

Back to Basics: 101 Ideas for Strengthening our Children and Families

Brook Noel

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This is the perfect book for people who enjoy answering questions as a means of judging their own lives and bringing them closer to the ideal. Anyone who is anxious to improve relationships among family members should find this book helpful although the greatest emphasis is on relationships with one's children. Taking the basic format of 101 ideas the author covers issues ranging from depressing statistics relating to teenage violence to wisely selecting a day care facility for a child.

For instance, Idea 47 presents the belief that we have actually lost control of our children: "The last time your child misbehaved, how was she punished? Did the punishment "fit the crime?" Are you a true authority figure to your child or does your child figure they can tiptoe around you? If your punishments aren't clearly defined, take a moment and decide what is appropriate punishment for misbehaviors." The author encourages readers to go from the general material in her basic discussion to the particulars affecting their lives.

Noel, who is deeply concerned about the state of the American family today, combines statistics with anecdotes to bring the reader's attention to the importance of focusing on the things that matter and presents ways of solving problems. Questions move readers to address these concerns and face the situation in their family honestly. Although the book might be accused of focusing on the negative in current American family life, taken in small doses it should be extremely helpful to parents looking for guidelines.

IRENE KLEEBERG (March / April 1999)

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