



The Benedictine Counselor

Newsletter of Benedictine Counseling Services

A Ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

Sr. Glenna Smith, OSB,
Director, Benedictine
Counseling Services
St. Benedict Monastery
Bristow VA



Message from the Director:

Our newsletter this month focuses on one way parents and teachers can help children develop strong character. Coping effectively with the child-sized challenges, difficulties, and even the pain, of life is one of the most important things we can teach our children for them to

grow as happy, resilient, compassionate individuals.

Share our joy and pray for us – HUD has awarded BCS approximately \$184,000 for 2007-2009 to help address the mental health needs of women and children in Prince William County who are homeless.



Tamara Di Paolo
MSW Intern

School Counselor at
Linton Hall School
Bristow, VA

Helping Children Cope with Feelings of Hurt and Sadness.

Children are for the most part happy, finding pleasure in the simplest things in life. As parents and caregivers, we often relish our children's happiness. But what happens when a child is unhappy or sad or really angry?

Parents of school age children often try to find the solution to the unhappiness. They call teachers, email the counselor, and let their children win at Monopoly in an effort to cheer them up. With the good intentions that parents often have, they campaign to restore their children's happiness.

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However, children occasionally need to feel unhappy in order to learn how to handle uncomfortable feelings. Parents, teachers, and counselors need to hold and contain the experience of unhappiness for the children, but instead of letting the voice the child hears say “I’ll fix this for you,” let it be heard saying, “I know you can handle this, and it will be right again soon.”

Teach children the skills they need to handle conflicts and disappointments and they will soon be in charge of their own happiness. According to a recent article in a parenting magazine, the ability to feel disappointment is crucial for a child’s mental health. If they can learn to handle the let down, recover from it, and then move on, they have an invaluable skill.

Parents should validate the children’s feelings and give them the respect of understanding their anger, sadness, and disappointment. Then adults might try to help the children come up with a blueprint of ideas on how to handle the situation. Take the common scenario of “Juli” or “Bobby,” who wouldn’t play with a child on the playground. No parent

wants their child to be excluded, so it is difficult when a parent hears of an exclusion

Rather than try to figure out a solution, the parents should try to help the child understand that not everyone will be their friend everyday. There will be hurtful times of exclusion. Talking to children about feelings and encouraging them to express their painful feelings will often help them feel better.

It is important for parents to be models of resilience themselves. This will help their children learn to bounce back from disappointment. Teaching children to be resilient when faced with disappointment will help them deal with stress and disappointment in the future.

Resources:

- Costello, Judith and Jurgen Haver (2004). **Zen Parenting: The Art of Learning What You Already Know.** Robins Lane Press, Beltsville, MD.
Barber, Nigel (2000). **Why Parents Matter: Parental Investment and Child Outcomes.** Bergin and Garvey, Westport, CT.
Ellis, Albert, and Sandra Moseley (1980). **How to Raise an Emotionally Healthy, Happy Child.** Wilshire Book Co. Hollywood, CA.
Selket, Oro (2004). **How To Raise a Super Kid.** Book Surge Publishing, Charleston, SC.

Lent—preparation for Easter, continued from last month.

Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving (spiritual discipline). We do our spiritual discipline and Lenten practices, in the end, to prepare for the feast of Easter, the celebration of Jesus’ death and resurrection for us.

During Lent we will hear at Sunday Mass about Jesus’ being tempted to sin, but saying no to Satan; his transfiguration, when the dis-

ciples saw him radiant and heard the Father call Jesus “my beloved son.” The third Sunday is a call to repent and the next two Sundays are the stories of God’s mercy: the Prodigal Son and the woman caught in sin. It is because of Jesus’ death and resurrection and the sending of the Spirit into our hearts that we are graced with the call to repent and know of God’s mercy. We know God loves us and so we turn away from sin. May our homes know mercy and forgiveness.

The Anita Moreland Foundation was begun to help BCS provide counseling and psychological assistance for people who would otherwise be unable to pay for services.

For more information contact: *Benedictine Counseling Services* below.

To contact *Benedictine Counseling Services*,
9535 Linton Hall Rd., Bristow, VA 20136-1217
Admin. Assistant, Steve Palmer, 703 361 0106; bcs@osbva.org.

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