

FATHERING

a newsletter for people who care about self-esteem
Volume 12, Number 6 - Issue 72 - November-December, 1992

Dear Reader:

When I was a child my father was... my father did... I wish my father had... When we answer these questions about the fathers we have or the fathers we had or the fathers we didn't have or the fathers we wish we had, we think about deep and important parts of our lives. In The Secrets Men Keep, Dr. Ken Druck reminds us that "...the most powerful common denominator influencing men's lives today is the relationship we had with our fathers... Much of our behavior and many of our attitudes toward living can be traced to our fathers." This is true of women also.

This issue of **WE** offers some ways to think about the important job of fathering. If you are a father, it may help you to think about the kind of father you are and want to be. The story about the complexities of fathering as told in a letter by Joseph of Nazareth will remind you that fathering has never been easy.

In addition you will find

- A way to identify decisions you made about your own father.
- An invitation to think about the kind of father you are or want to be.
- A Fathers Faces Board to help you find out what children need.
- A way for fathers to teach children about ways they can expect you to respond.
- A list of ways adult children would like to be noticed by their fathers.
- The Benefits of Hugging.

Special thanks to the sponsors of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations for providing an excellent conference on Fathering in December 1992 and for some of the ideas in this issue. I am especially grateful to the following presenters: James Levine, Rick Bell, Bernie Slutsky, Steven Tate, Ron Pitzer, and to my personal teachers, Dick Clarke, Marc Clarke, and Wade Clarke. Thanks to Nat Houtz of Seattle for sharing The Benefits of Hugging.

Celebrate Dads!

Jean Aliskey Clarke

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Jean Clarke's Travel Schedule:

- February 8, 9, 1993 - Spokane, Washington
- February 11, 1993 - Olympia, Washington
- March 27, 1993 - Phoenix, Arizona
- April 29-May 7, 1993 - Calgary & Lethbridge, Alberta

Transactional Analysis Training

Four of a series of workshops on the psychological system of Transactional Analysis for beginners, for professionals, and for those who want to become certified Transactional Analysts.

- February 19, 20, 21 - Transactions
- March 19, 20, 21 - Games
- April 16, 17, 18 - Discounting and Passivity
- May 14, 15, 16 - The Drama Triangle

Facilitator Training

A week-long workshop for people who want to ...

- Facilitate the **Self-Esteem: A Family Affair** or **Growing Up Again** models.
- Improve group leadership skills for working with growth, education, or support groups.
- Receive advanced training in the use of Transactional Analysis in educational settings.
- Practice ways of inviting people to change

- July 12 - 17, 1993 - Seattle, Washington
- August 9 - 14, 1993 - Minneapolis, Minnesota

REMINDER: Facilitators who have already taken the workshop anywhere may repeat it in Minneapolis for half price.

Write to **WE** for details on the workshops.

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A letter from Joseph to the Wise Men

Dear Friends:

I address you as friends, not only because you were so kind to my family, in making such a long trip to visit us, and in bringing such generous gifts, but I also must call you "friends," because the events of the past months have made it impossible for me to think of you as "wise men" any longer. I admit I have spent time wishing you had never come, or certainly wishing that you had never found your way to Herod's palace on your way to us. If you were so wise, that you could read the stars, how was it that you could not find us directly, rather than having to inquire of Herod himself where we might be? The local innkeeper might have given you directions. Or if the heavens were so wise, as to send a new star out for my son's birth, why weren't they wise enough to add a precise location for the star's light to fall? You were wise enough to know a new king was born, but not wise enough to know that this supposed king was just a baby, no match for a king like Herod when Herod started throwing his power around. Did you come for your own enlightenment, without taking into account the danger that we might be in because of you? I know you didn't want to hurt us. I am learning that wisdom, no matter how great, is incomplete, and it can sometimes get innocent people into trouble.



But I still think of you as friends, and I write mainly to thank you for your kindness to us. In the harsh months that have passed between your visit and today, I have often thought of you. The memory of your visit has helped me believe that this dangerous life somehow holds promise for my son, if he will survive long enough to receive it. That you would come from so far away, not just from our Jewish people, but from another people altogether, helps me believe that God has a good purpose in mind for him. And I admit that that increases my confidence, and also my fear, if both can dwell side by side in the same man. So I want to thank you for your gifts. I am sorry to say that we had to leave the incense and the spices behind when we left, but I don't know what we would have done without the gold. We fled quickly when we heard that Herod wanted to kill our boy, and we couldn't take much with us. I even left my tools behind. You may hear stories about our miraculous travels in the desert, one about a date tree bending down to offer us fruit. But we were frightened and poor. The money was a life-saver, manna for us in the wilderness. We could never repay your generosity.

You may want to know what has happened since you left. When you decided not to go back by way of Herod, we knew it was only a matter of time before he became suspicious of your absence. And then the warning came, so suddenly, in the night. I took Mary and the child away; eventually we came to Egypt. It didn't feel so grand at the time, but I suppose we were like generations of our ancestors who have fled for

FATHERING

Opening Activity

For focusing on fathering

- Hand out name tags.
- Choose a partner. Make a name tag for him and ask him to tell you the most important thing he thinks a father can provide for a child, offer a child, and do with a child.
- Introduce your partner and tell the group what he thinks is most important to provide for, offer and do with a child if he is willing for you to share that information.

Closing Activity

For encouraging good fathering

At the end of the meeting, briefly review the activities of the meeting.

- Ask those people who are willing to tell what they wish dads would do differently or what they themselves plan to do differently.
- Ask for Resentments. Listen to resentments, do not defend or explain.
- Ask for Appreciations.

Edited by Jean Illsley Clarke
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WE

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• Ideas and activities or
materials to use individually
or in support groups.

* For extra copies of
this issue contact WE

\$17.50 per year (6 issues)
\$22.00 in Canada and
Europe, \$27.00 in
Australia, U.S. funds

RECOMMENDED BOOK

If you work with fathers you will find **Working With Fathers** by the Minnesota Fathering Alliance (published by nu ink unlimited, 206 S. 5th St., Stillwater, MN 55082-4917) a helpful compilation of many subjects about Fathering. Some chapter titles include: What Do We Know About Fathers? Planning Programs: What Do Fathers Want? Building Intimacy and Parenting Skills Through Father-Child Activity Time, Women Facilitators, Single Fathers in Support Groups, and Gay Fathers and Gay Fathering.

newsletter for people who care about self-esteem

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The Benefits of Hugging

*Hugging is healthy:
It helps our body's immune system,
it keeps you healthier,
it cures depression,
it reduces stress,
it induces sleep,
it's invigorating,
it's rejuvenating,
it has no unpleasant side effects,
and
hugging is nothing less than a miracle drug.*

*Hugging is practically perfect:
There are no movable parts,
no batteries to wear out,
no periodic checkups,
low energy consumption,
high energy yield,
inflation proof,
non-fattening,
no monthly payments,
no insurance requirements,
theft-proof,
nontaxable,
nonpolluting,
and
fully returnable.*

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

their lives - like Moses who was threatened as a baby by the Pharaoh's court, like Joseph who found a safe place away from his brothers' violence, even like the exiles who were shipped to Babylon after their homes were destroyed in war. We hated the leaving, without even good-byes, but we felt lucky enough to get away. And we are young. We can wait out Herod's life and then return.

The worst came later, when we heard how Herod, not finding our baby, started killing all the children of Bethlehem. We knew those babies, as young parents always know the parents of the other children in town. There was absolutely no reason that they should die. Should we have let our own be killed, to save their lives? I keep imagining turning the baby in, sacrificing him for the other children. But you never know about a crazy ruler. Herod might have killed the other children anyway, for spite, or for some other imagined offense. And you never know what violence might have gotten them another time. At least that's what I tell myself. But I know I will always try to protect the life of my own child, even if I think I should give him up. That's the limit of my wisdom, or my courage. We are deeply grieved by the deaths of the children. I think we'll never go back to Jerusalem, even though we made a home there. I couldn't bear to see Jesus grow up, the only one in his age group, and all the time know why. I couldn't bear to see the grief on the faces of the other parents. I couldn't bear to have him live always remembering the violence of his early years. So we'll go to Nazareth, probably, and start again.

Before he was born, God told me that my son would save his people. God told me that this child would be Emmanuel, God with us. We were favored by God, to become parents of this child. I didn't think that God's presence in this child would bring more violence into the world. I didn't think that our being favored would mean that others would grieve while we escaped. If my son saves his people, I hope he will save them from killing each other. If God is with us, I hope he is more powerful than this child. This child can't save anyone, not even himself. I hope that I will be able to save him, the next time that danger comes. And I know that next time I may be as powerless as the parents of those other children who died, as helpless as the parents of children who die every day. I hope that God will continue to save my son in this dangerous world.

So, my friends, are you wise enough to know why the children suffer, when the adults struggle for power? Will you be wise enough next time, not just to go on your way, but to go out of your way to protect the children who are in danger? Will you be wise enough to know that any child might be God with us? That God with us might be as vulnerable as any child? I hope so, my friends. I am finding it hard to protect my son; I fear I won't be able to do it forever. The only hope is that we somehow end the violence that threatens him and all children. Please look at the stars, and help us to do that. Then we might find our salvation. Then Rachel and the other parents may not have to weep for their children anymore.

Yours in friendship and hope, Joseph

This letter, based on Matthew 2:13-23, was written in January, 1990, by Ann McKee, Minister of St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Wayzata, MN. Special thanks to Ann McKee for permission to print this letter.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Decisions About Your Father

To Be Done Individually Or As A Group Activity

The goal of this activity is to identify decisions about your father and yourself that you made and have kept or changed.

1. Think about, write about, or tell someone else what your childhood decisions about each of the following were:
 - How much my father was absent or present (physically and emotionally).
 - What my dad taught me how to do.
 - How my dad showed his feelings.
 - What my dad thought about me.
 - How my dad felt about me.
 - What my dad wanted me to do and be.
 - What my dad said to other people about me.
 - What my dad thought was important.
 - What my dad contributed to the family.
 - (Add any others that were important to you.)
2. One at a time, compare each decision to the decision or value you hold now. Is it the same? If you have changed it, what is it now? If you are a father, how do you put that into action? If you are not a father, how do you support it in other fathers?

WAYS OF DOING THE JOB OF FATHERING

Do you prefer an Admiral Dad or a Nice Dad? Do you think a Hardworking Dad, a Professor Dad, or a Marlboro Dad does a better job of teaching children how to manage money, learn to do sports, or handle feelings?

Dr. Ken Druck has identified seven ways of fathering in his book, The Secrets Men Keep, by Dr. Ken Druck with James C. Simmons, Doubleday, 1985. After you have thought about these types from your own experience, list the advantages and disadvantages of each type. You can learn more about each type and compare your lists with the lists Druck offers in his book if you want to. He has collected information from a large number of men and synthesized it in The Secrets Men Keep.

Here are Druck's types:

The Admiral Dad
controls the family to
make sure it "runs smoothly"
but he doesn't join in
family activities.



What would you like your father to notice?

Some old, outdated cultural myth says that children need to be parented until they are about 18 and then the job ends. Those of us over 18 who have living parents know that the "job" may end but the relationship continues. As adults, many of us like special kinds of support from our fathers. I asked eleven adult men and eleven adult women how they would like to be noticed by their fathers.

Question: What would you like your father to notice about you now that you are an adult?

"That I tell the truth about my life."

"That I am a competent, independent, thinking person."

"How important he has been in my life."

"That I'm a person, not just a girl."

"ME!"

"That I am capable and loved."

"My creativity! And I would like him to claim his."

"That I am good looking or pretty."

"That there are times I need to stand up for myself even though he has taught me not to fight."

"That I am worthy of respect in my profession and that he respects me."

"How clever I am."

"That I am a girl and it is OK to be a girl."

"I would be so tickled to be noticed for one thing I couldn't even think of a second."

"Vocational competency."

"That I love him."

"Value my ideas before he cuts them down with his own ideas."

"That I am an adult."

"That I'm a good father."

"That I am special. I think I am special to him but he never tells me and I'm not sure."

"When you ask me that, I have so much pain I draw a blank. I'm going to ask my sons what they want me to notice."

I hope they don't feel like I do."

You may add the ways you would like to be noticed. Some of you may already be getting or have gotten your cherished noticing. Others may choose to ask for it from your fathers. Others may choose to get it from other respected father figures.

You fathers may, like the final respondent, ask your children what they want you to notice. If you do, listen carefully to what they want, not what you think they need. Even if you are a man of few words, tell them what you notice. Some children have to hear it to believe it.

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FINDING OUT WHAT CHILDREN NEED

Use The Fathers Faces Board on Page 7

- Post a copy of the board to remind you that every day you choose how to be a dad that day.
- On the board, draw faces for other ways of fathering or draw faces that show each kind more accurately for you.
- Choose 4 or 5 of the following situations or use your own and ask your children to point to the face that is most helpful to them (not the one they like best or want, but the one that is most helpful) when you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • wake them in the morning | • reprimand them for misdeeds |
| • call them to breakfast | • remind them to be helpful family members |
| • tell them you love them | • ask about homework |
| • remind them to put away toys | • teach them a skill |
| • tell them they can have what they want | • teach them about winning and losing |
| • tell them why they can't have what they want | • expect them to respond to other's needs and wishes |
| • tell them what you expect of them | |
| • delay gratification | |

HELPING CHILDREN KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

These activities teach understanding and empathy as well as helping children know what to expect. Select from the following activities or invent your own to use with the Fathers Faces Board.

- Point to the faces that remind you of your dad and tell about when he looked that way.
- Point to one face and tell about the style of parenting your father was using when he looked that way. Tell your child if that was helpful for you.
- Point to a face and tell why you might like to use that style in response to specific behaviors of the children. If you probably will use another style, admit that and tell them why. Here are some behaviors for school age children. You can think of behaviors that fit for your child. *This is how I would like to respond if you:*

- | | |
|---|--|
| • have a good idea | • are on the outs with a friend |
| • are having fun | • leave a friend who is doing harmful things |
| • play by the rules | • help a younger child |
| • cheat | • learn a new skill |
| • bully | • get a high grade |
| • invent new rules that make the game more fun for everyone | • get a middle grade |
| • share what you learned at school | • get a low grade |
| • "tell" when it is important to tell | • make a wise choice |
| • tattle | • do something that displeases me |
| • make a new friend | • do something thoughtful and generous |

The Nice Dad

is so agreeable, easygoing and pleasant that he doesn't deal with deep feelings. He shows his disappointment with passive-aggressive behavior or occasional outbursts of temper.



The Professor Dad

seizes on every opportunity to lecture his children about what is right or wrong. Since he is an expert on everything he underestimates his children's abilities.



The Hardworking Dad

is so focused on achievement he forgets his human limits and his family.



The Sad and Mad Dad

is deeply troubled inside but hides his sadness and never complains except in angry outbursts. He is psychologically absent and may leave physically or through alcohol.



The Marlboro Dad

sits tall in the saddle as a perfectionist and an excellent provider. He does everything well and has no needs. He expects the same approach from his sons.



The Loving Present Dad

gives priority to his role as father. He models strength and sensitivity, firmness and flexibility. He sees things from his child's point of view and teaches how to resolve disagreements.



Here are some more possible types:

The Silent Dad

says little or nothing about his beliefs and values but makes sure his children know what he is doing and gives them opportunities to do things with him. He expects the children to learn and follow the family values without ever talking about them.



The Confuser Dad

"Be sure to do this," the Confuser Dad says, and then does the opposite. He lectures or berates the children for not doing what he says, but he often smiles when they do as he does.



The Tunnel Vision Dad

doesn't notice the kids at all or doesn't notice until they...



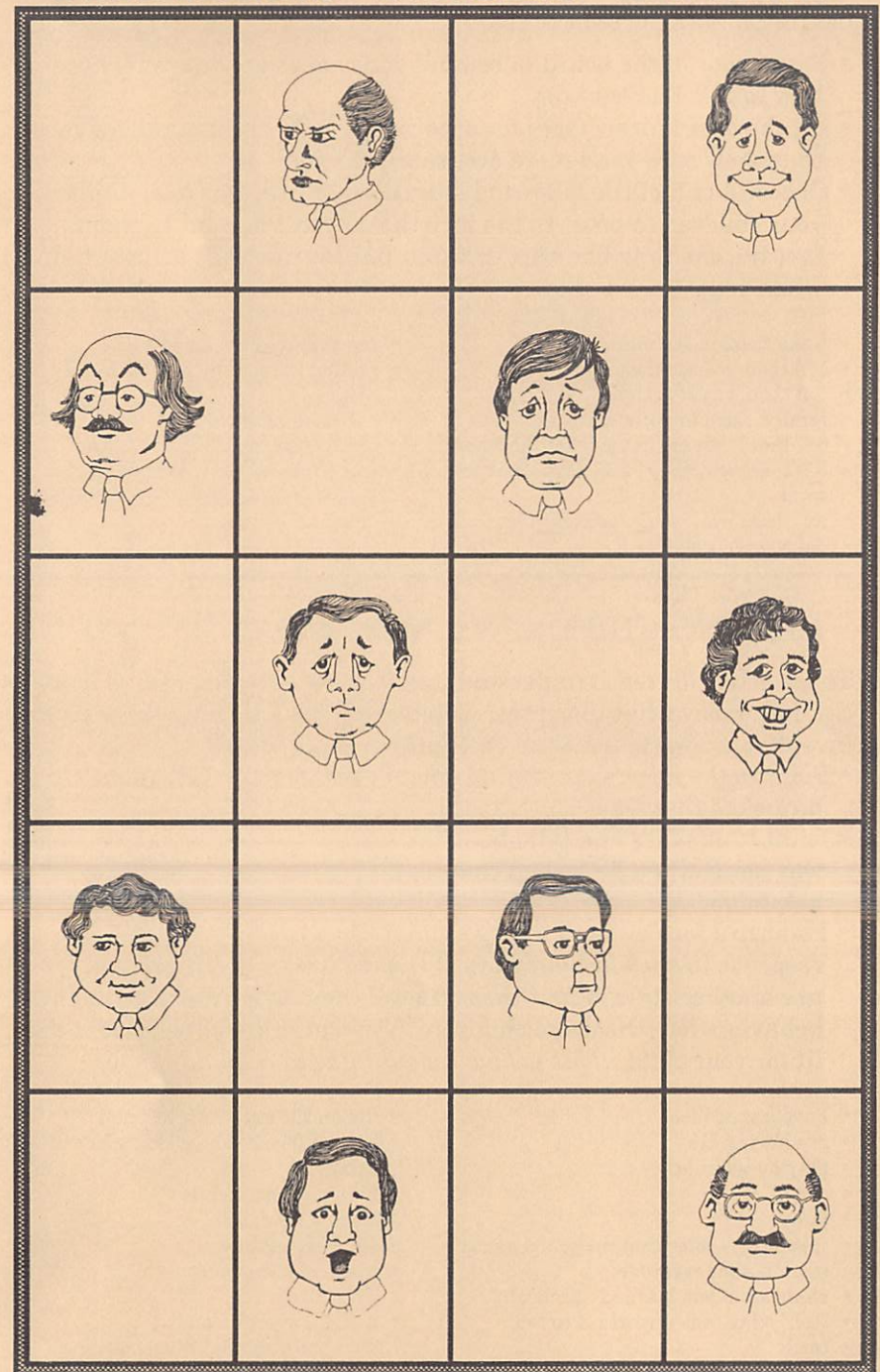
- You add other types in the spaces on the Fathers Faces Board
- Or use the spaces to draw pictures of Dads of one other ethnic or racial group. *Drawing a multicultural mix could imply how Dads of each group act.* If you send drawings of another group WE will share them with our readers.

If you are a father:

After you have thought about these types, ask yourself the important questions for you. They may be:

- What kind of father am I?
- Do I use different ways at different times?
- Am I the same as my dad?
Do I like that?
- Am I different from my dad?
Am I pleased with that difference or do I do a knee-jerk opposite?
- What new ways of being a dad am I willing to practice?

FATHERS FACES BOARD



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Thanks to Carole Gesme for the idea of the Faces Board