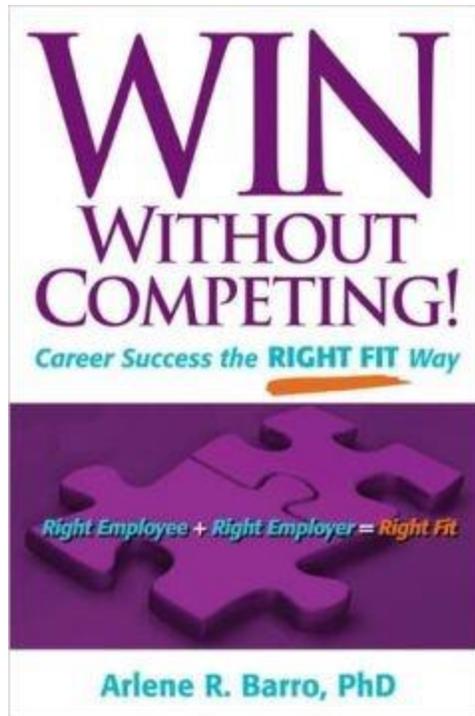


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene — Parenting Causes Stress



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Dr. Arlene Barro

Children are the product of their parents. Some stress is inherent in the process of parenting for children and parents. Changing the mindset of parents on how to raise children can reduce stress. The first step is focusing on the desired result: the successful transitioning of your children to adults. Unfortunately, many adults do not have the skills to function autonomously. Consequently, they need to learn these skills as adults.

Parenting Adults

Daily, I work with adults who cannot make simple decisions, have no passion for their career/personal life, and devoid of any sense of urgency. Their behavior is rigid. They are stuck in a behavioral pattern that is not working. When I ask my clients questions about their childhood, I learn how they were parented. We identify what they did not learn as children and put in the missing behaviors, creating what I call the new infrastructure.

After they change their behaviors, they admire and respect who they have become. The process of emerging as a fully functioning adult is not easy. The ideal is to parent children using the Right Fit Strategies to eliminate the need for extensive parenting of adults, as I have described. Note: the deficiencies in parenting are not necessarily correlated with a child's IQ. In fact, the gifted who are highly sensitive may need adult parenting.

Parenting Children

Think of parenting children as a journey of discovery for you and them. You have an opportunity to mentor your children on how to become thriving adults. If both of you are growing and learning together, you are setting the stage for a successful adult. My father, Cantor Tevelle H. Ring, was a master politician. He never used the word "should." Instead, he used words to make me think. As a small child I saw myself making decisions. For example, he never told me to rush. Instead, he said, "time is marching on." I understood that I needed to move faster and began saying that phrase to myself, which I still do today. He taught me urgency without causing me stress.

I grew up in Brookline, Mass., the birthplace of John F. Kennedy. My dad loved walking. He walked me daily like a little dog. When we were heading back home, I used to tell my dad I was tired which meant it was time for my piggyback ride. One day, I was surprised when I expressed my fatigue, my dad told me to sit down and rest. Then, walk home after I was rested. He had outsmarted me. What did I do? I continued walking with him, of course. The gig was up! I never requested another piggyback ride again. Looking back, I believe I was getting too heavy for him to carry me. He never mentioned my weight. Instead, he showed me how to change my behavior using his Right Fit Strategy. His strategies to mentor me did not cause us stress. He designed the strategies to match who I was. That is why I refer to them as Right Fit Strategies, the foundation of my Right Fit Method.

Interestingly enough we did not argue because he taught me how to manage the process. I knew that he did not want me to do certain things, but the decisions were mine. For example, when I was in college I told him I was going to work as a waitress at a hotel in the summer, away from home, to help pay for college. I knew from the expression on his face that he looked uncomfortable, but he did not tell me to stay. He knew that I had to test my wings. When I returned at the end of the summer, he understood that I had a grueling experience and he was right. He never said, "I told you so," instead, he welcomed me back.

Flying Solo

Children are like little birds. Gradually, they get ready to leave their nest. As they begin to fly solo, with less and less supervision, it is very important that they are motivated to be successful. Prepare them in advance to manage peer pressure, the unexpected and even bullying. Encourage your children to speak up and express their feelings. Remember, they need to function successfully early in life to continue blooming throughout their lives. Create a memorable journey of parenting which will build strong positive bonds between you and your children.

Questions about parental stress? Email: drbarro@barroglobal.com My response to your question could appear in my next column.

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