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Family & Relationships

The 7 Worst Things Parents Do
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Audio
Read by the authors and Jeffrey Hedquist

If there's one job in life that is practically guaranteed to arouse self doubt, it's the job of parenting. Of course, there is no such thing as "the perfect parent," but by giving heed to the advice offered by these Minnesota psychologists, parents can learn to recognize their counter productive and ineffective parenting techniques and make appropriate changes to become better parents.

Accompanied by peaceful guitar music, the authors briefly state the sobering fact that couples are most satisfied with their marriages before the birth of their first child and after the departure of their last child. Parenting is a great challenge and many parents unknowingly create unhealthy behavior in their children by making mistakes in their parenting. A listing of the seven worst mistakes parents make is followed by more detailed descriptions of each, with narration continued by Hedquist, whose friendly and resonant voice is pleasant and easy to listen to.

Segments on the inadvisable and somewhat intertwined practices of "putting your marriage last" and "trying to be your child's best friend" are covered particularly well. The audiotape offers suggestions about how couples can set a good example for their children by nurturing their marriage and taking plenty of time together as a couple instead of getting wrapped up in their work or in their children's lives. A discussion of "pushing children into too many activities" focuses primarily on college and high-school students as well as on adults who often overextend themselves. It would have been helpful to have addressed the problem of elementary school children who are enrolled in multiple extracurricular activities. The segment about "ignoring your emotional or spiritual life" could have been improved by adding comments

on exactly how children are affected by this error. Although the discussion of “failing to give your child structure” offers interesting information about how children use “self-talk” to learn self-control, the authors could have made this section more useful by offering concrete suggestions about how parents can provide structure.

Following the in-depth presentations of the seven worst mistakes, the tape addresses how parents can change their parenting paths and family patterns. A detailed case study is given of the work, progress and outcome of one couple’s struggle to provide more structure by enforcing their five-year-old’s bedtime. The authors then return to state that the goals of behavioral change programs are to teach parents how to provide structure and to learn that adults must be in charge in order to make children feel safe. The tape ends with the authors offering words of encouragement to all parents.

Although the content of this audiotape could have been improved by specifically including a wider variety of age groups, it is generally well organized and includes many helpful examples and suggestions. Results of research from such well-respected psychologists as Eric Erikson and Jerome Kagan are frequently and effectively used to support the authors? claims. While readers may not agree with all suggestions made by the authors, the audiotape provides worthwhile ideas and provokes thought.