't give me a choice, they explained why.

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ACCEPTANCE

Not Feeling Accepted

- 1. When I displeased my mother, she'd say, "You're impossible. Why can't you be like your brother?"
- 2. When I decided I wanted to work after I finished school rather than go to college, I was made to feel like a failure.
- 3. I am 49 years old and my parents still criticize my decisions.
- 4. My parents always wanted to know about everything I was doing and were upset when I wouldn't tell them everything.
- 5. I felt as if my parents were always focusing on my faults. (My grandfather was an exception.)
- 6. Our parents never let us argue. They made us feel we were bad, rather than teach us how to argue.
- 7. Whenever I gave my father reasons for poor work in school, he would say he didn't want to hear excuses and wouldn't discuss it.

Feeling Accepted

- 1. My parents never objected to my inviting friends over, even when I didn't let them know in advance. Everyone was always welcome.
- 2. When I started to grow my hair long, I had a lot of trouble at school and with some of my relatives. My mom told me that it didn't really matter if my hair was long or short. It was what was inside a person that mattered.
- 3. I have always loved raw onions. No matter where we were, my mother always saw to it that I got raw onions with my hamburgers, hot dogs, corn flakes or whatever.
- 4. They didn't try to talk me out of my career goal even though they weren't enthusiastic about it.
- 5. I was acknowledged by my mother for my ability to relate to, and be patient with, my elderly grandparents.
- 6. They rarely interfered with my selection of friends and activities.
- 7. My parents didn't get upset when I expressed strong opinions about things with which they disagreed; instead, they discussed them with me.

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INCLUSION

Not Feeling Included

- 1. When my sister went to a community center for psychotherapy, my mother and father went, but I was left out.
- 2. My family was famous for protecting us from the truth. There were a lot of skeletons in the closet, which eventually everyone knew about but couldn't discuss.
- 3. Our family did very little together.
- 4. I was never asked how I felt about important things or how I felt after a big family argument. I was never able to listen to my parents discuss anything significant.
- 5. When I was 10 years old my mother remarried, but she never discussed it with my brothers and me beforehand.
- 6. I was never included when parents had company; I was always sent to my room.
- 7. I felt excluded from my father's life. I wonder if he would have acted differently had I not been a girl.

Feeling Included

- 1. I always looked forward to holidays, family excursions, and family get-togethers.
- 2. There were often family discussions where decisions would be made. Everyone was included, and I was always asked my opinion.
- 3. My mother shared some secrets with me. Sometimes she would involve me in selecting a gift for my father and my name would be included on the card.
- 4. My father was a storyteller, and he would always oblige us when we asked for a "yarn." The stories were usually about his childhood and he shared how he felt in many different situations.
- 5. Every Sunday morning my parents would read the paper in bed. We used to climb into the bed and Dad would read us the comics, especially "Lil' Abner." It always ended with a "tickle-fight."
- 6. We did everything (well, almost everything) as a family. Every night during the work week, before going to sleep, we would play card games. My father would often play checkers with me and later, chess.
- 7. We did volunteer work together in community projects.

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SECURITY

Not Feeling Secure

- 1. My parents' divorce was devastating, especially since they never discussed it adequately with us.
- 2. Constantly being criticized by my parents was unsettling.
- 3. My mother always seemed worried about money. Although we never discussed details, I felt we couldn't afford anything. I felt guilty every time I asked for anything.
- 4. Our parents fought a great deal, with a lot of anger; we didn't ever get to see them make up. It left a lasting mark on us.
- 5. Mom was out of the house a lot. We didn't feel she was around much.
- 6. My mom always said she was fat and ugly, so I thought I was too since people said I looked like her.
- 7. I was always afraid to talk to my parents about any troubles I had, because they would become very upset, and I did not receive the support I needed.

Feeling Secure

- 1. No matter how bad their finances were, my parents never complained and always seemed happy. Growing up, I felt sorry for the poor children who lived around us, and it wasn't until I was fully grown that I realized we were no better off financially than they were.
- 2. My mother always made me feel better when I was sick or when I was scared. Even when I got into trouble, I always felt secure because I knew she cared.
- 3. Someone was always at home when I was there--if not my parents, extended family members were around. I grew up in a very stable neighborhood.
- 4. One of my parents read to me every night when I went to bed, and they always began and ended each day with warm hugs.
- 5. My parents were divorced when I was seven. Neither of them let us feel less because of it. They never talked bad about each other and were always cordial in our presence. They explained what happened without laying blame--also made sure to emphasize that nothing was our fault.
- 6. My mother and father gave a lot to each other. I saw them as kind, tender, loving, very understanding, and deeply in love with each other. This was very reassuring.
- 7. Our parents never yelled or spanked us when we did something wrong; they'd take time to discuss it with us. Consequently, a disapproving look from either of our parents made a strong impression.