

Success linked to relationships

DURHAM, NC—When the book "Dress for Success" came out, many people read the bestseller believing it would help them make it in the business world. But childhood relationships with parents and siblings may determine how high one climbs the corporate or social ladder as an adult, says Duke child psychiatrist Dr. John Looney.

"When we're little, it's our parents' attitudes toward us that give us our first feeling of worth—negative or positive," Looney says. We learn from them how to meet the expectations of the rest of the world."

Through interactions with sisters and brothers, a child takes the first step in acquiring skills like cooperation, honesty, helping, leadership, followership, negotiation and sharing, Looney says.

To a certain extent, sibling rivalry is an important part of growing up. "Mastering issues of rivalry is related to the feeling of making it," he says. "A reasonable amount of rivalry is healthy." (If, however, rivalry becomes so intense that it's painful or disruptive to family life, Looney advises seeking professional help. Often, the therapist will treat the family—and not just the child who is thought to be the source of problems.)

Through rivalry, young children lie for attention, particularly that of their parents. "Rivalry often manifests itself in terms of arguments over material things, such as who owns the family pet," Looney says. "But a child will soon learn that fights will not be rewarded."

Although establishing ownership of material possessions seems to be the issue, a child wants to feel a sense of accomplishment or be appreciated for his worth or uniqueness, he says.

In school a child takes with him family experiences and learns more about maintaining self-esteem and generating the approval of his peers and teachers. Relationships within other organizations—companies, military and clubs—will depend on his earlier success or failures.

Birth order may also influence success. Within a family, an older sibling may take on a leadership role whereas the younger sibling may become a good follower.

If the older child is male and the younger one a female, their relationship may result in stereotypical sex roles, Looney says. Later dissonance may arise because these children will expect gender specific behavior from others.

If all the siblings are of the same sex, Looney says, they may have to work harder at understanding how relationships with the opposite sex work.

"The data suggest that an adult may have an easier marriage if the relationship with a mate is similar to one he had with a sibling as a child," he says. "For example, a male with an older sister might do well being married to someone who is more of a pioneer, trouble shooter or leader. As a child, he has learned one way of working with a specific personality."

In marriage as well in other adult relationships, two first-borns may have difficulty getting along. "They are both used to being decision-makers and neither may be a good follower," Looney says.

When both parents are working—a situation that is common nowadays—the family relationships will be different. Looney feels these changes are overall beneficial to the well-being of the family. "The children will see that women can be professionals too, and that they are not limited to domestic tasks. The family will have to share chores, instead," Looney points out. "Also, two incomes mean an increase in the economic welfare of the family."

Only children may run into some difficulty because they have neither the experience of being a follower or leader within the family. "First borns with siblings are at an advantage in terms of making things work in a social or corporate setting," Looney says.

On the average, only and first-born children seem to have an edge because parents usually have special expectations of them. The child may adopt their expectations and strive for success but not without added psychological stress. Although only children have no siblings, they are first-born and never have siblings who may soften their parents' expectations.

"If you went to a group of people who might be considered to be suc-

cessful, say a class of first-year medical students or students in law school and asked those who were first-born or only children to raise their hands, you'd find that they were in the majority," he says.

In single-parent households the parent often has to be both mother and father. "If the family consists of one parent and one child, the child has no one with whom to compete and may be at a disadvantage socially," Looney explains. But with the advent of daycare programs, children may have an opportunity to experiment with a variety of behaviors and learn what is acceptable among his peers.

Looney says there is no exact formula to determine who will do well because so many factors are involved. But parents may increase their child's chances if they keep the following in mind:

Examine your marital relationship. The way you cooperate, share responsibilities, show respect and communicate with each other will be a model for your children. Looney feels this is the most important thing parents can do. Single parents should seek stable sources of support.

Be aware of the expectations you place on each child. Don't expect the first child to be the next president. At the same time, don't allow the youngest to become more dependent, have fewer responsibilities or treat him like the baby of the family. Don't overlook the needs of the middle child.

Understand that children will have disputes and territorial grievances. Be discreet about intervention, and make it a learning experience. For example, show them alternatives such as negotiating, taking turns, sharing or playing together.

Respond to each child's strengths and vulnerable areas and develop self-esteem within each child. "If they tend to categorize themselves—one is the family brain, the other is the athlete—avoid buying into that," Looney says. "Encourage each child's development in other areas and don't compare them to each other."

If you have an only child, make sure he has friends and other peers so he can develop relationships with others.



Pictured above is Clint Winslow winner of the Jams t-shirt given away by Darden's Department Store in Hertford. Clint was one of several who registered to win the giant shirt which was displayed in Darden's store window.

VA announces Golden Age games

The Veterans Administration will sponsor the Second National Golden Age Games, August 6-9 at the VA Medical Center, Ft. Lyon, Colo.

The games are open to veterans 55 years of age and older who are currently hospitalized in or are outpatients at VA health care facilities.

A multi-event recreational sports meet, the Golden Age Games provide opportunities for veterans to compete in sports activities geared to their capabilities. The games include activities such as bicycling, billiards, bowling, checkers, croquet, horse-shoes, swimming and table tennis.

"The Golden Age Games reflect the resilience and positive health potential of many older veterans who are receiving medical care in VA facilities," said Thomas K. Turnage, Administrator of Veterans Affairs. "In addition to our concern for the immediate medical needs of veterans, our programs also address their mental, emotional and physical well-being. Sports and fitness programs are a vital part of the total preventive

health care program for the aged."

The VA has a long history of involvement in sports activity for the elderly as one of many programs designed to improve the equality of life for the aging veteran. For the VA, the challenge of providing services to increasing numbers of older veterans is at hand, and the proportion of the population which is elderly is increasing much more rapidly in the veteran population than in the general population. VA researchers and

clinicians have been in the forefront of the growing fields of gerontology and geriatrics through extensive research of Alzheimer's disease and development of innovative programs that provide care for aging veterans.

During the year, each VA medical center conducts local competition for Golden Age regional meets which determine winners who then travel to the national event. More than 120 participants are expected to compete for this year's top awards.

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