

# LIFESTYLES

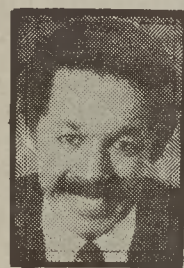
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THURSDAY  
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## Children also carry burden of stress

"Children sure do have it easy. They can live at home and relax. Only adults have to carry the heavy burden of destructive stress."

This is one of the most inaccurate statements that I have ever heard. The exact opposite is true. Children live in stress from the very moment they are born. One of the things that makes their stress so horrible is that adults don't think that children have stress. So, they don't do anything to alleviate the child's stress. In fact, adults pile more and more stress on the child each



Coping

**CHARLES FAULKNER**

day. What causes children to have stress? The answer is obvious: Children have enormous stress because of the pressure that parents put on them to be perfect. "You're just a child. You can't make decisions for yourself. You'd better do everything that I tell you to do. (And), You had better not make a mistake."

Some parents even threaten the child with extreme physical abuse. Other parents take out their own frustrations and stress on the child by turning the child into a punching bag.

Teachers impose constant psychological stress on the child by throwing each child into competition with one another and by making the child think that failing a test is the end of the world. The pressure sparked by the fear of failure is so overwhelming that it makes serious studying impossible. The stress destroys the child's memory, motivation, concentration, and often, his/her health. Yet, the parent says, "My child sure does have it easy."

We haven't yet said a word about peer pressure. If the child doesn't get one of the best grades on every exam, the other students often ridicule him/her. The child feels the need to be the best at everything. Yet, this is unrealistic. No one is outstanding at everything.

This pressure from parents, teachers, fellow students, friends and associates is unending. It is the constant companion of the child, practically throughout his/her life.

## Responsibility urged in workshops on sex

By Cassandra Wynn  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Michael Rorie, 17, has big plans. He will graduate from Garinger High School this spring. He has been accepted at N.C. A&T State University in Greensboro and wants to major in architecture engineering.

Michael realizes that a bad decision right now could ruin those plans. Like most boys his age, he has to confront issues concerning sexuality all the time.

"It's scary," Michael admitted. "The pregnancy part. I'm not ready to have a baby. That's in the back of your mind. You think about things like if you do this, is she going to get pregnant and will you end up being a deadbeat dad. Or am I going to be a responsible adult?"

It may be peer pressure or just the hormones kicking in. No matter what they've been taught at home, confronting their sexuality is something that most teenagers have to do.

The Male's Place, a program of the Mecklenburg County Health Department, is designed to help young men like Michael make wise and responsible choices when it comes to sex.

"The bottom line is to promote male sexual responsibility and involvement," said Reggie Singleton, The Male's Place coordinator. "All the emphasis on responsibility is placed on females and the guys have been left out of the loop and not held accountable. If we are to have an impact on teen pregnancy, we have to involve men and expect more responsibility across the board."

In his seminars on sexuality, Singleton tells youngsters, "If you choose not to be abstinent, then you should be responsible."

Michael has attended workshops and Singleton's message has been pounded into Michael's head: "When you become a father early, chances are that you may drop out of school, with no skills and limited options. It puts you in a rotten position."

But sex has always been an all-too-delicate subject. "Guys are embarrassed to talk about sex," Michael said. "They are worried about being pressured by parents if they talk to them. Their moms might start watching their phone calls and sweating them."

Clearing up the myths



Sharonda Clinkscales, 13, and Michael Rorie, 17, say they want to make responsible decisions.

Photo/PAUL WILLIAMS III

about sex is what Singleton tackles first in presentations to adolescents.

"There is so much mystery to sex," said Singleton. "No one taught our parents. They learned primarily through trial and error, jokes, myths and friends. A lot of it is inaccurate and not very positive."

Judy Williams says she is open and honest when she talks to any of her eight children (three biological and five foster) about sex. "I lay it to 'em on the line. I get out the medical books so there won't be any myths."

Most important, said Williams, who has had her children attend the workshops on sex, is teaching responsibility. "I tell them I'm not going to shoulder your responsibility. I tell them that when you do grown-up things, you have to take grown-up responsibility for it."

Abstinence is what Williams preaches. "I advocate no sex before marriage. I tell them that sex is beautiful under the right circumstances.

I say don't end up getting a baby. You can protect yourself."

Singleton said that those in sex education "see teen pregnancy and sexual behavior as separate things. You can't control sexual behavior, but you can teach responsibility."

The more comprehensive approach to sex education is aimed at factors involving teens' decision-making process. "It's not just plumbing anymore," Singleton said. "Talking about behavior is just as important."

In existence since 1981, The Male's Place is aimed at boys but its workshops include girls also.

"Most boys are responsible and respectful and have a sense of restraint and control. Still disturbing is teen pregnancy. There is still a large number of males who aren't taking responsibility," Singleton said.

Teen mothers are getting younger, according to statistics from the Mecklen-

burg Council on Adolescent Pregnancy (MCAP). In 1992, 2,064 teens became pregnant. Ninety-seven girls 14 and younger became pregnant and of that number 66 girls gave birth compared to 46 the year before.

Robin Woods figures that two out of 10 teens that she works with are sexually active. Woods is the teen advisor at Johnston YMCA.

Peer pressure is a problem for teens, Woods said. "Kids put each other into categories. They may say she's dumb because she's not doing anything. A lot of the eighth-grade girls have started to watch the guys playing basketball and are doing things to attract them," she said.

There is pressure for 13-year-old Sharonda Clinkscales. "Why don't you do it? There ain't nothing wrong with it," are some of the things she said she hears from peers.

But Sharonda is adamant about waiting. "One reason, I'm too young. It doesn't feel right now. There are a lot of diseases going around. And

my mom would kill me," she said.

Singleton stresses several things to teens at his workshops:

•You don't have to be promiscuous to be manly. Being monogamous is manly.

•Two persons should be equally responsible. Both the guy and girl should use protection against pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases including AIDS and HIV.

•Choices made now can have an impact much later. With a sense of decency, self respect, assertiveness and peer refusal skills, youngsters can make responsible choices.

Workshops are available for school and church groups as well as small groups. For information, call

## THE AFRICAN AMERICANS



Akanke Ast, Spelman College student, on cover of "The African Americans." It made an October debut at bookstores.

## Book filled with lush photos

By Cassandra Wynn  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

"The African Americans" (1993, Viking Studio Books) may be one of the "must gets" for Christmas.

Lush with rich color and black and white photos, "The African Americans" chronicles contemporary life for black Americans. Although the book has historical figures like Frederick Douglass, Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson, Thurgood Marshall and Martin Luther King Jr., much of the book also contains the little-known people who are working in community service, business, the arts, entertainment and churches to make a difference.

"It's for everybody," said

co-editor Charles Collins. "One of the messages is that we're all in this together—the fireman, the poet, the doctor, lawyer. Where the heart and soul of the book rests is with everyday people."

Collins, who lives in San Francisco, is president of WDG Companies, which is engaged in real estate, community and economic development.

The book made its debut in book stores earlier this month. The large-format, full-color book contains 240 pages and more than 250 photographs accompanied with text. John Hope Franklin, historian and author of "From Slavery to Freedom," wrote the introduction.

Photographs from the book are featured in the October

issue of Ebony magazine, the Today show and in Parade magazine.

The book includes recent pictures of the late Arthur Ashe and Arthur Mitchell, Reginald Lewis, Nobel-Prize winner Toni Morrison, author Terry McMillan, lawyer/teacher Anita Hill, boxer Muhammad Ali and former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Colin Powell are among those whose pictures are in the book.

But the photographs of African American, who are not famous and in the trenches make the book unique, Collins said. From Phillip Simmons, a retired iron worker in Charleston, S.C., to John Osborne, who is pictured helping his daughter with her homework to Shirley Clark,

a seasonal farm worker, the book makes an effort to cover every aspect of life.

"Our success is measured by the everyday heroes who are now working to improve lives. We wanted to give them some prominence. It is important that somebody pays attention to them," Collins said.

"The African Americans" is divided into eight sections: "Service to the Community," "A Quest For Knowledge," "Economic Achievement," "A Cultural Richness," "Amazing Grace," "Everyday Heroes," "Hope for the Future." Each chapter begins with an historical overview accompanied by a complement of pictures.

"We wanted a book that See 'AFRICAN' Page 10A

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