

# **PARENTING**

## **Counselling in the Home**

**Geoffrey Wango and Agnes Gatere**



## **DEDICATION**

### *To all Parents*

There is something I don't know  
that I am supposed to know.  
I don't know what it is I don't know,  
and yet am supposed to know,  
And I feel I look stupid  
if I seem both not to know it  
and not know *what* it is I don't know.  
Therefore, I pretend I know it.  
This is nerve-wracking since I don't  
know what I must pretend to know.  
Therefore, I pretend I know everything.

R.D. Laing, *Knots* (1970)

## **PREFACE**

Bringing up a child in a responsible manner is fairly challenging. The home is a source of comfort, socialisation and relaxation, the only place a parent and child can call their own. This is where the child finds love, warmth and acceptance, and redirects their future. Parenting is not a straightforward one-time activity: it is a process; it takes time; it involves constant and continuous guidance and counselling of the child; and, it is life-long. Most parents tend to assume that they will say whatever to the child and that she or he will listen, understand and comply. In many instances, many parents think that by providing for the material needs of the child, they have done almost enough. Providing for the child is necessary as it encompasses physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual needs. It is also essential that the child receives adequate support, constant guidance and counselling, which can only be done if parents clearly understand their role.

There are several important aspects of parenting. These include providing for basic needs such as food, health, clothing, shelter, security and education. The child also requires spiritual guidance, training on society values, beliefs and morals, mentorship and character building. Many of these needs have monetary implications. Finance is clearly important but there are additional to parenting. A parent has to constantly watch over the child, bestow love, ensure spiritual growth and instil constructive moral values and attitudes. This includes giving guidance on acceptable behaviour and appropriate language, etiquette, instilling a sense of responsibility, training and discipline.

This book discusses several requisites to successful parenting including: security, sexuality, adolescence, proper discipline, effective communication and career development. Parents need not necessarily discuss all the issues mentioned in this book with the child. Several sections can actually be read by the adolescents. Other than the understanding provided by the book, parents, counsellors, teachers and social workers should use their personal experiences and expertise to enhance life-long learning for children and young people. The book is also useful to practitioners working with children including professionals such as social workers, counselling psychologists and religious leaders. That way, the book serves as a practical and constructive guide on parenting.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We wish to express our heart-felt gratitude to all the people who have contributed to the publication of this book. This is because there are several issues that affect parents, children and adolescents at home, in school and in general life and modern living. In particular, we pay special tribute to the many parents, teachers, counsellors, members of the clergy, pupils and students with whom we shared on home and children upbringing.

We are forever grateful and indebted to our loving and caring parents who brought us up honourably, and to all our siblings, relatives, friends and acquaintances for their immense support.

Our gratitude is extended to all the children and students from whom we have learnt a lot, who have taught us to be ‘dad’ and ‘mum’, ‘auntie’ and ‘uncle’, teacher, friend and companion in every sense. We have learnt to love our children and others completely and unconditionally.

The preparation of this book has been very rigorous. Each chapter has undergone many stages of development. A lot of time was spent ensuring that the presentation of material is relevant to parents, teachers and counsellors. For such a high standard of both content and presentation, we would like to sincerely thank the following as they provided very useful insights:

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- Daisy Waitherero Wambua - Moi University
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- Jedidah Sakwa - Kenyatta National Hospital
- Dr. John Onala - Specialist in Children with Special Needs, Nairobi
- Leila Mkameli Gwiyo - University of Nairobi
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These and many other people provided a lot of essential information and input on marriage, children, family, adolescence, and spiritual growth and nourishment.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*The price of greatness is responsibility.*

Sir Winston Churchill

In many ways, all of us are generally happy together in a family. A family is a group of people who are related by blood, adoption or marriage. They form a household and live together in a house, home or compound as a unit. The close loving family bond makes the home a safe haven and promotes effective communication. The ideal family encourages skills needed to create a loving, warm and responsible relationship. Being together as loving, caring and responsible partners is a wonderful and warm experience that is both reassuring and comforting.

Having a child is a wonderful and overwhelming experience. Right from conception to birth, there is an intimate relationship between the parents and their children. The mother has maternal instincts that bind with the child, while the father too has responsibility of caring for the family. After nine months of pregnancy, of hopes and dreams, you are faced with the reality of someone who is utterly and totally dependent on you. The child looks up to you for love, care, training and support. This is also true for those parents who choose to adopt a child.

Admittedly, many parents often find parenting to be a frightening experience and are alarmed that they might not effectively meet the demands. The fear of parenting is mostly because there is hardly any formal preparation for one to become a successful parent. Some are convinced that they are doing the right thing, while others are not so sure. Many parents would admit to have been successful as a mother or father. Yet, others are fearful they could harm the child. In the end, many a parent look back, sometimes with admiration at what they have achieved, while others wonder if they could have been a better parent.

The young and new parent will listen to advice and counsel from friends, neighbours, parents, parents-in-law, relatives, counselling psychologists, doctors and nurses, clergy, colleagues and acquaintances. The information comes in bits and pieces, often sought in times of urgent need. The information could be useful, but at times it may be contradictory, leaving the parent more confused than before.

**Parental advice and counsel**

Always weigh all the advice and counsel carefully. Trust yourself as well as your instincts. In addition, seek professional advice on various aspects, and draw on your own experience as a child, and with time as a parent.

Books, newspapers, magazines and other publications, information found on the Internet and from people will tell you that you should feel instant love and care for your child and that these are somewhat spontaneous. This is rather awkward as the new parent diligently holds the tiny crying baby.

For many parents, the responsibility of parenting does not happen overnight. It takes time for this love with responsibility to grow. It also seems that everyone expects us to know how to parent; how to feed the baby, how to stop him or her from crying, when to take the baby to bed, how to tell when the child is unwell, what we should say and do at every stage, when and which school to take the child.

It must be admitted that parenting is a new experience; you cannot expect to know everything. Therefore, you should not feel unhappy or frightened by your feelings and your baby. It is prudent that you ask for help, particularly expert advice and give yourself time to learn as well as effectively adjust. Oftentimes, you may feel that your partner, the house help, friends, relatives and others around you are unable to care for the baby as well as you would want. You feel they will drop or harm the baby in some way. Just as you need to learn, so does your spouse, the house help and others. Give each other the opportunity to learn with care so that you can all become involved in parenting. No one should feel like they are an outsider.

**Information on parenting**

Parenting does not come with a user manual. The best training often comes from what a parent went through as a child, whether appropriate or improper. However, there is a lot of parenting information in books, classes, online sites, magazines and in newspapers. A wise parent has to carefully sieve the information for its relevance in the context, the child's age and values.

This book has been developed as a result of actual hands-on experience of working with parents, teachers, counsellors, psychologists, social workers, religious leaders, children and families. More importantly it is the conviction, both in individual and group counselling and training, that

the aforementioned professionals, children and parents can benefit from counsel on parenting. Subsequently, suggestions and recommendations given in this book are of two kinds:

1. General principles that are recommended or suggested to be taken into account in parenting; and,
2. Specific recommendations about explicit or appropriate aspects of the parent, child, home, school or community.

These two types of strategies are a reflection of the nature of our world and of counselling. This is because counselling situations are largely specific to an individual, situation or event. In addition, various counselling skills adopted in this book are useful in general parenting. This book is therefore suitable for parents, teachers and counsellors. Young parents may find the initial pages more exciting and progressively look at other chapters. Teachers and counsellors will focus on several chapters as they relate to their daily work. The book can also be read by young adults aged 18 - 25 years as they would find the chapters on safety, communication, growth and development, health, sickness, HIV and AIDS and general well-being very interesting. The book therefore has a variety of audience.

There are basic principles that can help in parenting. This book is therefore divided into three sections: parenting, the child and the home; growth and development; and, life issues, health and wellness.

**Part One** is on general parenting, the child, home and family and has three chapters.

**Chapter One** introduces parenting, home and vital aspects related to child care such as attention, financial considerations and planning, relationship and marriage, parenting styles, qualities of good and responsible parenting as well as rights and responsibilities.

**Chapter Two** focuses on safety and security in the house and home. This is because of the critical nature of safety and security in the house, home and compound. The chapter suggests requisite precautions for the same.

Effective family communication as an important process is discussed in detail in **Chapter Three** with an aim of making contact between members of the family more practical to enhance individual and group communication. This includes relationship among family members,

especially between the parent and the child in order to cultivate cordial relationship between children and other family members.

**Part Two** of the book lays clear emphasis on enhanced child growth and development throughout the life span. Behaviour management particularly discipline is a major concern for parents and is discussed extensively in **Chapter Four**.

**Chapter Five** establishes a link between the home and the outside World as the child enters school and emphasizes on increased parent-teacher partnership in acquisition of knowledge, skills and positive attitude by instilling appropriate values and morals at home and school.

**Chapter Six** aims to create a general understanding of physiological, emotional, psychological human sexual maturation and management. There is need for persons to understand the physical, sexual and psychological changes that accompany growth through adolescence and puberty. These include the emotional changes that can enable identify early and late maturity for boys and girls, as well as the role of parents, teachers and children in identifying ways of helping adolescents overcome the challenges that adolescents undergo during puberty.

**Chapter Seven** is a guide for parents on rearing adolescents. The chapter also has sections that an adolescent can read and this is purposeful because the young adult is also growing up and there is need for them to be familiar with the greater World.

**Part Three** highlights the tenets and challenges of modern living, using the principles of positive parenting.

**Chapter Eight** builds on the lifespan development as the person learns to interact in a positive way with others as well as cope with their emotions. Several aspects such as relationship building, decision making and dealing with stressful situations are emphasized.

**Chapter Nine** integrates healthy living as part of our lifestyle. This includes personal health, sickness and illnesses, and need for increased awareness to adopt healthy living.

**Chapter Ten** is on single parenting which is a major preoccupation of parents who need to deal with the various aspects in their unique circumstances.

**Chapter Eleven** is a reflection on various emerging issues on lifestyle and wellness that are critical considerations in the modern age. A few areas of further reflection are highlighted including religion, philosophy and spiritual nourishment.



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## Parenting: Counselling in the Home

The purpose of this book is to equip parents, counsellors, social workers and teachers with skills to assist them in child training and management at home, school and in the society. This is to enable the child grow up in a caring and loving environments where they are more understood, their needs met and they are guided according to the norms and values of positive living.

This book:

- Assists parents, counsellors and teachers in understanding the needs of the child,
- Provides parents, counsellors, teachers and other social workers including religious leaders with information about child development, and,
- Provides support and basic information about the home, school, society, child growth and development.

The book provides information to gain knowledge and understanding required in order to support the child at every stage, through infancy, adolescence into adulthood.

### *About the Authors*

**Dr Geoffrey Wango** holds a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) degree in Counselling from the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. He is a Senior Lecturer in Counselling Psychology at the University of Nairobi and has authored several books namely: *Counselling in the School: A Handbook for Teachers* (Wango and Mungai, 2007); *School Administration and Management: Quality Assurance and Standards in Schools* (Wango, 2009); *School Finance Management: Fiscal Management to Enhance Governance and Accountability* (Wango and Gatere, 2012); *Counselling Psychology in Kenya: A Contemporary Review of the Developing World* (Wango, 2015); *Early Childhood Development Education Guidance and Counselling* (Wango, Kimani, Osaka, Githinji and Amayo, 2015); and, *Study Skills for Secondary School Learners* (Wango and Gatere, 2016).

**Agnes Gatere** holds a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and is currently undertaking a Doctors of Philosophy in Business Administration at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. She has worked as a teacher in several secondary schools. She has authored several books as follows: *Top Mark KCSE Home Science: Questions and Answers* (Kithimba, Okudo, Orwa and Gatere, 2012); *School Finance Management: Fiscal Management to Enhance Governance and Accountability* (Wango and Gatere, 2012); and, *Study Skills for Secondary School Learners* (Wango and Gatere, 2016). Agnes works at the Teachers Service Commission and is a trainer in Education, Policy, Strategic Planning and Research.



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