



The Family Room

By Dr. Roy Don Whitehead

Do's and Don'ts of Post-Divorce Parenting

When Norma and Vera first separated, their children were devastated. (All characters are fictitious.) The children wanted Mommy and Daddy back together. As it became clear to the adults that a divorce was inevitable, they began to worry about their children's reaction. "What can we do to help the kids adjust to this divorce?" Vera asked her counselor.

There are many things a divorcing couple can do to minimize the negative impact of the divorce on the children involved. Robert Kincaid of Kincaid Family Therapy in Lexington has compiled the following list for parents:

1. Do make certain that children maintain quality contact with each parent (providing, that there is no abuse or neglect involved). Research shows that children who keep contact with both parents adjust best to divorce.
2. Do sit down with your kids as a couple and let them know that you both love them, will both remain their parents, and that the divorce is not their fault.
3. Do find a way to communicate

with your ex which minimizes the chance of negativity. If you can't talk to each other, how about e-mail?

4. Don't communicate with your ex through your kids.

5. Don't demean or criticize your ex to your kids.

6. Do ask your relatives and friends to abide by the same "no bashing of the ex in front of the kids" rule.

7. Don't argue vehemently in front of the kids, including over the phone.

8. Don't react inappropriately to things you see in your kids which remind you of your ex. "You are just like your father!" is usually not a helpful comment.

9. Do communicate concerns about your kids to your ex. You don't have to like or approve of your ex, but it helps tremendously if you can talk rationally to him or her about your children.

10. Don't be afraid to work with your ex on problems with your kids.

11. Don't expect to parent exactly alike but do try to minimize the differences.

12. Do communicate with your ex about big events (both positive and

negative) in the lives of your kids while they are with you.

13. Do stick to schedules as much as possible.

Norm and Vera can abide by this list of rules, their children will be better able to handle the divorce. Some children are not so fortunate. The most common mistake parents make is putting down the other spouse in front of the children. The second most common is engaging in heated arguments in front of the children.

Sue's mother made another mistake. After her husband left, she began to treat Sue differently than her sister. Sue noticed that her sister had

more privileges while Sue had more chores. Her sister was praised while Sue was the target of Mom's constant criticism. This caused Sue to think poorly of herself and resulted in problems later on.

It was not until she became an adult that Sue learned why her mother had targeted her. "You reminded me so much of your father," Mom said, "that I took out on you some of my anger at him. I'm sorry." While Sue was happy for the apology, it did not take away the effect of all those years of criticism.

Parents need to be careful of their children's feelings during a divorce.

Legislative Update

By State Representative
Danny Ford

Child protection measures, innovative financing among issues that lead off in second month of 2002 General Assembly.

On Wednesday, February 6, we approved HB 106, a measure that would create a child photo identification system within the state's missing persons clearinghouse. Under the bill's provisions, children ages 2 to 15 could purchase, for the minimal cost of \$4 per child, an identification card made with their color photo, birth certificate and social security number. The Kentucky State Police would be responsible for maintaining the information; they are currently responsible for the clearinghouse, and the information would be kept private.

We also passed the Medicaid measure. I wrote about two weeks ago, the bill would require nearly all Medicaid recipients to pay \$1 for each prescription they fill. It will not apply to juveniles, pregnant women, or institutionalized individuals. The measure will save an estimated \$8 million during the first year of implementation. During the last fiscal year alone the state Medicaid program was over \$300 million over budget, a majority of the shortfall has been attributed to the cost of prescription medications.

During their weekly meeting, the House Judiciary Committee passed HB 77, legislation that would exempt photographs and videos taken during an autopsy from the Open Records Act. Many may remember the controversy that arose last year after tabloid publications tried to get access to autopsy records of NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt.

One measure that I expect to see on the House Floor in the next week or two is the perennial "Bottle Bill." You will probably remember that this is the third year the General Assembly has taken on this issue. While we all agree that keeping our state clean is one of the most important steps in preserving our natural resources, what we can not seem to see eye to eye on is how to accomplish that goal. This bill would create a new tax that specifically applies to the beverage containers we purchase at grocery stores, convenience stores, and restaurants with drive-through windows. In addition, the bill taxes, on an extra dollar per ton of garbage taken to landfills. The new tax is expected to raise approximately \$30 million in the first year alone.

Without a doubt we need to do everything in our power to protect Kentucky's environment. I question, however, if the answer is not in finding an alternative funding source to clean up roadside litter and better enforcement of current litter laws. Certainly we should work to balance the interest of those who already do their part through voluntary local recycling and garbage disposal programs against slapping a new tax on law-abiding citizens.

As I mentioned in my last column, the next few weeks are going to be quite busy with issues like these and others, including the budget, education and the environment. I hope you'll contact me in Frankfort with your opinions or if I can provide any assistance. I can be reached toll-free at 1-800-372-7181. As always, if you are interested in visiting Frankfort during the session I hope you will let me schedule a guided tour of the State Capitol Building.

Christian Unity Service held

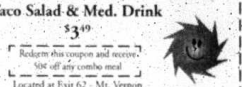
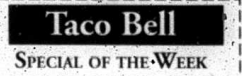
The annual Christian Unity Week service was held January 18th at Our Lady of Mt. Vernon Catholic Church located on Williams Street and Crawford Lane in Mt. Vernon.

There were several of the area churches in our community who participated in the service by providing Unity messages and songs of praise

and worship. The purpose of the Unity Service was to join churches in our community for the purpose of worshiping and praising Jesus Christ.

Our Lady of Mt. Vernon Catholic Church has held this service for the past six years. It is their goal that more churches of the community will become involved in this effort.

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