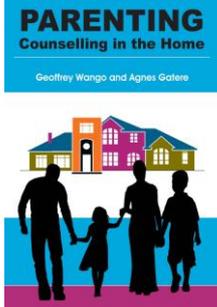


Parenting: Counselling in the Home by Geoffrey Wango and Agnes Gatere (2019). Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.



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To cite this article: Wangai, K. (2019). *Parenting: Counselling in the Home*. Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.

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The book, *Parenting: Counselling in the Home*, seeks to address the challenges of parenting in modern living. From the onset, the authors define parenting as the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development the child from infancy to adulthood. I truly admire the reference to parenting as the activity of raising a child rather than a mere relationship.

Parenting is an on-going process. Nonetheless, it has become extremely difficult in today's society for parents, especially the ever busy working father and/or mother and in particular the single parent, to adequately attend to all the needs of the child. The book helps make greater gains by assisting parents with important learning support services including a range of information on various issues in life and home. It adopts the Positive Parenting strategic approach which is constructive, purposeful, practical and progressive.

The book accomplishes this task by:

- (1) Assisting parents in understanding the needs of the child; and,
- (2) Providing parents with information and support about child growth and development.

This book is written primarily for parents as well as a wide range of people from the helping and health professions. These include: Clinical Psychologists; Counsellors; Psychologists; Psychiatrists; Sociologists; Social Workers; Physicians; Nurses; Teachers and other educators; members of the clergy as well as personnel working in the home, school and education. The authors are convinced, and rightly so, that anyone who cares about child upbringing, parenting and schooling will be deeply interested in the overall well-being of the child. Dr Geoffrey Wango, the main author, is a Counselling Psychologist with a

lot of knowledge in behavioural psychology and ably targets such a wide audience. The ultimate goal of this book is to prevent any problems in the home from becoming unresolvable in the first place, and assisting in child growth and development.

Parenting: Counselling in the Home starts with a reminder of the role of parenting in the overall development of the child. This includes the physical, spiritual, social, moral, emotional and intellectual needs of the child right from an early age and continuing through adolescence to young adulthood. What is most outstanding about the book is that it completely, and rightly, discards the encouraged common sense belief and approach that the relationship between parent and child is obvious or automatic and that the parents are aware of their duties, roles and responsibilities. The techniques used in the book are those of a practical counselling approach and applied in the home.

Parental counselling is a technique used in Child Psychiatry. The authors of *Parenting: Counselling in the Home* bring the knowledge, skills and attitudes of Family Psychology to the doorsteps of the home with a clear prominence on the child. The book provides the prerequisite information and skills with emphasis placed on helping the parent understand the child and issues that affect them, including the taken-for-granted safety and security, persons and visitors in the home and school matters. Additionally, there is the information on child growth and development which is embedded in the overall text in form of effective communication as well as aspects of human growth and development.

Clearly, parenting is a life-long process and there are several factors that influence parents as well as children. While one would have thought that the authors would do a throw ball on the challenges in parenting and possible solutions, they are more tactful and instead present the issues in a round-about way.

Parents are involved in the direct upbringing of the child. Thus, they are more responsive to helpful suggestions and constructive criticism including striving to identify aspects of parenting that can assist in child growth and development as well as aspects their child needs to work on, or build on their potential. Unfortunately, many articles and books often blame the parents when the child is at fault or misbehaves, and this puts off the ordinary parent. The authors lay emphasis on positive parenting including letting the child know when they are on course, finding out what they are doing, including when they are doing very well. This actually helps to make the book more purposeful in ensuring effective growth of the child.

Positive Psychology and hence positive parenting is emphasized as a feature adopted by experienced teachers and parents and in *Parenting* it adopts a developmental approach. In my view, this is the gist of this book. Parents will be glad they do not have to go through the tussle of looking for individual challenges and seeking solutions. Issues like child and schooling are presented in their own chapter, just as issues on adolescence growth and development are in their own section. The book advocates that parents and teachers should form effective partnerships in helping the child in school as well as in their ultimate

success in life. The book provides several essential strategies for making these collaborations work through a positive, personal, practical and progressive approach.

It is a common sense approach to look at life with its challenges and solutions, especially when there are circumstances such as HIV and AIDS, drugs and substance abuse and other issues facing the child and teenagers in a global arena. The parent must act as the glue between a caring responsible person and a wild world, enthusiastic peers out to teach the child every trick in the book and a child unskilled and unprepared for the world that still demands that they be responsible and act with integrity. It is important to also let parents know what challenges child is undergoing as they adapt to life, and that adults (parents and teachers) encourage the child/ren when they are doing well. This actually helps adults (parents, teachers and others) be more responsive to those areas where their child, teenagers and young adults require improvement. Subsequently, the parent must be equipped with knowledge, skills and techniques and I applaud the book for filling in such a growing perception.

This book makes a significant contribution to the development of values, character building, and above all, happiness in the family and the home in Kenya and elsewhere. This is because despite the demands of the present hectic lifestyle, the parent reader feels there is a lot they can gain to enhance on their own practice. I kept note of the general and specific suggestions about what parents can do to help their child at several stages in their growth and development, as well as assist the child overcome various difficulties they could be having at home and/or in school. Again, I admired the fact that the book does not take a lot of space to write personal messages for every child, teenager or parent which would make reading impossible. Instead, it makes clear attempts to ensure parenting is meaningful and nourishing, while at the same time encouraging responsible parenthood.

The authors know their readers, and parents as well as others readers will gladly welcome the book, *Parenting: Counselling in the Home*.