

FACILITATING THE AUTONOMY OF ADULTHOOD

Traversing the gap from adolescence to adulthood is not easy.

THE TASKS OF YOUTH

Each young person needs to ask himself or herself the following questions:

- 1) What is the **PURPOSE** of life?
- 2) What is **MY** purpose in life?
- 3) What attitudes and skills do I need to acquire in order to be both an *INDEPENDENT person and someone capable of sharing effective mutual independence in relationships?*
- 4) What are the main **PRINCIPLES** by which life and relationships function?

THE TASKS OF ADULTS

There are certain tasks that parents and other significant adults need to achieve in this process. These include providing the young person with a clear understanding of:

- *RESPONSIBILITY*
- *CO-OPERATION*
- *RESPECT and*
- *ACCOMPLISHING THE TASKS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (in the context of the mutual interdependence of life).*

In addition, young persons must be given the **FULL OPPORTUNITY** to develop their skills.

In this process a *FRIENDSHIP*, as in all relationships, is desirable.

Most parents and other significant adults usually work well with young people in achieving these tasks. Nevertheless there are situations where *SPECIAL CHALLENGES* need to be addressed

- 1) in the young person;
- 2) in his or her peer culture;
- 3) in the family unit as a whole, such as a situation where parents and offspring find it difficult to separate from each other;
- 4) in the parent, parents or other significant adults.

All parties need to examine themselves and develop an approach and a plan of action that will address these problems. If not, we will then be faced with a scenario of an increasing number of young persons who will not be well equipped to deal with the responsibilities demanded by various aspects of life and society, such as:

- 1) career and work
- 2) friendships and relationship skills
- 3) marriage and home making
- 4) keeping the law and moral code
- 5) contributing to needs of the society, the poor and other form of civic progress,

SOME TIPS FOR PARENTS AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT ADULTS

In preparing yourself and your offspring for independent living the following will help:

- 1) Facilitate increasing **RESPONSIBILITY** and **CO-OPERATION** in the home

- 2) Use **ACTION AND NOT ONLY WORDS** when agreements are broken and co-operation breaks down.
Words only have meaning when they relate to practical intent that is followed through
- 3) Action can be used for providing incentives and rewards or for the **REMOVAL OF FORFEITED PRIVILEGES**. This is how the workplace functions!
- 4) **TEACH THE SKILLS** required. Just don't merely complain about their absence.

Most young people become responsible in the home and leave home eventually. In many cultures those who leave will still remain very involved in the affairs of the family such as the welfare of younger siblings or elderly and ailing parents,

What about those who maintain a parasitic, manipulative, irresponsible and highly dependent relationship with parents?

Some parents have taken a stand and insisted that the best way the reasonably healthy and capable young adult person is going to make it is to take the step towards living on one's own. Thus they are willing to take firm measures to facilitate this.

Unfortunately some highly undesirable situations arise where some offspring have decided *NOT TO TRY HARD ENOUGH TO BE RESPONSIBLE AND PRODUCTIVE, OR TO GET THE PROFESSIONAL HELP THEY NEED TO COPE WITH LIVING, WORKING AND CO-OPERATION SKILLS*.

Even if initially parents don't demand that these persons find themselves in outside living and working arrangements, the fact is that these offspring will eventually place such an overwhelming demand on parents, that many may end up having to "let go" in frustration for the sake of their own health and sanity. Letting go in desperation leads to less preparation of the young person for adequate autonomy in a proactive emancipation.

Sometimes, as in the case of the Prodigal Son, in the Bible, some offspring throw aside the values and co-operation that were part of their families and society as a whole and reject family respect only to end up on the streets or in jail. If this is of his or her own making *trying to repeatedly rescue someone who refuses to learn will be an exercise in futility*. It will also serve to *enable* the behaviours.

What works with the person who refuses to be responsible, respectful, co-operative and interdependent? *ONLY ADULTS THEMSELVES CAN MAKE THE "TURN AROUND" NECESSARY TO LIFT THEMSELVES OUT OF A PIT OF THEIR OWN MAKING*. God and others can only assist.

Youth and young adults must be given the opportunity to face the positive and negative consequences of their decisions and actions. This is the only pathway to learning and change.

CONCLUSION

In the early years in a child's welfare and development it is mainly the parents who are responsible. In the adolescent years it is a shared responsibility. When the offspring is an adult, except with parents or guardians assisting with tertiary education (where possible) and in emergencies, the responsibility is totally that of the emerging adult. He or she also increasingly becomes *responsible for others* in the society including:

- his or her future family
- others in need in his family of origin or extended family

The young adult moves from:

Being cared for

to



Self care

to



Caring for others.

All this is made possible by the facilitators of autonomy and mutual interdependence versus chronic dependence and immaturity.

CHAPTER 14: PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUES FOR PARTNERS, FAMILY FRIENDS AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

In seeking to work together to solve common problems, persons involved in relationships need to have a common approach. Such relationships include couples, partners, friends and work-pairs, as well as teams of various types such as involving family and workplace

All need to develop procedures for solving problems that will inevitably arise. Without such procedures or "plan of attack" for the problems, persons in these relationships will find themselves "attacked" by the problem, going in frustrating circles and very often "attacking" one another.

Below is a guide to common problem solving in relationships. It is written in a questionnaire format so that persons involved can assess **WHERE THEY ARE** in the process and **WHAT SKILLS** they need to develop.

It is suggested that members of the team first answer the questions. This may be done individually and then those involved in the relationship may try to arrive at a common assessment together.

THE PROCEDURE

A. OUR APPROACH

1. What is our **COMMON UNDERSTANDING**, so far, of the **NATURE** of the problem?
2. What is our common understanding, so far, of the **SOLUTIONS** to the problems?
3. If we have **DIFFICULTY ARRIVING AT A COMMON PROBLEM DEFINITION AND SOLUTIONS** what does this mean?

What improvement in our **PROBLEM SOLVING, COMMUNICATION** and **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS** do we need to work towards?

How willing am I to say "I WAS WRONG," "I AM SORRY," "LET US NOT LOOK FOR WHO IS TO BLAME" and "I FORGIVE YOU"?

4. How willing will we be to **BRAINSTORM** possible solutions despite our own preconceived ideas, existing knowledge, personality tendencies and prejudices?
5. How can differences be resolved in a "WIN WIN" manner?
6. What about the use of **EXPERT OUTSIDE HELP** such as:
a mediator?
a therapist?

B. THE STEPS

1. What about seeking to **INFORM** ourselves about the nature of the issues by means of books, audio visual aids and by any other possible means?
2. Will we be willing to **EXAMINE THE AVAILABLE FACTS** in an objective a manner as possible?
3. How willing will we be to establish a common contractual **PLAN** of action with certain **GOALS, STEPS** and **DEADLINE DATES** for each step?
4. How willing will we be to discover together and agree on the **PRINCIPLES** in wisdom, science, natural law, morality, and Divine will as we understand it that will govern our plan?
5. Will we be willing to regularly **EVALUATE** our plan and contractual agreements. Where certain solutions, plans or steps do not seem to be working satisfactorily how willing are we to **RENEGOTIATE** change as necessary?
6. How willing will we be to spend the **TIME** for self-evaluation, fact-finding and discussion that **MUTUAL PROBLEM SOLVING** will require?
Will we seek to negotiate and stick to time arrangements?

CONCLUSION

With repeated use of this approach, by effectively dealing with problems facing them, persons in various relationships will be better able to successfully work as pairs or a team. Also they will be able to build stronger relationships