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Family & Relationships

Guiding Parents, Succeeding Children: Reflections on Raising Children in 79 Articles by a Parent, Therapist, Teacher, Coach

Tom McNair
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Hundreds of books seem to be published each year on the topic of parenting. Or rather, on many subtopics, ranging from normal and dysfunctional development, the different stages of childhood and teenage years, books about physical, emotional, and social issues. Not that there's anything wrong with having a thoroughly researched and documented, well thought-out discussion of specific issues. But sometimes, busy parents just need a quick overview, something to jog their own thought processes.

That's what the author does in this collection of seventy-nine articles he wrote for the *San Marcos Daily Record*. McNair has worked with children from a variety of angles; a psychotherapist for fifteen years, he is also a biological and adoptive father, stepfather, and foster father. He knows first-hand the topics that interest parents, ranging from what makes a good father, whether or not moms should stay home, to the value of positive reinforcement, the enormity of teenage suicide—and why today's kids should learn about Helen Keller, a historical figure who's losing ground in education today.

None of these articles can replace more in-depth books on specific topics, and in many cases the articles fall into editorial territory as McNair's opinion rather than fact. However, even in short essays of two to three pages, he often brings up supporting evidence, such as quotes from respected authorities on the subject, to back his opinion. His thoughts are well considered and clearly expressed, and sometimes conservative, such as his view that mothers really do need to leave the workplace and stay home with their children. Other times his opinions are more contemporary, such as the need for fathers to be more involved and hands-on with their children than fathers of previous generations have been.

McNair even provides convincing arguments that introducing children to Joseph Campbell and Helen Keller will give them good grounding for high work ethics and moral

standards, and overall a better life. Discussing the need to let kids find their own way as they approach adulthood, he says, “Your child lives in the now, where the bliss may appear. It may reveal itself in the future, but it will be to them, not you, and that future will be their now … love, raise, and encourage; and let the discovery occur.”

Wide-ranging and fearlessly opinionated, McNair makes thinking about parenting necessary, but also exciting. Some of his views—like his opposition to abortion—may rankle some readers. But in the end, the book is worthwhile, if only to cause readers to think about their own opinions and stands on the very important topic of raising the next generation.

Amy Rea