

FAMILIES



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Grandmothers of the Disappeared

Family ties and strength are important when a crisis hits. In 1976, the military overthrew the government of Argentina. At least 210 children were kidnapped, along with their parents, or were later born in captivity.

Not long after the coup, a group called *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, or Grandmothers of the Plaza of May, formed. The women were the mothers and grandmothers of those who had disappeared. Every Thursday afternoon these women stood outside military headquarters to protest the kidnappings. They also gathered all the information they could about the disappeared. They questioned neighbors, prison janitors, released prisoners, and

women who delivered the babies in jail.

Most of the disappeared adults were killed, but the grandmothers were determined to find their grandchildren. It was not easy. The captors sold the children on the black market and gave them away as gifts, bribes, or payment for services. With persistence, the grandmothers kept track of many of the children.

In 1983 the government began to listen to the grandmothers' pleas that the children be

returned to their natural families, but the grandmothers had to prove the children really belonged to them. With the help of an American geneticist, they began to match the blood of the children with the blood of the grandparents.

More than 48 children have been returned to their grandparents on the basis of the blood test. The grandmothers continue to search for the rest, still determined to resolve a crisis that began many years ago.



Although this can be difficult, it is in the best interest of everyone. An abuser who learns how to control problem behavior may be reunited with the family later. The strain of confronting the problem is worth the effort when the result is a happier life.

People who are abusive, or fear they might become so, can be helped by Parents Anonymous, a national organization that sponsors support groups for parents throughout the country. This organization is listed in telephone directories.

SUICIDE

For everyone, life has its ups and downs. Sometimes people feel that a low point in life is overwhelming. Choosing suicide, however, is a permanent reaction to a temporary problem. Solving problems and letting strong negative emotions fade is a better answer. Down times eventually turn up when given a chance. There is no second chance with suicide.

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Trying Times for Girls

Being a good parent means loving and taking care of a child regardless of what gender it is. Parents in many Asian countries, such as China, however, have shown a preference for boys, although the picture is changing.

Traditionally, Chinese boys helped on the farm. They took care of their elderly parents. On the other hand, girls worked at home only until they got married. Then they worked for their husband's family. Girls also had to have a dowry (money or property a bride brings to her husband when they marry), so Chinese families often looked on girls as a needless expense.

Over the years, the prejudice against girls has been changing. One government policy, however, has hampered the

process. Overpopulation has forced the Chinese government to recommend strongly that couples have only one child. The vast majority of couples feel that if they can only have one child, they still want a boy. A man may even divorce the mother of a girl so he can remarry and have another child. The man's parents may encourage him because they, too, want a boy.

The favoritism toward males can be seen in several other ways. If there is a shortage of food, girls may be given less to eat than boys. Some parents do not carry daughters' baby pictures or boast about their daughters. Some grandmothers ignore granddaughters but lavish attention on grandsons.

Prejudice against girls creates other problems, too. In one province, the 50,000 bachelors outnumber women in their age group by ten to one. Many of them will never marry.

Fortunately, among young people in Asian countries the attitude is changing. Many among the new generations feel that a child is precious whether male or female.



Good Nutrition

Because children haven't the means or the knowledge to know what makes up a nutritious, well-balanced diet, parents have to provide the right foods. Children are growing at a rapid rate and need plenty of nutritious foods to help them grow and develop strong, healthy bodies. Providing children with all their nutritional needs is not always an easy task, so parents must

take special care to plan children's meals and snacks. This is especially true of small children who frequently do not eat much at one sitting and therefore need to eat often.

Sasha, for example, gives her children juice and nutritious snacks to eat at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Their favorite snacks are raisins, peanut-butter-filled celery sticks, and fresh fruit. At meals she also gives them a variety of nutritious foods.

MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

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Among the nomadic Tuareg people of the Sahara Desert, women are much respected. No man would risk the loss of honor that would occur if he were to beat or assault a woman.

Unlike women in other Muslim cultures, Tuareg women do not cover their faces with a veil and are not kept separate from the men. Tuareg women voice their opinions openly and take part in discussions. They take part in organizing special celebrations.

Tuareg women are very strong. They are the ones responsible for digging postholes for the family's tent, setting up the tent and taking it down, and loading and unpacking the camels and donkeys. Their hands are large from milking the goats and

Strong Mothers

from using a huge and heavy wooden pestle to grind the grain that is their staple food. Their heavy work goes on even while they are pregnant.

Tuareg women also participate in what, in other parts of the world, is considered a masculine sport — wrestling. Wrestling takes place on special occasions, such as the naming ceremony for a baby. It takes place between women, often between cross-cousins — the daughters of a brother and sister.

Visitors who come to the

naming ceremony, however, may be caught up in the events, too. Soon all the women are wrestling. The wrestling is all good natured, with jokes and friendly insults exchanged.

Mothers have an especially honored place in Tuareg society. They hold knowledge about group customs and the use of herbs. Group members seek them out to ask for advice. Women believe that their skill as strong wrestlers shows that they are strong enough for their role as mothers.



REWARDS OF PARENTING

On the other hand, children bring many rewards. Parents say the main benefits of having children are shared love and affection and the feeling of being a family. Some couples feel a need to have children to make their family complete.

To many, parenthood brings a sense of fulfillment. A feeling of satisfaction and pride comes with providing for all the needs of children and watching them gradually grow and develop into healthy, happy, well-adjusted, responsible, and successful adults.

Another reward of parenthood is the stimulation children provide. Playing and learning with a child can be great fun for both parent and child. Seeing and rediscov-

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Life Structure Changes

A change in physical surroundings can affect a family for generations. Take, for example, the simple matter of custom and tradition. If parents move to a different country, children will learn the customs of their adopted home.

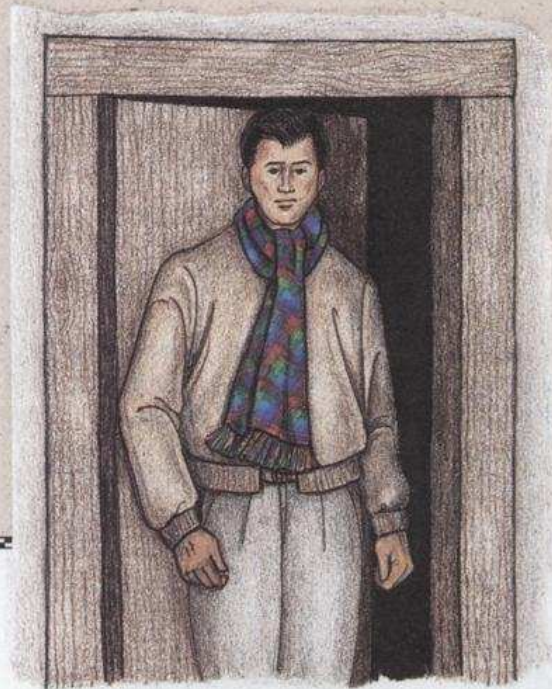
A family in Scotland, for instance, observes some New Year's customs that are very different from those followed in the United States. New Year's Eve is called hogmanay by the Scots, and one of the traditions is the thorough cleaning of the family's home. It is considered bad luck to begin the new year with a dirty home. It is also thought bad luck to begin a New Year's party before the stroke of midnight. Compare this to typical New Year's celebrations in the United States, which usually

begin before midnight so friends and family can start the new year together.

Another Scottish New Year's superstition is that a family will have good luck all year if the first person to cross their threshold is a tall, dark man. Some families with tall, dark-haired sons, nephews, or husbands will send the men outside a few minutes before midnight. They

are then the first to step into the home as midnight strikes.

Children of Scottish parents who are raised in the United States may not observe these traditions. They may forget or modify them to make them more "American." This may result in a new family tradition that may change again to suit the changing aspects of their own children's life structure.



The final aspect of life structure includes the *physical world* in which the person lives. This includes the community, neighborhood, and residence.

Adult life proceeds through times of stability and times of change. During stable periods, a person's life structure is established and maintained. During times of change, the life structure shifts and changes also. Sometimes these changes are minor, while sometimes

they are major. Changes in life structure can include adding or subtracting roles, building new relationships or ending old ones, and changing the physical setting.

The periods of change in a person's life can come from without or within. Some changes are external. These include new

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The Mark of a Good Consumer

In Germany, families who are concerned about the environment look for the Blue Angel label. The label, used on products that are potentially harmful to the environment, does not mean that the product is perfectly safe. It only means that it is less damaging than other similar products on the market.

Blue Angel labeling began in 1978. By the early 1990s, more than 3500 products in 60 categories bore the mark. Some of the products approved for Blue Angel marking are aerosols with CFCs (chemicals that damage the ozone layer), oil burners that produce low levels of carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas), wallpapers and flower pots made from recycled materials, recycled tires, brake lin-

ings and floor tiles that are free of cancer-causing asbestos, and trucks and buses that produce little soot and little noise.

Products proposed for the label must go through stiff evaluation and testing. Three government agencies, an independent jury, experts in various fields and special interest groups oversee the selection and testing process. The public nominates more than 100 products a year for the Blue Angel mark. Only three or four, however, earn the coveted label.

The mark carries weight among German consumers, eight percent of whom belong to the environmental party, the Greens. These families buy Blue Angel labeled products, so

manufacturers are motivated to improve the quality of their products. In the early 1980s, only two percent of the oil burners produced in Germany met Blue Angel standards. Within two years, eighty percent qualified.

The labeling works, too. Estimates are that the amount of toxic solvents in German waters has dropped by about 40,000 tons since the mid-1980s. In an era when families feel threatened about their environmental safety, this is a significant contribution to such problems.



Consumers have the right to be *informed*. Several federal agencies work to be sure that companies provide accurate information about products, both in advertising and in labeling. Lars, for example, is allergic to some dairy products. He reads the list of ingredients on food packaging to help him select products that fit his special dietary needs.

Consumers have the right to *choose*. This means that there must be a variety of prod-

ucts and services from which to select. Having options helps keep prices competitive. Suppose there are seven businesses in your community that offer copying services, and only one in a community nearby. How do you think this will affect prices?

Finally, consumers have a right to be *heard*. If they are not satisfied with a product or service, they should receive a full hearing and fair treatment. Also, the government must consider consumers' inter-

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Potlatch — Giving Until It Hurts

Many Native American groups along the Pacific Northwest coast of America have held the belief in their culture that all social and political events must be public. All witnesses to such events had to be repaid and, of course, well fed. The celebration that accompanied such events was called a potlatch.

The meaning of “potlatch” originally comes from the Chinook word meaning “to give.” At a potlatch, northwestern Native Americans have given away property at great feasts. Potlatches were given when young people reached puberty, at naming ceremonies, at initiations of boys into secret societies, and at marriages. The most important potlatch was given at death. Responsibility for the

potlatch fell on the family of the father of the deceased.

All family members were expected to help provide the gifts—slaves, clothing, or skins in the early days. Later blankets were often the primary gift. The gifts were displayed in public on the beach. Permanent posts were set up marking the ends of the long line of presents so that everyone would remember how much was given. The family also supplied huge amounts of food, by fishing and gathering or buying food with wages.

The potlatch advanced the host family in rank and in standing in the community. The bigger the display, the more invitations given, and the bigger the feast, the greater was the respect given to the family and the longer people remembered the event.

Providing a memorable potlatch, however, often put a family deeply in debt. Many families were bankrupt by the process.



HANDLING EVERYDAY EXPENSES

Most teens are financially responsible for only part of their needs and wants. Housing, food, and other needs are taken care of by adults. For which of your expenses are you responsible?

As you become more independent, you start to assume more financial responsibility. At some point, you will discover that it is not always safe or convenient to keep enough cash on hand to pay all your bills. Two alternatives to this are checking accounts and automatic teller machines (ATMs).