Section Seven

Supporting a Healthy Lifestyle

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Teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse and violence: these problems afflicting young people have elicited focused educational programs and interventions in the form of sex education, substance abuse prevention and conflict resolution. Approaching these issues from the perspective of heart and character yields distinctive insights. It happens that all these problems are part of a constellation of risky behaviors that is impacted by character and the familial relations that are meant to foster it. Hence, prevention begins with general character education from the early grades. Character-based approaches go beyond giving information about risky behavior; they empower students to take responsibility. Just as importantly, they situate the behavior within a larger context of life's meaning and purpose, thus giving a perspective that examines consequences far beyond the concerns of the moment. Character-based programs that focus on core motivational factors, including the search for meaning and value, give added protection to youth.

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Character-Based Sexuality Education

MARGARET MURPHY, A NURSE AT A MIDDLE SCHOOL IN A suburb outside Chicago, has two weeks to present her proposal to the school board. The time has come for the school to select a formal sexuality education program. The pregnancy of an eighth grader has galvanized the community, and the several health presentations in physical education class are no longer enough. The superintendent favors an abstinence-oriented program. A vocal member of the school board wants birth control information to be center stage. What should Nurse Murphy do?

Stopping further pregnancies is an immediate concern. Even making condoms available to the students is an option to consider. Yet crisis management has to be weighed against long-term goals, she realizes. The school has just begun a character education initiative. What approach best supports the kind of ethos they are aiming for, one of respect and self-restraint, that precludes irresponsible sexual experimentation?

Murphy takes her role as a health advocate and educator very seriously. What is the optimal health message regarding teenage sexual behavior? In short, what is the program her conscience could live with? Margaret Murphy has entered the controversial world of sexuality education. It is a world of competing philosophies, sometimes-conflicting claims of research, and passionate feelings on both sides.

The fundamental postulate guiding this volume is that character issues deserve priority in education. This suggests as a corollary that a character-based approach is most appropriate in the area of sexuality education as well. After reviewing this approach and the competing model of sexuality education, the advantages of character-based sexuality education will be examined in terms of its effectiveness and its compatibility with general character education.

Contrasting the Approaches

Two competing models of sexuality education influence how both teachers and parents socialize youth about sex. One emphasizes technology and techniques to reduce the harmful consequences of sexual relations. This contraceptive-based sexuality education is also often called the comprehensive or "safer sex" approach. The other model focuses on self-control to prevent adolescent sexual activity. This model is commonly called the abstinence-based approach to sex education. The most up-to-date methods of abstinence education, however, frame the message of abstinence with a view to developing character and inculcating a positive vision of love, marriage and family. Therefore, this model is more accurately called a character-based approach.

There are essential differences between the two approaches. Contraceptive-based sexuality education, on the one hand, sees responsible and healthy sexual relations as based on mutual consent and including birth control and prophylactics.[1] Risk-reduction of physical consequences through increasing use of protective devices is considered the only viable objective, since the approach assumes teenagers will inevitably experiment with sex. This attitude is typified in the words of Susan Newcomer, director of education for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, "Teens are having intercourse, they have always done so, and no amount of exhortation will cause them to stop."[2] Educators promote birth control and prophylactics and make them available to all students. The immediate appeal of "safer sex" education is its pragmatic simplicity.

On the other hand, character-based sexuality education sets the desirable standard as no sexual relations until marriage.[3] "We teach that abstinence from sexual intercourse outside of lawful marriage is the expected social standard for unmarried, school-aged persons," said

Stephen Pryor, spokesman for the Mobile County, Alabama, public schools.[4] Its objective is risk-elimination, consistent with policies regarding other hazards, such as smoking, substance abuse and weapons at school. Contraceptives are not promoted; they are seen as conveying adult expectations of sexual activity. When educators discuss contraceptives, they clarify their limitations. In addition, this approach stresses prevention of the psychological, moral and relational risks of premarital sex.[5]

The character-based approach holds an intuitive appeal in its resonance with parents' and educators' task to encourage strong character in the young. Fostering self-control, personal integrity, compassion and altruism, as well as a deep sense of meaning and purpose, is the deeper and longer-term solution to not only pregnancy and disease but also all problematic behaviors of youth: truancy, substance abuse, and violence.

View of Marriage and Family

Character-based sexuality education holds that marriage and the two-parent family is the norm and the only acceptable goal to be advocated by family life educators dealing with the general population. The value of marriage has an objective basis in research and cross-cultural studies.[6] The marriage norm in turn provides the basis for advocating premarital abstinence as the sole responsible sexual ethic.[7]

Contraceptive-based education sees this differently. It asserts that in a pluralistic society, views on marriage and family are so diverse that students must interpret them individually in counsel with various sources of guidance.[8] Thus this approach presents information within the context of various views of sexual morality. Students are encouraged to develop their independence and own moral guidelines. These are based on being well-informed and assessing alternatives and consequences as well as consulting trusted authorities.[9] In the words of Susan Wilson, executive coordinator of the New Jersey Network for Family Life Education, it is better to "support the decision to say 'yes' as well as 'no' to sexual involvement." Sex educator Mary Lee Tatum advises, "encourage abstinence but not to the exclusion of other decisions people might make."[10]

The character-based approach recognizes that sexuality is inherently morally laden. Teenagers need not only information but also

The Two Approaches at a Glance

The following chart offers a thumbnail sketch of the contrasts between the two models:

Character-Based	Contraceptive-Based
Norm is no sexual relations until marriage	Norm is sexual relations by mutual consent & use of protection[11]
Contraceptives not promoted, as would undermine abstinence[12]	Contraceptives promoted as effective protection[13]
Appeal as character-building	Pragmatic appeal
Supports most parents' values	Tolerates diverse values
Morally directive	Non-directive[14]
Assumes teenagers respond to abstinence message	Assumes teenage sexual activity is inevitable
Abstinence defined as no genital activity[15]	Abstinence includes "low risk" sex[16]
Age-appropriate discussion respects natural modesty	Explicit discussion to instruct in contraceptive use
Supports parents without reservation[17]	May support students' privacy against parents[18]

unambiguous guidance. "With drugs or tobacco we are crystal clear. How can we be vague about sex which can potentially mess up their lives even worse?" asks a California father. "Children hunger for this moral clarity and direction from adults," says Thomas Lickona.[19] They are able to positively respond to the challenge and protection of the abstinence message.

Modesty and Parental Involvement

To facilitate contraceptive education, "safer sex" educators advocate explicit discussion about sexual anatomy and practices in mixed-gender settings from a young age.[20] This desensitizing technique lowers barriers to dealing with issues surrounding contraceptive use. A widely used Rutgers University program, *Learning about Family Life*,

advocates telling children in kindergarten, "The man puts his penis in the woman's vagina and that it feels really good for both of them."[21]

Further, it advocates allowing students health services—such as receiving contraceptives and abortions—without the parents' knowledge when the parents' right to know clashes with the child's right to private decisions.[22]

Conversely, to protect the natural modesty of young people, character-based education favors accurate yet discreet, developmentally appropriate instruction. Pre-teenagers often receive discussion in separate-gender settings.[23] In addition, educators encourage parents' protective interests by supporting their right to know about their children's circumstances without reservation.[24] It recommends involving parents in designing the program and reviewing every element before it is presented.

Comparing Program Effectiveness

The rate of births to unmarried girls aged 15 to 19 recently declined for the first time in 25 years.[25] During the five-year period from 1991 to 1996 abortions declined as well, as did overall sexual activity. At the same time, condom use rose 33 percent.

Was this improvement due more to the increase in condom use or to greater abstinence? More specifically, should the "safer sex" approach or abstinence education receive the credit? Though research is sometimes ambiguous and the abstinence-oriented programs are too new for extensive testing, an association representing 2,000 health professionals, the Consortium of State Physicians Resource Councils, attributed the decline in the birth rate to the increase in abstinence-focused education and "increased cultural acceptance of abstinence."[26]

Why? Before surveying the evidence it is helpful to note the record for the contraceptive-based approach. Although it has enjoyed the lion's share of funding and time to prove itself, it has not been shown to be effective. "The 20 to 30 years of contraceptive education... did not show a decrease in sexual activity... pregnancy rates and... STD rates," concludes Reynolds W. Archer, former director of family planning and sex education programs for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.[27]

One comprehensive 1997 overview by the World Health Organization of over 50 studies of contraceptive-based programs gave

a dismal outlook.[28] Over half—27—found the programs under review to have no impact at all on behavior or attitudes. The remaining studies deemed such programs to be somewhat successful in delaying sexual activity, reducing the number of partners or reducing unwanted pregnancies or STDs. However, these were minimal improvements based on small samples. In one case, only 12 students out of a comparison involving a total of over 430 were found to have resisted sexual activity, and even this gain was lost in the following months.[29]

The Achilles heel of "safer sex" education is its objective to increase consistent contraceptive use. This is extremely difficult to achieve. Even among couples where one spouse is HIV-infected and they are continuing to have sexual relations, only about half of these highly motivated adult couples could be bothered with using condoms.[30] Given this resistance, what level of diligence can be expected of teenagers who have no evidence that their partner is infected? Researcher Douglas Kirby concedes, "It may actually be easier to delay the onset of intercourse than to increase contraceptive practice."[31]

Yet even when the consistent use of condoms increases, rates of pregnancy and disease do not necessarily decline. One reason is that condoms and other devices are unreliable or even useless against certain important hazards. Condoms are in fact poor birth control, exhibiting between 13 to 27 percent failure rates in students under the age of twenty.[32] Indeed, the recent statistics about adolescent sex during 1990 to 1995 show teenagers' increase in rates of condom use was matched by their increase in rates of out-of-wedlock births.[33]

Condoms are even worse as disease control. In the case of the most prevalent viral STDs such as genital herpes and human papilloma virus, condoms are virtually useless.[34] Rates of chlamydia transmission have been found to be identical whether condoms are used or not.[35] Against deadly HIV, overall failure rates range from 10 to 30 percent for consistent adult condom users, in a comparison of five different studies published since 1993. "It is a disservice to encourage the belief that condoms will prevent the sexual transmission of HIV," concludes researcher Susan Weller in her analysis of multiple studies.[36]

In contrast, character-based programs offer 100 percent reliability against pregnancy and disease when they can succeed in reaching young people with the abstinence message. They have yielded dramatic results in reducing teenage pregnancies and delaying the onset of sexual activities.

"Low Risk" Sex?

Perhaps the fatal flaw in the logic of contraceptive-based education is best revealed by the advocacy of so-called "low risk" sex activities—those short of intercourse. Debra Haffner, executive director of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), recommends teaching adolescents about "oral sex, mutual masturbation" and other techniques "to help them delay the onset of genital intercourse."[37] Since these behaviors carry less risk of conception or transmission of disease, enjoying them as an alternative to intercourse is considered a benefit. Of course, common sense would suggest the opposite. These activities are otherwise called foreplay and lead to strong arousal, putting the couple at great risk for actual intercourse. No evidence has ever been shown to the contrary.

The recent proliferation of the practice of oral sex among middle and high school American students would seem to be the realization of these advocates' hopes. Yet it is not bringing positive results.

On one hand, such non-penetrative activity still holds a significant measure of risk of disease. More than 5 percent of AIDS infections are transmitted by oral sex.[38] A young teenage girl was admitted to a New Jersey hospital with such severe genital herpes she could not stand because of the pain. She received the disease from oral sex.[39] On the other hand, most of the non-physical risks of sex—the psychological harm, the link to substance abuse and suicide, and the impaired preparation for committed relationships—are unmitigated. Adolescents still report regret, shame, a sense of degradation and deepened loneliness as a consequence of "low-risk sex."[40]

Actual promotion—not just tolerance—of sexual activity apart from the context that makes it safe and responsible reveals the deep-seated bias that adolescents should be free to experience sex prior to maturity and marriage. Peggy Brick of

Planned Parenthood has said that "pleasure, sexual satisfaction... and orgasm" are important to be emphasized to adolescents, even without reference to marriage.[41] Sex is seen as a natural right and potentially enriching experience, and therefore no blanket prohibition is warranted.

As long as these attitudes persist among educators, the contradictory effort to encourage youthful sexual experimentation while trying to contain the negative consequences will continue.

Pregnancy Reduction through the Character-Based Approach

Best Friends, a character-based program in Washington, D.C., reduces the rate of unwed pregnancies within a high-risk, lower class urban population. Of the 600 Washington girls in grades nine through twelve who participated for two years or more, only 1 percent became pregnant, as opposed to a 25 percent citywide rate for girls of comparable age.[42]

A 74 percent reduction in their teen pregnancy rate was reported in East St. Louis, Illinois after the first year of their character-based educational experiment.[43] Character-based programs at Jefferson High School, located within the Washington, D.C. area, resulted in a significant decline in high school pregnancy rates over five years, as well as an overall improvement in school performance.[44]

Some of these programs only indirectly could be called sex education efforts. As with the best character education initiatives, a character-building context is created and the constructive results—whether reduced substance abuse, violence or pregnancies—flow from that. The National Longitudinal Adolescent Health Study noted that youth attending schools implementing intentional character education enjoyed additional protection against early sexual activity.[45]

The Teen Outreach Program of general character building through service learning began in 1978 and is now used in 120 middle school classrooms in over two dozen cities with over 6,000 students enrolled. A careful four-year evaluation reports a 40 percent reduction in pregnancies among teenagers in the program, as contrasted with their counterparts who applied for the programs but were not selected by lot-

tery.[46] Kirby concluded in his landmark 1996 survey, "This is the best evidence we have that any single program can actually reduce teen pregnancy."[47]

Decline in Adolescent Sex

Besides reducing pregnancies, other measurable areas for evaluation are the delay in the onset of sexual activity, reduction of sexual activity itself, and the promotion of attitudes favoring abstinence. Character-based education excels in all three of these areas.

Over 90 percent of the virgins participating in the *Art of Loving Well* course were still abstinent two years later, as compared with about 70 percent of non-participating counterparts.[48] "If it weren't for Loving Well, I would be a father!" wrote one eighth-grade boy in Dudley, Massachusetts.[49]

Among teenagers in the Best Friends program, only one in five lost their virginity before twelfth grade, contrasted with three out of four comparable girls who did not participate.[50] Similarly, there was five times the protection of the students' virginity among 4,500 eighth-grade girls who participated in Postponing Sexual Involvement, an abstinence-oriented health program used in Atlanta, Georgia.[51] 70 percent of the girls said they learned that they "can postpone sexual activity without losing their friends' respect." The protective influence persisted into the following year.[52]

An evaluation of two programs, Facing Reality and Choosing the Best, involving over 6,800 Illinois middle and high school students from 76 schools, showed an increase in the number of students who believed that sexual urges could be controlled and that saving sex until marriage is valuable.[53] Surprisingly, this change in attitude was greater among the sexually experienced and those virgins whose circumstances would suggest a higher risk for premarital sex.[54]

Thus, evidence affirms the intuitive expectation: cultivating the heart and strengthening the conscience of youth helps them to better resist all influences not conducive to their best interests. Character-based sexuality education helps to reduce unwed teenage sexual activity and pregnancies and other harmful consequences that follow.

Focus on the Cause

Why are the character-based programs effective? There may be many factors, but certainly the chief virtue of character-based sex education is its focus on the actual cause of the problem. It looks squarely at the fact that except in cases of rape, teenage pregnancy is essentially the result of lifestyle and is in the realm of choice. Teenage pregnancy is but a symptom of the deeper problem of teenagers having sex outside of the maturity and commitment that characterize marriage. The same holds true for sexually transmitted diseases, which persist despite the widespread availability of contraceptives and advances in medical technology. As physician Farzin Davachi states, STDs are "a moral problem [requiring]... a moral remedy."[55] Those practicing abstinence before entering into a lifelong, monogamous marital relationship face a negligible risk of contracting AIDS or any other STD.

The temptation to focus on preventing pregnancy and STDs, rather than addressing the sexual behavior that causes them, is understandable. Addressing teenage pregnancy and sexual diseases in themselves are not as contentious as the emotionally charged issue of premarital sex. Besides, there is a known route—promotion by physicians and the media, for example—for getting a population to use technology to protect themselves. However, targeting the consequences rather than the causal behavior—stressing a secondary level of prevention over the primary one—is ultimately inefficient and ineffective.

The Teen Outreach Program serves as an example of the elegance and efficiency of the character-based approach. Yet this relatively simple and inexpensive program devotes less than 12 percent of its time to discussion of sexual issues. Its effectiveness is due to its addressing the pillars of character in a way that supports the three basic life goals.

The program addresses young people's need to make a meaningful contribution. Joseph Allen, a University of Virginia psychologist, observed in the teenagers a significant change in self-perception: greater self-respect and an enhanced sense of self-worth by finding a more valuable role to play in the community. "When they learn to take care of others, they learn to take care of themselves," he remarks.[56] In addition, they learn the benefits of altruism: what is given is received.

The program also meets the need for warm peer relationships and a sense of belonging. TOP integrates discussion and group spirit building with the volunteer activity. When teens get involved in mean-

ingful friendships with a wide circle of peers, the narrow and inward focus offered by one-on-one dating and sexualized relationships holds less attraction.

Characteristics of the Character-Based Approach

"Sex education is... about character and formation of character, says former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett. "A sex education in which issues of right and wrong do not occupy center stage is evasive and irresponsible."[57] Research shows that values determine sexual choices more than information does.[58] Teenagers who agree with such statements as "It goes against my values to have sex" and "There are many benefits to saving sex for marriage" are much more likely to practice self-control than those who do not.[59]

For example, one feature of several character-based programs is a pledge of commitment to abstinence—what the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health found to be the single factor most associated with the delay in early sexual activity.[60] Then to help teenagers realistically meet the challenges of abstinence, the programs boost moral reasoning, a sense of empathy and commitment, wisdom about love and social skills. Thus, character-based education sets a clear moral norm and then actively prepares young people to meet it.

The Character Education Partnership advocates character-based sexuality education with these characteristics:[61]

· Guides youth to discern right and wrong regarding sexual choices

· Cultivates the virtues, skills and strategies needed to practice abstinence

- Fosters the value system and moral reasoning that favors abstinence

· Clarifies the difference between sex and love

· Addresses the physical, social and emotional needs of students in a holistic way

- Promotes marriage and the value of saving sex until marriage

- Encourages non-virgins to recommit to self-restraint

- Fosters the cooperation of home, school and community in strengthening marriage and family life.

Moral Directiveness

Moral ambiguity regarding sexual choices undermines the resolve needed to achieve the optimal health choice, premarital abstinence. If feelings of love, a sense of need, use of birth control or being married are all morally equivalent bases for sexual relations, why choose the most demanding standard? If abstinence is simply pragmatic for certain age groups, then why is it morally superior?

Character-based education assumes that parents and teachers are inescapably involved in giving guidance by virtue of their elder position. Whatever they do or do not emphasize is itself a statement of moral advocacy. Therefore, clear guidelines are in order as a starting point for setting standards for the young. Successful programs such as Facing Reality prod students' moral reasoning with questions like these: "Is it possible that two individuals could agree to use each other? What effect do you think an arrangement like this would have on personality?" "Why does maintaining a family require self-mastery and unselfishness?" "How might a self-centered sexual choice hurt a family?" "What motives would parents have for setting age limits on dating?" "How can girls make guys feel esteemed and admired for choosing the wise course [of avoiding sexual activities on dates]?"[62]

Advocating abstinence echoes the great religious and moral traditions of the world—which unanimously recommend premarital abstinence and marital fidelity. This gives adolescents the benefit of thousands of years of human wisdom and protects them from having to learn from painful trial and error.

Modesty and Conscience

The sense of privacy and sexual modesty are youth's allies in avoiding premature sexual involvement. These are innate,[63] universal traits necessary to abstinence.[64] Like a prompting of the conscience, sexual embarrassment is a valuable signal that indicates a moral and relational boundary is being threatened. Without it, adolescents are weaker and have, as author Wendy Shalit observes, "nothing to pro-

tect what is human in them."[65]

Girls and boys are shy about sex because they sense its mystery, its gravity and their own intense interest and potential responsiveness. When modesty is not socially supported—when they feel they must succumb to the sexual pressures to fit in—they have little choice but to try to close down their sexual awe and emotional vulnerability. They may adopt a matter-of-fact attitude towards even the most intimate of behaviors, as the peculiarly dispassionate nature of much of contemporary teenage sex shows.[66]

Responsible sexuality education thus protects adolescents from situations of embarrassment or overstimulation. Effective teachers exercise care not to let a precocious or reckless few set the tone for an entire classroom. In middle school settings, they often arrange separate discussions for boys and girls to allow gender-specific issues to be brought up and to discourage sexual acting out of insecurities between the genders.[67]

Supporting Hopes for Lasting Love

The dominant reason sexually experienced teenage girls gave for their physical involvements was not pleasure but a search for "true, monogamous, permanent... love."[68] Tying this innate hope of teenagers for lasting love to the challenge of abstinence—indeed any challenge of character—is a smart way to motivate them. Most adolscents hope someday to be married. (See Chapter 19) Abstinence educator Richard Panzer tells of routinely asking classrooms of teenagers, "How many of you see the possibility of marriage in your future?" and having almost all hands go up.[69]

Young people can respond to the realism of the abstinence message especially if it is combined with an inspiring vision for a more passionate and lasting love.[70] They naturally want the highest they can believe in for themselves and are capable of sacrificing for what captures their idealism and sense of romance.

"You don't have to have sex until you get married. There's always going to be the peer pressure and there's always going to be the urge, but it's a matter of... how strong you are," says Jeremy Smith, 16.[71] Young newlyweds Michael and Tina of Concord, New Hampshire, concur. "If you never give [sex] to anyone else, except for the person you marry, on your wedding night, then that is the ultimate act of love."[72]

Delayed gratification is possible when youth see themselves as part of a heroic journey to realize true love.

Of course, this appeal is predicated on students seeing happy marriage as a reachable goal for themselves. Otherwise, why should they—how can they—wait? This is why character-based abstinence education is naturally more effective when coupled with marriage preparation guidance. (See Chapter 20) Effective abstinence programs often have such a component.[73]

Valuing an Abstinent Lifestyle

Character-based programs help students understand the psychological, moral, relational and physical risks involved in premarital sex and the greater sexual and emotional satisfaction to be experienced within marriage. They arm students with strategies for controlling sexual urges and how to distinguish between love and infatuation. Abstinence educator Mike Long finds that teenagers appreciate his Love Test: "Ask the partner to wait until marriage for sex and by their response you'll know if he or she loves you."[74] Given the romantic idealism and naiveté of adolescents, such discussion is fascinating.

Character-based programs such as No Apologies present abstinence as a "whole person commitment,"[75] a natural part of a lifestyle reflecting respect and responsibility and a manifestation of unselfish love. (See Chapter 23) They celebrate abstinence as liberating adolescents from unnecessary burdens and ensuring the freedoms that all teenagers should be able to enjoy.

Those who are no longer virgins are encouraged to recommit to abstinence to enjoy many of these benefits. Among those teenagers labeled "sexually active," many have had sex only once or twice,[76] and over half of them express regret.[77] Gynecology professor Marion Howard found that 84 percent of the non-virginal girls at Grady Memorial Hospital, in Atlanta, wanted to know how to say No without hurting the boy's feelings.[78] Thus they can be readily persuaded to shift towards the healthy ethic and gain the character strength to practice it.

"Saving Sex" Plus "Safer Sex"?

Some educators recommend an abstinence-oriented approach supplemented by contraceptive instruction, sometimes called "abstinence plus" or "dual message." Advocates claim that teaching about contraceptives will not put the abstinent students at risk, while it helps those who are already involved in hazardous activities.

Certainly it is not unreasonable to inform adolescents about contraceptives. The issue is not in discussing them but in promoting them to make their use attractive to young people. This means maximizing their advantages and minimizing their disadvantages. Herein lies its potential for compromising the character and abstinence focus. Can educators paint a compelling vision of the value of self-control, the beauty of saving sex until marriage and the connection between true love and abstinence while portraying condom use as responsible and loving as well?

When signals collide, which one wins? Teaching both "saving sex" and "safer sex" at the same time is equivalent to telling students not to smoke cigarettes, but if they do, to use a filter, or don't inhale deeply. It is like telling them not to drive while drunk, but if they do, to use seat belts.[79] For adolescents eager for new experiences and who think they are ready to enter the adult world, the abstinence message can be less exciting, concrete and memorable than a discussion of contraceptive devices. Even one session of giggling students fumbling with putting condoms on bananas can neutralize many classes emphasizing self-restraint and the benefits of abstinence. As Baltimore teacher Deborah Roffman remarks, "Any teacher knows that when students get mixed messages from adults, they test."[80]

"Melanie," a middle-aged health educator, tells of her experience of sexual promiscuity as a teenager. Her abusive home life drove her to engage in petty crime just to enjoy the relative safety of jail. It was there

where a counselor visited her and she told him of her risky sexual habits. His response was to guide her towards greater self-respect and self-discipline. Melanie took his advice and changed her life. She eventually became a happily married wife and mother and a speaker of international fame. "What would have happened," she asks, "if that man had given me a condom instead of believing in me?"[81]

Comprehensive Character-Based Sex Education

The broader the character-based, abstinence-oriented initiative, the greater the results. Programs such as Best Friends are school-wide. The effort is even more effective if it involves coordination among parents, school and community. An integrated kindergarten through twelfth grade abstinence education curriculum in Denmark, South Carolina engaged parents, clergy and other community leaders and media coverage involved the entire community. As a result, the pregnancy rate was cut by more than half after the first year and remained low in subsequent years.[82] The "Not Me, Not Now" initiative of Monroe County, New York, is aimed at helping youngsters aged nine to fourteen to postpone sexual involvement. It encompasses a television and radio campaign, a student-friendly website, a peer-led classroom program, parent coaching and a research and evaluation component. Such comprehensive school-wide and community-wide efforts create a culture supportive of the marriage norm and provide numerous protective influences around adolescents.

Too often, early sexual experimentation comes as a result of loneliness and a desire for attention. Sex not only looks like a way to attract and hold a partner but it can score points in impressing friends as well. Therefore, successful programs cultivate a peer culture supportive of non-sexual relationships. Free Teens generates positive peer pressure by setting up student clubs and having older students in high school or university serve as teachers and mentors to younger ones. Not only do the younger students respond, but also the older students deepen their conviction regarding abstinence. "None of my friends are having sex," says Sarah, 17, of Portsmouth, Washington. "Usually kids at school push you to ignore your parents' beliefs and it's really hard to resist, because everybody wants friends. But having friends who are also waiting until marriage helps me know it is really right for me, not just my parents."

Parental Involvement

Pro-abstinence parental influence is probably the strongest safeguard for youth. "Intimacy, responsibility, trust, integrity, the difference between love and lust, behavioral expectations—these are not 'taught' by specialists," observes educator Patty Starks. "They are 'caught' in the course of kids' daily lives from those who influence them the most—their parents."[83] Parental disapproval of sex and contraceptive use is powerfully associated with postponement of teenage sex.[84] This is why it only makes sense for sexuality educators to reinforce the link between parent and child as much as possible as well as help compensate for its deficiencies.

Character-based educational programs create a partnership with parents, inviting them to preview materials in advance of presentation to their children. They dispense homework that invites parental participation, and coach the parents in passing on their sexual morality. The Teen-Aid program, Sexuality, Commitment and Family, invites teenagers to discuss with their parents such issues as "How should a marriage partner be selected?" and "What does commitment mean?"[85] Practices like this encourage a more open and honest relationship between parent and child.

Parents often need and appreciate encouragement and help to successfully share their insights and sexual ethics with their children. After all, teenagers require more than a "Just Say No" button from their parents[86]—they need time with them, an emotional connection, and the guidance necessary to address their deepest concerns. Some schools coach parents in talking to their children about sex, monitoring their children's friends, delaying and supervising their dating, and regulating exposure to various kinds of media and entertainment. The support, reassurance and research base of a dedicated school program can strengthen parental backbone.

In the end, Nurse Murphy is likely to join the trend of schools towards character-based abstinence education. "School policy at the local level really does promote abstinence overwhelmingly," said Cory Richards, co-author of a recent Alan Guttmacher report. Currently, one in three schools employs an exclusively abstinence-oriented program. Many districts have shifted from a neutral stance concerning abstinence to one of promoting it.[87]

Respect for both the power of sex and the character potential of youth spells a character-based approach. This approach is more effec-

tive against unwed pregnancies; it recognizes the mental and moral consequences of even protected teenage sex; and it reduces the causal problem of sexual activity itself. It works even with youngsters considered to be at highest risk.

Such an approach reinforces the strengths in a young person's character and supports the positive elements in his or her home and school environment to provide the best protective influence. When schools take a moral stand for abstinence and involve parents and the community in comprehensive efforts, they are taking steps to change the popular culture away from one that celebrates casual sex towards one that uplifts the value of character and true love.

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Substance-Abuse Prevention

Drug use is a misguided attempt to find the meaning of life. It is a great deception because it gives users a false and temporary sense of transcendence, of power and control. The drug problem is fundamentally a moral problem in the end. It is seeking meaning in a place where no meaning can come.

—William J. Bennett[1]

THIRTY YEARS AGO, DRUG PREVENTION PROGRAMS PRIMARILY warned youth about the dangers of substance abuse. They relied on the theory that students would act rationally to avoid drugs once they knew the facts. Warnings alone are indeed sufficient for some. Yet despite widespread drug education in middle schools and high schools, and countless anti-drug messages on television, the trend towards substance abuse did not abate.[2] Few were addressing the underlying reasons why people take drugs.[3]

Today, the theory that merely dispensing information about the dangers of substance abuse—or any dangerous or antisocial behaviors—would be motivationally strong enough to deter youth has been discredited.[4] The so-called "targeted" approaches at prevention that deal narrowly with the behaviors to be prevented are ineffective as compared with more "general" approaches that broadly aim to address risk and/or protective factors. The latter are aimed at adolescents and

pre-teens at the time when they are at greatest risk for engaging in the problem behavior but before they have actually started doing so.[5]

Newer, more effective substance prevention programs employ comprehensive strategies that target a variety of risk factors for drug abuse. They continue to provide information, but they also address the deeper personal and interpersonal factors that predispose adolescents to abuse drugs.[6] The Drug-Free School Recognition Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education has determined that successful drug prevention programs do more than provide accurate and age-appropriate information. They also train in social resistance skills and a broad repertoire of personal and social skills such as decision-making, anxiety reduction, communication and assertiveness. Most importantly, they promote positive values, a sense of self-worth, and a vision of life's meaning in which drug use is not the norm.[7]

This is the hallmark of a character-based approach. Indeed, it turns out that the same character and interpersonal factors that predispose adolescents to substance abuse also correlate with increases in other risky behaviors, including dropping out of school, early sexual intercourse, and attempted suicide.[8] Thus, character-based prevention programs help prevent a broad spectrum of undesirable behaviors, substance abuse among them.

What are the deeper reasons why people take drugs? The physical mechanism of drug action is to mimic or interfere with the natural chemicals of the brain and central nervous system. In this way intoxicants artificially create the feelings, emotions and moods that people normally experience in the course of a gratifying life. Drugs, therefore, become a substitute for the natural satisfaction that derives from fulfilling the basic aspirations of human life.

As clarified previously, these aspirations are: first, to achieve personal maturity; second, to give and receive love; and third, to make a contribution to society. As people achieve these basic life goals, they gain a sense of joy, competence and well-being. This requires years of effort. On the other hand, instantly and without any effort at all, a person can experience analogous emotions by taking drugs, though the effect is short-lived. Therefore, when a young person loses his way or finds his path to authentic fulfillment blocked, he does not cease to desire the joys that fulfilling the basic life goals would afford. He may turn to intoxicants in the desperate hope of filling the emptiness inside.

The Human Face of Drugs

Drug abuse has a human face; it wreaks havoc in the lives of famous personalities. John Belushi, a well-known American comedian and actor, died from cocaine and heroin use. The American rock artist Kurt Cobain committed suicide by a heroin overdose.

South American soccer star Diego Maradonnna led Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup. When on his game, he was a sports legend on the level of a Pelé or a Michael Jordan, but drugs laid him low. Living in the fast lane, by age 24 he had developed a cocaine habit. In 1991, while playing for Italy, he tested positive for cocaine and was banned from playing for 15 months. Despite a brief comeback, he couldn't stay off drugs and in 1994 was suspended once again. According to doctors, his addiction has caused irreversible brain damage.

Gia Caranji was one of the world's top models, appearing on the covers of *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*. However, she acquired a serious heroin habit. At 26 years old, she was reduced to an unemployed street junkie injecting herself with dirty needles. She died of AIDS within a year.[9]

Jennifer Capriati at 14 years old was on top of the world of tennis. An Olympic gold medalist, she was making millions of dollars in prize money and endorsements. Then she began using drugs, and in 1993 she dropped out of professional tennis. Although she kicked the habit, she spent years floundering in the basement of the tennis world.[10] But having beaten her drug habit, her story may have a different ending. With family support and considerable determination, seven years later she is on her way to becoming a contender once again.

Detour on the Road to Personal Maturity

Mature character is not achieved automatically as the body grows. It is rather the outcome of individuals making the effort to cultivate the conscience, practice self-control, and learn to take responsibility for their actions. (See Chapter 7) These efforts are difficult and must be pursued continually, yet the result is a satisfying sense of self-respect that accompanies each step on the path to maturity.

Drugs can impart the illusion of maturity and of being in control, and inspire the false sense of confidence to go with it. Thus, substance abuse can be viewed as a misguided attempt to fulfill a legitimate inner need by taking a dangerous detour. When the illusion subsides, the user finds his or her life falling apart. In reality, substance abusers have done nothing to build up their inner resources; they have only avoided working on themselves and on their problems. Hence, their character development is arrested. Kathy, a 26-year-old recovering substance abuser, gave up drinking and smoking marijuana only to discover to her dismay that all her old problems were still with her:

> I started drinking when I was twelve, and two years later I was a regular user of marijuana. When I couldn't cope with things I would get high to make it through. The next thing I knew was that as a twenty-year-old I was getting nowhere. I thought if I gave up the stuff then everything would somehow be all right. But the reality was that I had all the same problems... I did... when I started. Nothing had changed except that now as an adult I still had the same insecurities and emotional disposition as when I was twelve.

Another way to look at personal maturity is in terms of attaining a balanced personality. Human beings have physical, intellectual, emotional and moral aptitudes in diverse measure. All these faculties function together in a balanced way in a healthy, mature person. They support the moral reasoning, feeling and action that make for strong character. Neglecting to develop one of them affects all the others and detracts from optimum wellness.[11]

A star athlete or a science prodigy who has focused on developing one aspect of his or her self may leave other aspects underdeveloped. Such an imbalance can lead to difficulties for themselves and others. One of the tasks of character development is to help students identify and challenge their limitations, resisting the tendency to rely too much

on their strengths rather than remedy their weaknesses.

When people find it too painful to face their shortcomings, they may turn to intoxicants for relief. This can blind them to the many negative effects that such substances have on their personality and character—impairing the intellect, disturbing the emotions and weakening the will.

Weak Character: A Risk Factor

Therefore, the factors that make for a weak character are also major risk factors for drug abuse. As Peter Benson has noted, "failure to pay attention to the development of our young goes a long way toward explaining the proliferation of health-compromising and future-jeopardizing behaviors among young people that unnerve all of us."[12] It stands to reason that people who have poor impulse control will have less ability to resist drugs' lure of immediate gratification, that those with a limited sense of responsibility will be less concerned about the consequences of their actions, and that those without positive life goals will be less averse to drugs as harmful to their future.

Indeed, some of the factors associated with weak character that have been found to put young people at risk include aggression, academic failure, low commitment to school and low religiosity,[13] as well as a low stage of moral decision-making[14] and an impoverished sense of personal meaning that does not regard drugs and alcohol as harmful to their life's goals.[15] Other verified risk factors include poor social skills[16] and drinking alcoholic beverages at an early age.[17] Conversely, even youth born into challenging situations have a stronger tendency to resist drugs when they have well-developed intellectual abilities, social and interpersonal skills, and close friends for support.[18]

It follows that the components of a strong character—a high moral standard, obedience and respect for parents and elders, self-discipline, the ability to manage time well, responsibility, and a sense of life's meaning—are protective factors against substance abuse. People exhibiting these character traits have the power to resist the allure of drugs, whether from peer pressure, messages from the media, or the blandishments of drug dealers. They understand that substance abuse interferes with their long-term goals. Says Tina, a West coast teenager, "I want to be a veterinarian, and I can see how the kids using drugs are real losers. If I am going to get where I want to go I can't afford to spend my days wasted."

For these reasons, drug prevention begins with education for character. The Child Development Project (CDP) has helped reduce the use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana in 5th and 6th grade students, while in matched schools that did not use the program students' use of the same substances remained constant or increased.[19] "We try to help schools provide children with a stronger sense of autonomy, belonging and competence—a new sense of the ABCs," says Eric Schaps, program founder. This program focuses on school discipline practices, parental involvement and school climate. Hall monitors report on peers' behavior, and a buddies program places older students with students from younger grades to support them during the school year. Family involvement is encouraged through events such as the Family Read Aloud Night and homework assignments that draw on family experience.[20] CDP is typical of comprehensive character education programs, implemented from the early grades, that effectively address the underlying risk factors of substance abuse even when drugs are not explicitly the issue. In fact, once the issue of drugs has taken center stage, providing stopgap measures and giving warnings may be too little too late.

Detour on the Road to Loving Relationships

All people desire the joy that comes from giving and receiving love. The key to fulfillment in love lies in developing the ability to share oneself with others. Traversing the emotional terrain of relating to others with integrity, courage and unselfishness allows young people to experience authentic human interaction and belonging.

Normally, people's craving for love pushes them toward making greater efforts at relating well. However, drugs—including alcohol—give the illusion of facilitating social relationships and putting people at ease with one another. They provide a false sense of sociability and a sham sense of belonging, simulating the emotional satisfaction that comes from strong relationships without the hard work of caring and investing. Yet the end result is often isolation and loneliness, as the user discovers he or she has alienated family and real friends in favor of the false friends whose concern is only to enjoy the stupor of intoxication. Drugs thus become a well-camouflaged detour from the path towards fulfilling the life goal of loving relationships and family.

Gateway Drugs

Despite widespread usage and acceptance, alcohol and tobacco are classified as drugs. They are responsible for more health and social problems than all other drugs combined. For this reason, there is a worldwide trend to restrict the consumption of cigarettes, especially to minors.

Moreover, there is a strong link between alcohol and tobacco use and the use of hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin. A person under the age of twenty-one is far more likely to try hard drugs if he or she has already known the intoxication of alcohol or marijuana. They are more prone to try marijuana if they have already put tobacco smoke in their lungs.[21]

Not every smoker will go on to use cocaine. Nevertheless, the probability that a 12–17-year-old teenage smoker will one day use cocaine is 19 times greater than a non-smoker. A teenage drinker is 50 times more likely to someday use cocaine than a teetotaler. A teenager who smokes marijuana is 85 times more likely to use cocaine at some point than one who never smokes marijuana.[22] Thus, tobacco, alcohol and marijuana are called "gateway drugs."

Research has found that if students perceive the use of marijuana as "risky," then drug use declines; if not, then the converse is true.[23] A tolerant attitude toward "softer" drugs only encourages abuse of the hard, addictive drugs.

Unhealthy Family Environment: A Risk Factor

Given the pivotal role of family experiences in moral growth, families that fail to instill self-discipline and self-worth and provide training in respect and reciprocity leave youth more at risk for substance abuse. Domestic violence, lack of affection and care between the husband and wife and between parents and children, absence of parental discipline—

these all take their toll. Research in criminology and child development indicates that family deviance, including substance-abusing parents, affects the developing child, because such families are likely to tolerate and model deviance for children.[24] Drug abuse can arise as a reaction to neglect or lack of intimacy between parents and children, as the adolescents try to fill an unmet emotional need.[25] Likewise, teenagers who consistently spurn the guidance of elders and do not establish a bond with at least one adult, such as a grandparent or teacher as a positive role model, are also at greater risk to take drugs. FBI statistics indicate that three-fourths of young people in drug treatment centers come from single-parent homes.[26]

After college basketball star Len Bias died of cocaine, his mother Lonise began speaking to young people about drug abuse and learned that many of them could not deal with troubles at home: "They told me many of them used drugs because they cannot cope. I asked them what they meant by that, and they say, 'My mom and I don't get along,' or 'My mom and dad are divorced.' Parents who couldn't cope with each other are expecting children to be able to cope. We need families where the children can see the mom and dad trying to do their best and young people will emulate the parents."[27]

Educators can take a proactive approach by identifying such at-risk children early on and offering assistance. This remediation works best if it begins in the primary grades, long before the temptation to substance abuse enters the children's lives. Elementary school programs with a component of individual mentoring, such as the CDP program described above, can give students the emotional support they lack at home and teach them the ways of good relationships.

Healthy Family Environment: A Protective Factor

Conversely, a healthy family is a protective factor against substance abuse. A warm, emotionally close relationship with a parent that includes open communication,[28] bonding,[29] quality time spent together and parental assistance with problem solving help protect youth from drug use.[30] Where there is affection, harmony and respect among family members, children become secure and confident that they are loved and learn the ways of getting along well with others. These family experiences are invaluable assets in resisting the allure of intoxicants.[31]

In this regard, it is a protective factor if family members set the example of being drug-free themselves. Children raised by parents who smoke cigarettes are far more likely to become smokers themselves, while children raised by non-smokers are less likely to take up smoking. The same applies to alcohol[32] and drugs.[33]

Current drug prevention strategies target family environments and their impact on potential drug abuse in children.[34] Government-sponsored advertising campaigns advise parents about talking to their children about drugs. A project in Louisville, Kentucky that focuses on parental training and support was found to delay the onset of alcohol and drug use in high-risk teenagers ages 12-14.[35] Encouraging parents to be more involved with their children and to maintain open channels of communication where they can express their values about substance abuse is key.

Peer-Helping Strategies for Drug Prevention

School-based substance-abuse prevention programs likewise benefit from attending to relationship needs. Peer influence is strong on adolescents, whose life focus is on the sibling's sphere of love. Thus, peer leadership can be an effective strategy for drug and alcohol prevention programs in schools.[36] The National Commission on Drug-Free Schools identifies programs that combine "positive peer influence with specific skills training" as effective to "change the drug use behavior of nearly implacable high-risk populations."[37]

When peers dispel the myth that "everyone is using drugs," the message is received with greater impact. A 20-session program for over 1,000 seventh-grade students from 10 suburban New York junior high schools that involved such activities as role-playing, interpersonal exercises and active feedback from peers, led to a significant reduction in drunkenness.[38] At Dundee High School, where peer leaders were trained to lead the drug prevention classes, students voiced such remarks as, "I feel more comfortable talking to seniors than adults" and "We felt we could tell them more than we could tell a teacher and we were more likely to listen to them."[39] Project Northland, a seventh-grade program implemented in 20 northeastern Minnesota schools, included a peer participation program in which student groups planned supervised, alcohol-free activities for themselves and their classmates. Program goals included (1) providing

peer leadership and social support for non-use of alcohol, (2) creating opportunities for alternative behaviors to alcohol use, and (3) creating a norm of non-use.[40]

Critical to the success of peer-helping programs is the selection of suitable peer mentors. Effort is made to identify prospective student leaders who are helpful, trustworthy, concerned for others, good listeners, and positive role models. Recommendations from teachers or interviews with a project staff member and a teacher can identify students with moral leadership potential. A school-wide focus on character education provides more fertile ground for the cultivation of such individuals, who can then lead their at-risk classmates away from the blind alley of substance abuse.

Detour on the Road to Making a Contribution

Young people want to excel—on the athletic field, in the classroom, and in their careers. They yearn to develop their talents. They hope their accomplishments will gain the approval of their elders and their peers. They look forward to the power, money and prestige that come with success. More importantly, they want the inner satisfaction that comes with making a difference in the world.

The basic life goal of making a contribution to society is closely linked to mastery—competence in the skills and knowledge to do a job well and create things that people value. Thus mastery too is a fundamental human aspiration. Hence, when it is frustrated, people are liable to turn to a substitute. Taking intoxicants can give a person the illusion of brilliance, competence and power. Yet in reality it sidetracks them from the path to true mastery and social contribution.

Creativity also figures into making a valuable contribution. Few experiences are more satisfying than to be recognized and appreciated for a work of genuine self-expression. This is especially true of people with an artistic bent. When circumstances constrain their self-expression, when their work goes unappreciated, or when their creative well is stagnant, they may in frustration turn to drugs. An accomplished classical musician recounted, "My first big break was with the orchestra of *Cats*, but after a week I began to lose confidence I could deliver night after night. A friend turned me on to meths. They made me feel confident, really great. The problem was that I wasn't playing up to par;

I was disrupting the whole violin section. And by the time anybody told me I couldn't take it; I was a bundle of nerves. They let me go after five weeks."

Social Impediments to Youth's Aspirations: Risk Factors

Risk factors for substance abuse include the limitations within the community that discourage young people's ambitions to mastery and their hopes of making a difference in the world. Schools plagued with discipline problems, dull programs and aloof teachers are an obvious example. Regardless of how strongly adults preach an anti-drug message, if a student feels that they don't genuinely care about him, his achievements and his future, he will be at risk.

Moreover, even gifted students are at risk in environments such as the inner city that lack jobs and opportunities for career advancement. Frustrations fed by perceptions of "dead end" jobs tempt students to seek an escape through intoxicants. One school principal who runs a successful drug program says, "Teaching kids the skills they need to get along in society isn't enough; you must provide opportunities for them to practice and develop those skills. To be successful we must help young people find options, avenues, and alternatives that enrich their lives and alter their lifestyles."[41]

Lack of constructive recreational and artistic opportunities is another risk factor. Whether on the athletic field, in the art studio or at a wilderness campground, students can blossom when they have incentives and opportunities to work on their skills, express their creativity, and find a meaningful way to relate to their world. The unavailability of such outlets makes the allure of drug abuse that much stronger.[42]

Communities can include arts and recreational organizations in their drug prevention efforts. At Ailey Camp in Baltimore, children attend a dance camp where they learn discipline and self-confidence.[43] Students from the "Just Say No" to Drugs Club in Cherryvale Elementary School in Sumter, South Carolina organized themselves into a dance group.[44] The "Rope Not Dope" program trains inner-city girls in the skill of Double-Dutch jump rope and prepares them to participate in national competitions.[45]

When teenagers are busy honing their skills and striving for success, they are naturally less likely to be attracted to substance abuse. Life Skills Training (LST) is a program that builds adolescents' ability to deal

with life's challenges rather than escaping them through drug use. Lessons teach such life skills as dealing with stress, resisting advertising pressure, and decision-making that considers the long-range consequences of behavior. Lessons in conversation skills and manners are supported by out-of-class behavioral "homework," such as encouraging students to introduce themselves to five new people. The fifteen LST classes in the seventh grade are supplemented through "booster" classes in the eighth and ninth grade. Program developer Gilbert Botvin tracked 3,600 LST students in 56 rural and suburban public schools in New York State. Six years after being coached in the program, they were less likely to use alcohol, drugs and cigarettes than those who had not been so trained.[46]

Community and cultural norms condoning the "gateway drugs" of alcohol and cigarettes and glamorizing the harder drugs can also put young people at risk. Project Star, a five-year program adopted by the Indianapolis schools, reaches out to parents and the community with prevention education. In the first year, students are taught drug awareness and resistance skills. In the second year, parents are involved with the aim of creating stronger family rules. In the third year, schools sponsor community-wide prevention activities such as "smoke-outs" and alcohol-free sporting events. In the fourth year, program participants work for policy changes such as creating a tax on beer and drug-free school zones. In the fifth year, they target the mass media to deliver anti-drug messages in advertisements and talk shows. Programs like Project Star that address community norms are more successful in curbing substance abuse than school-based programs lacking this component, according to school psychologist Mary Anne Pentz, who developed the program. It has been shown to lower occasional use of gateway drugs throughout high school and to quell heavier use, such as daily drunkenness and chain-smoking.[47]

Drug Highs and Natural Highs

Everyone wants to experience the peak experiences or "highs" of life. Natural highs are intense, exhilarating experiences that affirm the best in oneself. People often take drugs to experience an artificial version of such exhilaration. Indeed, research at the University of Kentucky and Indiana University shows that drugs excite the neural reward sys-

tem in the brain that is normally activated by novel and stimulating experiences.[48]

Substance-induced ecstasy is a very poor substitute for natural highs, extracting a terrible toll. When drugs affect the central nervous system, they cause physical and psychological dependence that can harden into addiction. Natural highs, on the other hand, extract no toll: they are physically, emotionally and mentally constructive. They are the body's way of rewarding an individual for accomplishments on the path to maturity, love and success in life.

One example of a natural high is graduating from college. When the student receives a diploma, the moment is euphoric. Society is celebrating the achievement of a personal goal. All of the hard work and discipline she had invested to pass exams and get good grades is appreciated and validated. The student's family, too, is proud of her accomplishment and showers her with praise. In terms of the basic life goals, this natural high reaffirms her family relationships and validates that she is qualified to contribute to society.

Sports provide natural highs that come with scoring a goal, winning a tournament, or earning a trophy. The ability that allows one to seize that moment and perform so admirably is the culmination of years of physical discipline and training. Yet, that one moment of success makes it all worthwhile. It is even more satisfying when the individual is contributing to a team effort or bringing victory to his school—when his personal mastery contributes to a social purpose. Greg, a high school senior, remarked, "I experienced the greatest natural high after we won the basketball championship. When the final buzzer rang and the whole crowd was on their feet cheering and clapping, the emotional atmosphere was incredible. It was such a powerful experience. I was so high that I wasn't sure if it was all real. At one point everything seemed to suddenly go silent, and I felt like I was floating on air. It was only for a moment, but it was the best feeling I have ever had."

Experiences that reach the peaks of human value—love, truth, beauty and goodness—reinforce positive behavior leading to fulfillment of basic life goals. Musicians experience a natural exhilaration when their music is in perfect harmony; it gives them incentive to strive for even greater performances. A couple experiences a natural euphoria when their first child is born; it opens their hearts to the experience of parenthood, which will demand much of them. Walking in the woods

in the springtime can be a natural high, instilling a life-long environmental awareness and bond with nature.

Drug-induced intoxication does none of this. Natural highs enhance and encourage growth towards sound character and social skills, whereas drug-induced highs distort and impede growth by short-circuiting the path to psychological and social maturation. Natural highs lead to improved health and well-being, whereas drug-induced euphoria leads to a deterioration of physical and mental health and well-being. The only thing drug-induced exhilaration reinforces is further drug abuse, leading to ever-greater dependence and ultimately addiction.

In the last analysis, the drug problem is primarily a moral problem. More than any outward allure, contributing factors lending attractiveness to drugs lie in deficiencies in the moral formation of young people. That is why substance abuse prevention programs have a better chance of succeeding when centered on a moral dimension. There is thus a natural synergy between drug prevention and character education.

Youth who are taught and encouraged in self-discipline, kindness, delayed gratification and hard work toward desired goals are insulated against the dangers of drug use. They experience the natural highs and sense of self-building their accomplishments bring them. Such youth can recognize drugs as illusory and growth-inhibiting substitutes for the real happiness and bona fide success in life they are busily garnering.

28

Causes and Resolution
of Conflict

IN THE WAKE OF THE SHOOTINGS AT COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL
in April of 1999, popular opinion about protecting students from con-
flict includes support for such measures as installing metal detectors in
schools. Yet most of the conflicts that affect youth—and which affect
youth all over the world—take place under far more ordinary circum-
stances. Children and teenagers suffer from quarrels between their
parents, discord within their neighborhoods, and clashes with school-
mates. Indirectly, children suffer from the workplace disagreements
their parents cannot leave behind as well as marital quarrels; these
drain parents of the energy and aplomb needed to optimally care for
their children. These conflicts take their psychological and emotional toll
on young people, affecting them deeply, cumulatively, and often per-
manently.

Understanding the causes of conflict and the means of resolving
it are ways to lessen this psychological toll and help children grow into
maturity with secure inner working models for forging good relation-
ships even in the midst of the inevitable tensions they will face.

The Value of Resolving Conflict

Conflict is a fact of life. Under ordinary circumstances, conflict is neither good nor bad in and of itself. It is the way people respond to conflict and handle it that determines its outcome. If conflict is feared and regarded as negative, it has little growth-promoting potential. Conflict, like all adversity, is best looked upon as an opportunity for character growth—a chance for individuals to call upon and refine their inner resources—to challenge themselves to new frontiers of empathy and relationship skills.

Conflict is a symptom and sign that the emotional subtext of a relationship needs correction and improvement. Tensions may even be welcomed as a herald of potential to deepen a relationship. Many a couple feels closer and more intimately connected to each other after a dispute has been resolved. Friendships are often strengthened by successful resolution of a disagreement. New bonds have been forged in the fires of conflict in all types of relationships.

Unfortunately, many people respond to the presence of conflict by seeking to terminate the situation where they find it. They quit jobs, leave schools, divorce, sever friendships, never go into a certain store again or stop speaking to a relative. These avoidance methods bring temporary relief, but in fact, unresolved conflicts inevitably return to haunt the person. They often reappear in a new form or with new people, continuing to resurface until resolved. Conflict cannot be compartmentalized. Until the problem is healed on the deepest levels of the human heart, it inevitably permeates a person's interactions with others.

Dawn, a mother of three, had an altercation with a neighbor over her children playing in the back of his parked truck. He strongly urged her to ground her children for the offense. Dawn remembered, however, that he often let the children play in the truck when he was in a good mood. How could he be so inconsistent? Dawn was angry with the neighbor and decided not to punish her children. Yet when her husband and children came home, she found herself yelling at them over every minor offense. Dawn realized her unresolved anger over the incident with the neighbor was causing her to lash out at her family.

Resolving conflict is desirable for many reasons. The cessation of tensions removes the paralyzing impasse that leaves both sides feeling isolated and stagnant. It opens the doors to forgiveness and reconcili-

ation, which in turn free up time and energy for creativity and progress. The amount of emotional energy lost in maintaining friction—the defensive moves and retaliations—could be more efficiently directed toward living a full and productive life and promoting more gratifying relationships.

Peter from New Haven recalls the sense of renewal and resurgent relationship upon resolving a difficulty as a child. "When I was a small boy I used to play every afternoon with my best friend. Our favorite game was setting up our army of tin soldiers. I was especially proud of a little army truck my father had given me. I even marked it in a special way. Then one day, the truck disappeared. What was worse, I discovered that my friend had taken it. Because of the little mark I had made, there was no doubt in my mind that this was my truck. I said nothing and my friend said nothing, but our happy little world lay in ruins. I knew that he took it, and he knew that I knew that he took it. We could not face each other. We could not play together. Then, in a day or two he came up to me and said, 'I'm sorry. I took your truck. Please forgive me.' There was a moment of silence. 'Oh, forget about it,' I answered. 'What do I care?' Suddenly all the world around us was bright and happy again."

A person is able to make his or her world of relationships better by seeking the means to resolve conflict. Part of this resolution involves understanding that there are often deep underlying emotional and psychological needs beneath the surface of disputes.

Causes of Conflict

Among school children, disputes arise over personal possessions and school resources, cliques, differing ideas and opinions, cheating, bullying, and such abusive moves as shoving for a better place in line, using put-downs and name calling. Many schools have conflict resolution programs in place to deal with such everyday issues,[1] but schools with character education programs are already teaching their students the basics of respect, courtesy, manners and the treatment of all people as equal and worthy, proactively addressing the issues that underlie much conflict. (See Chapter 12) Such preventative efforts keep clashes from arising in the first place.

In the home, disagreements occur over such common issues as discipline and obedience, parenting styles, money, sibling rivalry, home-

work and grades, children's possessions and teenagers' desire for independence. Conflicts tend to escalate when self-control, patience, forbearance, long-sightedness and other virtues are deficient. Thus, building healthy marriages and giving children the foundation of good parenting reduce conflicts. (See Chapters 21 and 22)

Conflicts in families are exacerbated and amplified by substance or alcohol abuse. In addition, certain destructive patterns such as schizophrenia and alcoholism tend to run in families, producing strife. Negative patterns of family interaction—violence, insults and sarcasm, among others—tend to be imitated from generation to generation until one member of the family has enough perspective and courage to change it in his or her generation. People who have interrupted the negative cycles of neglect and abuse in their personal histories to become loving, respected parents to their own children sometimes feel they are literally altering fate, breaking up the bad "karma" of their family line.[2]

Tensions with a History

Individuals and families in neighborhoods and communities are often affected by hostilities stemming from actions, past and present, by or against their ethnic, racial, religious or national group. Sometimes crimes were committed against a certain group as part of a national mindset or policy. The result is that succeeding generations inherit a legacy of racial and ethnic resentments and prejudice. Such tensions fuel fires that can escalate simple interpersonal conflicts into community conflagrations.

One such incident happened on a sunny summer day in New York, when eleven-year-old Steven pushed ten-year-old Joey to the ground and kicked him hard in the ribs during a dispute over a game. When Joey's mother went outside, she found him on the ground, in pain and gasping for air. Fortunately, Joey's asthma medicine restored his breathing, and a doctor's visit showed that he had a bruised rib, not a broken one. That, however, was not the end of the incident.

Steven's family had come to the United States from Puerto Rico, and the only housing that had been available to them when they first came was in a ghetto area where Steven had quickly learned to defend himself and his brothers. He and his family already felt that white people were against them, and that feeling was exacerbated when neigh-

bors grew cold after the incident with Joey. For their part, the white neighbors feared Steven's ferocity and viewed him and his growing brothers with suspicion, wondering about a future Puerto Rican gang, as they'd read about in the newspapers. The ethnic mistrust that permeates American society hardened the families' attitudes toward one another, reinforcing old prejudices and leading to catcalls, rudeness and minor scuffles whenever paths crossed. Thus, due to racial prejudice, a simple playground fight polarized a whole neighborhood.

Recurring Effect of Unresolved Conflict

Tensions over racial inequities is a prime example of how an issue of conflict will resurface repeatedly until it is finally resolved. Although the United States was founded upon the highest ideals of democracy and freedom, translating these ideals into practical reality has been a continuous challenge throughout its history.

The issue of slavery was never dealt with during the founding of America. Thomas Jefferson said slavery kept him awake like an alarm bell in the night, foreboding the death of the Union.[3] George Washington predicted that this unfinished business would someday divide the nation. His guilt and uneasiness over slavery led him to free his own slaves upon his wife's death and to work for the education of all slaves. "I clearly foresee that nothing but the rooting out of slavery can perpetuate the existence of our union," he said,[4] and vowed that if the nation ever divided on the issue, he would fight on the side against slavery. Yet Washington's efforts to better the lots of slaves in Virginia were fruitless. The unresolved issue raised its head again, as these presidents predicted it would, several generations later. The Civil War was fought over the issue of slavery, at the cost of half a million lives.

Abraham Lincoln vowed to fight slavery to the end, even "until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid

by another drawn with the sword."[5] He believed that the war was payment for long unresolved injustices. But even though the Civil War was consciously fought to right an historical wrong, the issue of inequality between races was not settled and was left to another generation to resolve on a deeper level—the level of the heart.

One hundred years after the Civil War, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others worked to establish civil rights and equality for all races. King's soaring oratory and his courage through a campaign of non-violent demonstrations called America to her conscience on race relations. Many whites experienced a genuine change of heart. Legislation was passed, and as they had in the Civil War, federal troops were called in to defend blacks' rights to participate in democracy. African-Americans entered mainstream national life in unprecedented numbers and ways. Although race relations are far from what they should be, King and others catapulted race relations forward through the peaceable resolution of conflict, bringing the ideal of human equality closer to actuality.

If social problems and crises are not dealt with thoroughly and well, they will inevitably resurface in the future until they are properly resolved. There have been many cases where one side won a war only to be re-engaged in battle years later because the original animosities never were addressed. Physical force may stop an aggressor in the moment, but it does not stop the enmity and resentment that caused the aggression in the first place. Defeating an enemy does not answer his or her grievances or end hatred. Unless the defeated one's desire for vengeance is abated by kindness and fairness, sooner or later the urge for revenge will rise again, often in an even more destructive form. This is why history often appears to repeat itself. Until the deep, underlying factors are resolved, the conflicts will arise again and again.

Conflict needs to be dealt with on the deep, causal emotional level before peace can be well and fully established—whether it is peace between nations, races, societies, communities, students, families or within an individual. The heart of the problem is the human heart.

Conflict and the Human Heart

When people feel their human dignity has been violated, the reflex is to strike back. According to psychologist Steven Stosny, anger and the desire for vengeance stem from a sense of diminishment of self. The person feels disempowered and belittled. Therefore, he seeks to re-empower himself. Too often, such empowerment is attempted through counter-productive means.[6]

A nation may feel stung by actions that threaten its sovereignty, impugn its motives, or threaten to harm its well-being through interdiction of goods and services. That nation may go to war. On the community level, some individuals feel disenfranchised by the system. They feel left out, deprived, treated unequally. Such individuals may resort to crime and become even further marginalized.

After the Columbine massacre, fellow students reported that Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold had been the victims of brutal teasing. They were badgered, shoved up against lockers, bashed into walls, and people cut in front of them in line, acting as if they did not exist.[7] Erik Veik, a friend of the pair, reported that Klebold and Harris said they wanted to get revenge for the constant hazing. "They were tired of those who were insulting them, harassing them. They weren't going to take this anymore, and they wanted to stop it. Unfortunately, that's what they did."[8]

Police psychologists Marisa Pynchon and Robert Fein interviewed other students now in jail for school shootings and found that they, too, were often the victims of harsh teasing. Luke Woodham, convicted for shooting his girlfriend in school in 1997, stated, "They'd call me stupid or fat or whatever. Kids would sometimes throw rocks at me and push and kick me and hit me." These psychologists emphasize the need for adults to understand the intensity of teasing and similar conflicts between students at school.[9]

People who are marginalized or disrespected naturally seek to reassert their importance and value. While nothing can justify the actions of these students, it is possible that an atmosphere dedicated to the resolution of conflict and respectful treatment of others could have encouraged them to seek the help they so desperately needed instead of resorting to their horrendous actions.

Authentic empowerment comes from accessing the intrinsically good and most fundamental part of the self: the heart. Others' careless

and thoughtless words do not—indeed cannot—diminish this core value of a human being. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "No one can make you feel small without your cooperation." Difficult circumstances may tarnish the "shine" from a person's heart but ultimately cannot destroy its potential to love and relate in a healthy way.

Stosny teaches children this concept with a coloring book that depicts "My Good Heart" and helps children get in touch with their best selves through drawings and questions. When asked, "What happens when people are not in touch with their good hearts?" children invariably draw pictures of people hitting each other, yelling at each other and committing acts of violence—scenes of escalated conflict.

Yet accessing the heart is not always easy. Without proper cultivation, the heart remains buried and often tangled in conflicting desires. Martin Luther King, Jr., commented on such intrapersonal tensions—tensions within the person himself: "Each of us is something of a schizophrenic personality, tragically divided against ourselves. A persistent civil war rages within all of our lives."[10] This inner divisiveness between the individual's best impulses and his worst ones is the root of conflict. This has been described and dramatized in countless ways throughout history.

Plato described the human personality as a charioteer with two willful horses pulling in opposite directions. Psychology depicts it as a battle between the socialized self and the infantile self. Some cultures have characterized it as a battle between the animal self and the human self. Poets, artists, philosophers and the religious have often seen it as a war between metaphysical forces of good and evil. However it is viewed, this inner struggle is inevitably reflected in quarrels with others, whether within the family, in the school, or in the community. When people are not at peace with themselves, it is easy to clash with others. The quarrels between spouses, strife between groups, and hostilities among nations are all reflections of the conflict within each individual.

One way to access the heart is to affirm such universal values as respect and the interrelatedness and common humanity of all people. Indeed, universal values lie at the core of peacemaking and rebuilding a sense of connection and community. Kay Pranis of the Minnesota Department of Corrections said, "Communities are value-laden structures. Resilient, sustainable communities are built on respect, caring, taking responsibility, fulfilling obligations, a sense of shared fate."[11] Any attempts to arrive at peace that are not value-driven are usually ineffective.

Universal values include the notion that every person is worthy of respect. This respect extends to the one who is considered the offender in the conflict too. The offender, even in the wrong, is a human being responding to pain—a person in need of correction, but in need of support and help as well. To bring the offender back into good standing with the others he or she has affected is the goal. This means healing the rift rather than just meting out punishment. Ideally, it means restoring the relationship on the level of the heart.

Steps to Resolving Conflict

Mohandas K. Gandhi, the great peacemaker of India, discovered in his early law practice that everyone benefited if his motivation was to bring the parties together rather than to "win" his cases. Indeed, if restoring the warring parties into a good relationship is the basic motivation of conflict resolution, the problem is already well on its way to being solved. There are three distinct phases or steps that characterize all good conflict resolution efforts:

Step One: Reflection and Reorientation. This step involves getting in touch with the heart and higher motives as well as considering the ways in which one might have been at fault.

Step Two: Reversal and Restitution is the step of acting upon these better impulses to ameliorate some of the injury and separation.

Step Three: Reconciliation and Renewal is the experience of coming together again and making a fresh start.

Whether consciously or not, conflict resolution goes through these steps naturally. People clash and separate. After they cool off and calm down, they often find themselves having regrets and even charitable feelings toward the other party. These sentiments gently prod them to renew the relationship. They approach the other person with an apology or other expression of sorrow over the incident. Then the two parties begin to restore some degree of harmony and good feeling.

Step 1 – Reflection and Reorientation

Upon reflection, those who have been involved in a conflict may realize how their own conduct contributed to the problem in some way big or small. Rueful second thoughts about their own words or behavior—or the motivation behind them—are often part of this process. So is clarifying why the other person or group affected them in such a way. Parents and educators can guide students to consider such questions as: "What could I have done differently? What is the real problem here? What do I really want and need? Where do I need to change myself? How did I contribute to the problem?"

Students usually need special help with this process. When emotions are running high, a teacher can encourage reflection by first helping the parties cool down and think. The Falk Laboratory School at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania has developed a creative program called Conflict and Resolution Education (CARE) that helps students to think things through by use of a traffic light image. The red light reminds students to stop and "Cool Down" and recall the "Ground Rules." "Tell Your Side" and "Listen" are labels for the yellow light. The green light exhorts them to "Brainstorm Ideas" for solving the problem.

At the end of the first year, teachers reported that conflict resolution had taken on a collaborative problem-solving dimension. One primary grade teacher found that students were applying techniques taught and practiced in classrooms at home. One insightful seven-year-old student urged his parents to use the conflict-resolution traffic light because "it works in school."[12]

Another technique to encourage reflection and reorientation is taught by Volunteers of America. It is called "Have a SODA." Students at odds are given a picture of a large ice cream soda and asked to sit down and reflect on the meaning of the acronym. S means "Stop." O means consider the "Options"—"If I do this, this will result, and if I do that, that will result." D stands for "Decide" which option to take, and A stands for "Act" according to a good decision.

Step 1: Reflection and Reorientation

- Identify one's contribution to the problem

- Recognize how it affected the other's feelings

- Evaluate one's attitude and behavior in light of universal values

- Consider how one might have better dealt with the problem

- Decide to take responsibility for one's contribution to the problem

- Plan how to make amends

Thinking about Values and Outcomes

The reflection phase also includes thinking about values: Do I believe in fighting? Are angry words, harsh gestures and unforgiving attitudes conducive to good human relationships? Are all people inherently worthy of respect and fair treatment—even my so-called enemy of the moment? Am I worthy inside, no matter what the other person has said or done? Such reflection can often calm a person down and motivate him or her to take responsibility to heal the conflict.

In the upper grades at New Hope School in Bridgeport, Connecticut, behavior journals function as a method to cool off, gain perspective and process negative feelings about a situation that made a student angry or agitated. When teens are overwhelmed by feelings of unfairness, frustration, impotence or anger, their ability to reflect on goals and values is greatly compromised. In their journals students describe their view of what happened, the variety of emotions surrounding the experience, and to consider the implications if "everybody responded that way." Then they identify a value or action that will help resolve the conflict.

This technique worked well for one student, Steve. During the

stressful time of his parents' divorce, he yelled a racial slur at the school janitor, and later defended his action by claiming that the janitor had previously called him names and spread rumors about him. Steve's teacher did a lot of work to help him get to the heart of the matter—his own pain and frustration—and to see the value of practicing respect even though he might not feel adults always deserve it. After begrudgingly writing an apology to the janitor, Steve began to feel true remorse and decided to apologize face to face.

Reflection also means to clarify the desired outcome of the conflict and to consider means to bring this about. In a thoughtful moment, a person may realize that some types of vengeful actions or expressions of anger will not bring about the results they really desire and might even have an opposite effect.

For instance, Patricia, a mother of two elementary school children, was enraged when her nine-year-old son came home from school saying that his teacher had accused him of lying, in front of the class. The boy had expressed confusion and concern at home about test scoring, and when his father had called the school to inquire, the teacher had become defensive and thought the boy had gone home with tall tales about unfair test scoring practices.

Patricia and her husband were angered on behalf of their son, but they reflected upon what they wanted to come out of the ensuing parent-teacher conference. What they really wanted, they decided, was for their son to receive a sincere apology in front of the students who had heard the accusation and for the teacher to be more charitable toward him (and other students) in the future. They did not want to take him out of school in the middle of the academic year. They decided to work toward these ends.

Upon reflection and discussion with the principal, the teacher decided that she had been in the wrong. She adopted the policy that when an issue came up with a parent, she would first discuss the issue thoroughly with the parent and the principal before confronting a child. She reoriented herself toward giving children the benefit of the doubt.

The Role of a Mediator

A mediator may be needed in the case when the parties involved need help in getting the process started. A mediator is a neutral and mutually trusted figure who is not personally involved in the conflict. The mediator helps the disputing sides find a common basis—points of

agreement—for constructive interaction. Thus the mediator encourages both sides to take the first two steps of restoring peace and find their way towards reconciliation and renewal.

An effective mediator affirms the value of both parties and thus helps each to affirm the other's value. The goal of the mediator—although it is not easy—is to achieve a collaborative, win-win outcome where both sides can feel satisfied. The mediator helps the parties find possibilities for cooperation and mutual benefit.

School mediation is typically led either by teachers or peers. Six basic steps of successful teacher-led mediation are as follows:

1. Initiate mediation: Approach the conflict and make a statement, stop aggressive behavior, neutralize any object of conflict by holding it (i.e., a disputed piece of sports equipment will be appropriated by the teacher).

2. Gather information about the victim's feelings and aggressor's wants and assure the disputants that each will be heard.

3. Define the problem in terms satisfactory to both sides by paraphrasing their feelings and concerns.

4. Generate alternative solutions by encouraging suggestions from disputants and observers and allowing ample time for them to come up with ideas on their own.

5. Agree on a solution: paraphrase it and spell out how the solution will be implemented.

6. Follow through by arranging someone to monitor the implementation and announce its success when this has occurred.[13]

Some schools have success with peer mediation programs for older students. The Mediation for Kids training program[14] trains young mediators how to see both sides, remain impartial and not react to the excesses of emotion involved in the disagreement, and assert values over vengeance. It provides an activity format to guide students through the mediation process.

Properly trained, peers can be understanding and helpful mediators, though they need the support of the administration, teachers and

other adults to be effective. Peer mediators are uniquely placed to find and understand the underlying emotional and psychological needs operating in their peers and to help them "save face" and survive in the school environment.

Step 2 – Reversal and Restitution

Reversal and restitution is the substantial attempt to right the wrong that was done to the other party and to reverse whatever caused him or her to feel hurt or violated. It is a sincere effort to soothe the sorrow and pain that was caused. It is an admission of wrong and a gesture of good will which strives to make amends and reconnect with the other person by whatever means are necessary to make an opening to renew the relationship. In the case of Patricia's son, the teacher issued an apology to the boy in front of the class and from that time on treated him with more kindness.

Often, the motivation to restore a damaged relationship and forgive cannot be awakened without an actual gesture showing sorrow or compunction. Such a gesture serves as payment or indemnity for losses incurred. In common incidents, it is a peace offering: the enraged heart of a neighbor is assuaged when the boy who put a ball through his window offers to pay for it; the wife who is angry at her husband's neglect is mollified by a huge bouquet of roses.

This concept of making concrete reparations, called "restorative justice," is enjoying increasing popularity in the criminal justice system.[15] Some offenders are being held financially liable to their victims for the losses and damages they caused. In other cases, the offender not only pays compensation in the form of service to the community or in fines or incarceration, but also he or she meets with the victim and their representatives and listens to their story of how the offense affected their lives. In many cases, this leads to greater understanding between the two and reduces recidivism as the offender is schooled in empathy. The victims also feel relief at having been heard.

Restitution may take the form of lesser compensation, such as an apology or an act of kindness in a relationship that is basically sound. On the other hand, there are situations where "equal" restitution is necessary. If property is damaged, it may have to be repaired or replaced for the full value of what it was worth before it was damaged. In some cases, the restitution required may be greater than the original injury.

A $50 debt that is left unpaid may be increased to $60 to cover the delay and frustration of the creditor. Someone who has made a hurtful remark to someone they do not know well may have to make many gestures of sincerity before the person is able to trust them. Insincerity or failure to fulfill an earlier promise may increase the time and amount of restitution required. This is one reason why it is desirable to resolve conflict when it first crops up.

Step 2: Reversal and Restitution

- Reverse whatever caused the other to feel violated

- Make restitution to correct injustice and repair damage done

- Be open to receive restitution

A Change in Attitude

Sometimes a reversal in a person's attitude and behavior is the key to restoring harmony. Certain attitudes provoke friction. Arrogance is one of them, and practicing humility reverses it. Humility involves being able to admit to not always having the superior or correct view and being receptive to learning from others. Often, a stubborn insistence on being right hinders people from seeing events from another person's point of view. A person with humility defers to the common humanity of all people, recognizing that everyone, including herself, has shortcomings and can improve.

"I hadn't talked to my brother Piet for a year after we had a big blow-up in a restaurant over his claiming to be out of money again and asking me to pay," recalls, Joan, a middle-aged illustrator. "I went ballistic after all the money I've lent him that he still hasn't paid back. When he finally called me up and apologized for that, I found myself admitting to myself that I once owed Dad quite a bit of money, too. Somehow I could let it go and enjoy talking to Piet." Thus does humility often beget more humility. If a person can bring him or herself to humbly admit to wrongdoing or a bad attitude, the other person is

much more inclined to forgive—or even to sheepishly admit to his or her own weakness or role in the problem.

Generosity reverses greed. An episode on a popular television series showed how a woman had undercut a talented friend in order to take center stage and become a star. When confronted with her greed, the star generously allowed her friend to go on stage in her place, giving her a moment in the spotlight. She also helped her friend's daughter succeed in a stage career. In this way, she reversed and made up for her self-centered and hurtful actions.

Feeling themselves superior to others, people sometimes treat one another in cruel or unjust ways, spawning resentment, anger and a desire for retaliation. An attitude of service reverses the pain caused by such actions and attitudes. A hospital orderly on the West coast tells of one episode of service removing resentment. "The doctors sometimes march around like little kings and never even notice you. But I'll never forget the first time a doctor remembered my name, thanked me, and even gave me a present later for my new baby. I was stunned. I felt different after that."

Anger is reversed by compassion. A program for New York City bus drivers designed to help them cope with stresses and frustrations on their jobs helped them develop compassion toward their passengers through changing their frame of reference. The bus drivers were shown a film clip of a woman getting onto a bus very slowly and holding up all the other passengers, as well as traffic. The bus drivers found this maddening. Couldn't the woman understand the pressures of traffic and route timing that the drivers were under? Why was she deliberately moving so slowly? Then it was explained to the drivers that the woman had a disability which was not visible but which caused her to walk slowly and with much pain. Back on the job after such training in compassion, the bus drivers all reported a decrease in tension, anger and conflict. Some of them even felt sorry about the way they had treated customers in the past and began to deal with their customers with more empathy and understanding.[16]

Two Sides to Every Story

Taking responsibility for restitution is not the sole burden of the offender. Often it is not even easy to determine who is the offender and who the offended. In most clashes, both parties wind up hurting each other, or the present offender might think that he or she is only evening

up the score from a previous injury committed by the other party. Sometimes, too, the apparent offender lacks the maturity or clarity of mind to make any gestures of reparation, and if the relationship is valued enough—as between family members—the offended may need to make the first move if any restoration of the relationship is going to occur. "Realistically, I knew my mother was bullheaded and proud and she wouldn't budge even if it killed her," says Matt, 38, a stock analyst in Canada. "Not coming to my wedding just tops a long list of insults. But she is my mom and I want my kids to have a grandma, so I've made overtures and even apologies so she can be part of our lives without admitting she did wrong." It is wise for both sides of a conflict to think in terms of how each may take responsibility to rectify the problem; however, in the end it may well be that whoever has the heart to do so has to initiate efforts to repair the relationship.

Consciously applying the strategy of Reversal and Restitution shows people what to do when they are feeling stymied by conflict. Though they may not feel inclined to do so, once they have made a gesture of restitution, they are likely to experience a great release of good feeling and a strong sense of renewed relationship. This is the transition to Step Three of conflict resolution—Reconciliation and Renewal.

Step 3 – Reconciliation and Renewal

In the case of Patricia mentioned above, although the teacher had apologized for the miscommunications that had led to the altercation over test scoring, this mother still felt distant from the school and brooded over whether she should keep her child there. She realized upon reflection, however, that she had been feeling distant from the school for a long time before the incident and had not been cultivating a relationship with her child's teacher as much as she should have. At the next opportunity, she went up to the teacher after school and sincerely apologized for her part in the conflict, presenting a small gift. The teacher was a conscientious woman who had deeply regretted the incident, and when Patricia apologized to her, she had a hard time holding back her emotions. Mother and teacher promised to work more closely together in the future. Patricia felt a rebound of loyalty and affection for the school and began to think of ways she could contribute as a volunteer.

This third step in peacemaking is a result of the work done in the first two steps. It is a transitioning from broken relationships to restored ones: reconciliation. Often, the restored relationship is stronger than it was before the conflict happened. Based on reconciliation, there may be renewal. Once the parties understand each other better, new avenues of friendship and relationship open. Having had an emotional experience together, people who have successfully resolved a conflict may feel closer and more bonded than ever before. Reconciliation means people have had to take a closer look at one another and at themselves; it is often a spur to new levels of understanding and sympathy.

Step 3: Reconciliation and Renewal

- Give up claim to retaliation

- Forgive and be open to forgiveness

- Support the other's reform

- Foster good will

The Element of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an essential aspect of reconciliation to bring tensions to an end. Forgiveness means to give up the claim to retaliation and to allow positive energy to flow in the relationship again. Forgiveness does not excuse the wrongful or hurtful actions; nor does it mean that repetition of such actions is acceptable. However, forgiveness means that the actions no longer stand in the way of relating. The blockage is at least partially removed.

It is also well to note that forgiving is as beneficial to the one who forgives as to the one who is forgiven. Forgiveness brings relief. Letting go of the resentment, ill will, residual desires for revenge and negative expectations of the other brings a new sense of freedom.

"I'll never forget the feelings I had when the airplane started to shake and dip," said Toby, a woman in her late twenties, who was fly-

ing from California to New York at the time. "I gripped the seat handles and thought, 'What if I die?' Then the next thought that came was, 'Who haven't I forgiven?' I realized I hadn't forgiven Jesse, who had jilted me after a year's engagement. He'd approached me several times afterward, trying to be friends, but I'd just spurned him. In those moments before I thought we were going to go down, I thought, 'Jesse, I forgive you. I let you go.' Well, the plane didn't crash, but after that I found that whenever thoughts of Jesse occurred—less and less as time went by—I felt peace in my heart. I've heard he's married now, and I wish him well."

Forgiving is not easy. It requires the individual to find a certain amount of trust that he or she will not lose by forgiving. Forgiveness is easier if the second step of Reversal and Restitution has been done sincerely and well. Yet, even without these steps, the forgiving person is the one who finds the greater peace within and more gratifying relationships with people in general.

It is easier to reconcile when one person is able to see the other as a vulnerable fellow human being. Reconciliation and renewal are humanizing processes. The other person may be operating from a base of fear or pain or deprivation, and once this is understood, it is easier to forgive. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life of sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."[17]

A woman in her sixties had been shaken upon discovering a homeless man who had broken into her basement and lived there for three days. The sight of the man and the mess he had made of her basement had terrified her. When she saw him again, this time in court, however, she felt sorry for him. The man had gone through a rehabilitation program and now humbly apologized, telling her he understood her feelings of fear and violation. The woman suddenly saw him as a person like herself, not a threatening figure at all. She realized that his crime against her property had been more a result of his own confusion and helplessness rather than an attack upon her. She said, "I saw him as another human soul trying to put sense into life. I see that person as myself in many ways, that frightened, sometimes beaten soul."[18]

The heart is where conflicts become embedded, and they will proliferate and rise again until truly resolved on this profound level. Conflict need not be feared or avoided, but rather seen as an opportunity for deeper relatedness. After proceeding through three discrete steps, con-

flict resolution can welcome people firmly back into the camp of human belonging, resulting in hope and resurgent relationships.