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It's summertime. The kids are home all day. What now?

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal reminded me of an important topic that I speak about continuously with my clients, and I thought I would share it. I generally have to demonstrate to my clients that any problem at work also shows up at home. These problems simply manifest differently or sometimes similarly. The capacity to see them or deny them is the deciding factor.

The business owner, who feels powerful in the office, may not feel so powerful at home with his wife and children. The business owner, who feels powerless in the office, might feel more powerful at home or not feel very powerful at home either. Some business owner will just do what they are told to do in order to keep the peace at home or to keep making money in the office feeling that making money is their most important value.

In these discussions with clients about the problems in the home and office, the children are often part of the scenery and victims of the problem. Children reflect a parent's successes and failures in life. Business just like family is not just about making more of something, e.g. money, extracurricular family activities, vacations, choice of colleges, etc. Your performance in business and family is about demonstrating your competence, your personal sense of adequacy and proving to yourself that you have value in the world. Some people do this in their physical reality while some people can only do it in their fantasy world. The issue of one's competency, adequacy and value is always on display for the children to model.

I recently came across a book review: "The Secrets of Happy Families". The author proposed running a family like a corporation. At first glance, I consider this to be another example of a misguided society moving in the wrong direction. As I read the review and listened to how he talked about how his children took up his cause, I smiled to myself. That is the beauty of children; they are helping him fulfill his ridiculous vision, while they accept the loss of their autonomy, freedom and innocence to take care of their father fantasy. He was abusing his children for his own gratification, and I thought, "How sad."

Perhaps the motivation for the book was his need to cover up that he didn't want to give his energy to his children or perhaps his need to cover up his wife's lack of affection and nurturing instinct. Regardless, the intent of the book focused on the convenience of the parents and their idiosyncratic perspective on parenting. To begin with parenting is a biological process, and what is lost in abandoning this process are the children. The children naturally, not without some

resistance in the beginning, embraced his corporate model of family because they had to. It is not a choice for children. Children do not have choices when parents are weak and misguided.

Children instinctively follow their parents' dictates because they are programmed to live and breathe for their parents' approval. They naturally grow towards the love. They need this love, because their survival instinctively and biologically is dependent on the connection to the parents. Children are victim to the competency, adequacy and value that parents believe about themselves. I was smiling because this biological need for approval provided the author with feedback that he was on the right track regarding running his family like a corporation, when in fact, his conclusion was irrational, although it made perfect sense to him.

I would propose in an oversimplification that a family is a unit of beings designed to create new life and nurture that new life until it is prepared to go off on its own and create its own new life. Implicit in this definition is the imperative that the children must survive and implicit in this imperative to survive is the responsibility of the parents to accomplish that task: the child's survival.

The job of being a parent is to facilitate the survival and growth of the children. That is not the same as telling children what to do so that the parents are not inconvenienced. It has been my experience that clients who are overly controlling due to their insecurity and fear managed to raise children who are inherently angry and who manifest levels of helplessness in many aspects of their lives. In response to this anger and helplessness, some children fall apart while other children overachieve in an effort to cover-up the uncomfortable feelings.

Angry children appear in families when inadequate parents cannot meet the essential needs of the growing child early in childhood. Anger is a psychological reaction to not getting something you feel you were supposed to receive: an entitlement. A child, however, is forbidden from expressing this anger at the parents, so they drive the anger in against themselves.

Furthermore, many children of inappropriate parents grow up feeling helpless, because these parents, in an effort to cover-up their inadequacy, do everything for the child. As a result these children do not develop the confidence that comes with initiating one's own intent and then experiencing the consequences of one's efforts. These parents appear controlling and smothering. As a result of being controlled by the needs of the parents to look good, the children lack real life feedback regarding their talents, abilities, skills and interests. As a result, they feel very insecure in the world and unconsciously dread growing older.

The article from the Wall Street Journal encouraged parents to not organize their children's summer, but to let the children organize their summer. They encourage parents to let the children pass through the "I'm bored" phase of summer without solving the problem for the children. While this phase can be very uncomfortable for the children initially, it is not supposed to be uncomfortable for the parent. And that's the point!

The average parent makes raising children all about their convenience and avoids letting children explore the world freely to learn and grow with each experience, even the ones that generate feelings of discomfort. Once the child becomes accustomed to solving their own problems, a

sense of confidence and control over one's destiny begins to surface and becomes a habitual belief. Letting the children solve their children problems and letting parents solve their adult problems leads to a habitual family atmosphere: we are productive and happy.

It was very comical to read that the initiative to write the book came from the fact that his family experienced a morning disaster everyday trying to get the children off to school, and another disaster every night trying to get the children to bed. His solution was to get control like a business. It never dawned on him or his wife to ask why the children were so non-cooperative. Is it possible the children weren't getting their needs met, and they were angry over the sense of helplessness imposed upon them by the selfishness of their mother and father?

The author went on to say that, "human beings are conditioned to see home as a place to relax, but that's not reality." And he's right. It's not reality in "his" home! But, it is a reality in the real world. Homes are a place of safety. Whether living in a 5000 sq. ft home or a cave in a mountain, home is where mom is. Home is where dad keeps everyone safe. The author complained about all the things he had to do when he got home at night. Rather than realizing that there was something wrong with him and his wife and the way they ran the home and their careers, his decision was to become really efficient and make the children effectively take care of the parents instead of becoming more loving and giving generously to the children by doing his job as a parent.

From my perspective, the author was moving away from the biological model that all brains are designed to manifest. The only reason why the brain likes efficiency is because it helps us to survive better, but in order to survive, you have to be safe, and creating a space of safety is the job of the parents. To do this successfully, mothers and fathers need a sense of dignity, respect, privacy and right to self-expression. They need these virtues for themselves, and they need to defend those virtues for their children, because every child is entitled to feel safe.

This impulse to put the parents' needs before the children's' brings us back to the article on summer vacations. The problem is not that the children are bored; problem is that these adults feel obligated to solve the problems of the children in order to feel good about themselves or perhaps to ignore a deeper truth regarding their inadequacy as parents.

Yes, I recognize this is a gross oversimplification, but I think an oversimplification is very necessary when confronting people who advocate running families like corporations, and mothers and fathers who feel the need to tell their children what to do during summer vacation.

The final point is simply that the distortions that we experience as children persist into our adulthood. Those distortions continue to diminish the quality of life as evidenced by this author lack of creativity. The deeper problem is that this author's behavior feels normal to him, and because it feels normal, there is no inclination to change. As a business owner, it is your responsibility to maintain the realistic quality of life in your office, as well as at home, and the methodology for maintaining this quality of life comes through your behavior and what you believe to be normal. What is normal is often learned in childhood, but can you be sure that what you learned in childhood is really good for your children, or for your business?