

Divorcing parents owe their kids

Marriage counseling is seen by some as a luxury. Others accept it as a necessity. And still others claim that it is a total waste of time.

The reluctant spouse will often tell his or her pleading partner: "I don't have a problem, so if you want to go, then do it alone." More threatened types will even try to stop the partner from reaching out.

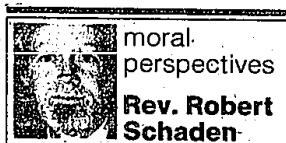
Such refusal to work on a relationship is sometimes brutal, often painful and usually sad. But when the refusal for help is detrimental to dependent children, it is criminal.

The research on children and divorce is quite definitive on three counts. Divorce does make a difference in the life and development of a child regardless of age.

CONFLICTED marriages can be more harmful to children than some divorces. It has also been shown that the behavior of parents during and following a divorce has considerable impact on children.

Unfortunately, the anger and hurt often linger long past the court date. Children are unwittingly or on purpose pulled into the middle. They become the pawns in a game of "I'll pay you back if it is the last thing I do."

They are also often the innocent and helpless objects of anger from parents who have never learned to deal with what they feel. Regardless of their age,



moral perspectives
Rev. Robert Schaden

they are ill-equipped to deal with parental adolescence.

Child abuse of this sort is not relegated to the uneducated. It has nothing to do with social class, race or religion. Rather, it is the legacy of those children whose parents are more concerned with their own jealousies and hurts than they are about the children for whom they say they would die.

TWO POSSIBLE dynamics lying behind such cruel behavior would appear to be meanness or helplessness. The harming parent(s) is either mean and simply does not care or is helpless in controlling the harmful behavior that even she or he abhors.

In the case of the meanness, there may be a challenge for the legal system. Certainly the rights of parents need to be protected. Parent-child contact is important enough that it must be provided for. How-

ever, when such provisions or their denial take into consideration the wants of the parent over the needs of the child, we need to think in another direction.

A plan of helplessness might rather follow unless the pleading parent is doing something more than making another resolution. Some kind of professional help for such a parent is needed — not because he or she wants it but because the child(ren) involved has a right to something better.

It may be that the couple who were unable to learn to relate as husband and wife need help to relate as parents. The level to which they learn to do so directly affects the level of healthy emotional growth available to their child.

STRUGGLING to grow up in an age obsessed with ways of blowing each other to kingdom come in the name of defense is difficult enough. The other complexities that sometimes threaten to overtake the opportunities often make for an anxiety-ridden journey.

Those who claim to love them first have a choice to make. Either they can contribute to the pain that already exists or they can work to diminish the burden. If such work entails putting pride in one's pocket and reaching to learn a new way of relating to the child and the other parent for the child's sake, so be it. A refusal at this point can never be the right of any parent.

medical briefs/helpline

WELL-AWARE PROGRAM
An invitation to be "Well-Aware" of health concerns is extended by Providence Hospital in Southfield to all within the listening range of radio station WCAV-AM (1090 AM), Livonia.

"Well-Aware" is broadcast on Mondays from 1-3 p.m. Providence's professional staff will be invited as guest speakers. Listeners will be able to phone in questions to the expert on the air.

'WHO IS THE ALCOHOL-ICT'

A videotaped lecture by Russell Smith, M.D., entitled "Who is the Alcoholic?" will be featured at Brighton Hospital's next community education program at 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 1.

In his lecture, Smith, who is Brighton's medical director, discusses the physical, psychological and social characteristics of the person with the disease of alcoholism.

Following the lecture, a trained counselor will be available to answer questions about the disease and explain what help is available for both the alcoholic and his or her family.

The informal style of the free community education program allows

people who are concerned to obtain information about the disease and its treatment.

Brighton Hospital is located on E. and River at Kensington Road, just off the I-96 freeway. For additional information and a schedule of other programs, contact the hospital at 227-1211 or 227-4143.

MENDED HEARTS

Mended Hearts, a support group for those who have had heart surgery, will meet at Beaumont Hospital, 3601 13 Mile Road, Royal Oak at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 23, in the nuclear classroom on the first floor, north entrance. For more information, call 557-8500. The speaker is Nancy Mazur, R.N. She will discuss hypertension.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENINGS

Beaumont Hospital's Health Promotion Center will offer three high blood pressure screenings once a month from 1-4 p.m. Mondays in Classroom C. The blood pressure screenings take place in the Administration and Education Building, 28550 Grand River, Farmington Hills. Upcoming screening dates are: April 16, May 14, June 11, July 16 and Aug. 13.

'Older' man seeks aphrodisiac

Dear Jo:
Could you remember a good aphrodisiac for an older gentleman? Sign me — "Don Juan of Yesterday."

Dear Who?
I never thought a Don Juan would be writing me — and information on an aphrodisiac.

I wonder if you are serious — just in case you are, there is both bad news and good news regarding the long and never-ending search for a good aphrodisiac.

First, the bad news — there is no such thing as an aphrodisiac. Substances such as licorice, ginseng, gotu kola and sarsaparilla have gained reputations as would-be aphrodisiacs because they contain small amounts of substances that are similar to those found in the male sex hormone testosterone.

Testosterone can increase both sexual desire and



gerontology
A. Jolayne Farrell

performance in people (both men and women) who do not have enough of the hormone.

The most dangerous aphrodisiac is Spanish fly. This product, made from dried insects, is extremely harmful to the reproductive organs. It can damage the urethra so severely that impotence results. Death from shock due to its use has been reported.

Older persons experience changes in their sexual activities as part of the normal aging process — a gradual decrease in frequency and intensity.

At their yearly physical, older persons should speak to their doctors about any unexpected changes in their sexual activities as they could be caused by a physical problem, an illness, or a medication.

Now for the good news (I guess). There are various things one can use to be "turned on" sexually — much of what happens in sexual interaction is influenced by how one thinks or feels. So — if you think make oil, perfume and/or satin sheets will act as an aphrodisiac they probably will. The trick is to know yourself and your partner and what usually works.

Perhaps one of the best known, readily available, "aphrodisiacs" are the words "I love you."

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