Clarion Review

Family & Relationships

ScreamFree Parenting: Raising Your Kids By Keeping Your Cool

Hal Edward Runkel
Hal Edward Runkel LMFT
Oakmont Publishing
978-0-9759981-1-3
Five Stars (out of Five)

Parents who raise their voices beware—there is a better approach outlined in *ScreamFree Parenting* by Hal Runkel. Runkel a licensed marriage and family therapist and relationship coach who is also a parent describes his tested techniques for everyday communication with children in this outstanding guide to parenting. His most fundamental advice is that "What children need most is for their parents to be the first ones who see them as individuals in their own right with their own lives and decisions and futures." His premise is that it is better for parents to be responsible *to* their children rather than *for* their children by raising accountable individuals who can make mature decisions. The basis for those decisions is reasoned thought rather than overreacting behavior.

ScreamFree Parenting sounds so simple. Surely all you need to do is simply stay calm and keep your voice low. However avoiding raising your voice is just the beginning. ScreamFree Parenting is also the ability to allow children to make their own decisions (to provide space) and to allow your child needed privacy (to provide place) rather than continual direction and supervision. Interestingly ScreamFree techniques can also be applied to marital and work relationships and generalized to multiple situations.

ScreamFree Parenting is organized in four sections. The first three cover keeping cool in interactions with your child providing space and providing place. The fourth encourages parents to put parenting in perspective to take care of themselves and to build healthy relationships with their children. The style of the writing in this book is tender and empathetic—the author has obviously experienced the challenges of raising children. Each chapter begins with one or two relevant quotes about parenting to set the tone of the chapter. Runkel then uses anecdotes to set the stage for the major points of the book. The material is well-organized and easy to follow and

the writing style is informal and conversational.

An important asset of the book is that each chapter is followed by thought-provoking discussion questions that can be used individually or in support groups or parenting classes. Indeed this book could be used by social service agencies churches health care agencies and schools to help families communicate better apply mutual respect and improve the quality of their lives. The long-term implications for children and family health are profound since children who aren't yelled at are less likely to be screamers themselves. The principles outlined in *ScreamFree Parenting* are universal because finding alternatives to overreaction produces deeper and more positive relationships in families.

Rebecca Sisk