Parenting from page 3

them to cope with negative feelings, and guiding them through periods of family stress, their children are shielded from many of the damaging effects of family turmoil.

Should parents ban all forms of marital conflict or keep disagreements hidden from the children? Well, this would be impossible. Anger and conflict are normal, to some degree, in everyday married life. Couples who can openly express their differences and work through them in respectful, constructive ways have happier relationships. Their children can actually benefit from witnessing certain kinds of family conflict. Children can clearly see that their parents are working toward a resolution and can see and experience how conflicts can be managed. Children who never see adults get angry with another, disagree, and then settle their differences, are missing crucial lessons that can contribute to their lives. Home is the place to learn and practice new skills, including valuable negotiating skills.

If there ever is a time to talk to your children about their feelings (emotions), it is when there is marital conflict at home. It is often difficult for parents who are sad or angry, but they can find the emotional energy to talk with their children.

• When talking to children about family conflict, do so when you are feeling relatively calm yourself. Explain the situation in as much detail as is appropriate. And help your child express his or her feelings about the situation and encourage the child to ask questions.

In conclusion, a healthy Christian marriage is a powerful statement to others of God’s love. All intimate relationships experience some level of conflict. This is part of life on this earth. How couples display their love for one another, and how they deal with their own couple-conflicts, can provide powerful insights to those who live closest to them, especially their children. When sympathy is missing, when parents don’t have the desire or energy to handle their emotions in healthy ways, the couple and the children suffer.

As Ellen White shares in Ministry of Healing, “Home should be a place where cheerfulness, courtesy and love abide; and where these graces dwell, there will abide happiness and peace. Troubles may invade, but these are the lot of humanity. Let patience, gratitude, and love keep sunshine in the heart, though the day may be ever so cloudy. In such homes angels of God abide.” p. 393

Sue Murray has recently retired from her teaching responsibilities at Andrews University in the areas of Family Studies and Social Work. She is a spouse, passionate mother, grandmother and loyal friend.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the level of parents’ ability to regulate emotions impact their children’s well-being?

2. How do the ways that parents interact with each other affect their children?

3. In what ways can marital conflict in the home benefit the children?

Children who never see adults get angry with another, disagree, and then settle their differences, are missing crucial lessons that can contribute to their lives.

I believe the best days of AAFLP are still ahead.

During my tenure on the executive leadership of AAFLP it has been my privilege to work with five presidents: Dick Duerksen (1996); Rupert Young (January 1997-December 1999); Audray Johnson (January 2000-December 2003); Susan Murray (January 2004-December 2005); and Jorge Mayer (January 2006-present). These years also gave us three terrific editors of Family Life who kept us in touch with the membership and reminded us of what AAFLP was alive—Roger Dudley (1995-December 1999); Don Murray (January 2000-December 2008); and Peter Swanson (January 2009-present).

Wonderful and exciting things have happened in this organization during my watch since October 1995: this publication was re-designed twice; the name of the organization was changed to the Adventist Association of Family Life Professionals (July 2001); with the Winter 2000 issue of Family Life—Don Murray’s first as editor—I started writing Musings from Silver Spring, sharing a birds-eye view of the happenings in Family Ministries around North America; the executive secretary position was changed to that of executive director (July 2001); scientific investigations conducted by Adventist scholars were presented each year at the AAFLP Research Forum, even being hosted once at the Smart Marriages conference in San Francisco in July 2008; two levels of family life education certification were developed and made available in Spanish as well as English, the John and Millie Youngberg award for outstanding family life education (2008), and the Alberta Mazat award for outstanding family therapy (2009) were instituted and given each year at Andrews and Loma Linda Universities to exceptional graduate students/young professionals.

And just to record for posterity, a few of the Family Ministries initiatives that came to fruition in NAD during the past 15 years include: the branding of NAD Family Ministries resources with a dynamic logo designed during the first quarter of 1996; the publication of A New Generation of Adventist Families and...
Willie & Elaine Oliver Elected World Family Ministries Directors

At the recent 9th General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, Willie Oliver and Elaine Oliver were elected Director and Associate Director respectively of Family Ministries (FM) for the world church. Willie Oliver comes to the world headquarters office from the North American Division (NAD) where he has served as the FM Director since October, 1995. Elaine has served as a consultant for NAD Family Ministries. Willie and Elaine succeed Ron and Karen Flowers who stepped down after more than 30 years of service in Family Ministries at the General Conference.

Family and family ministries have been keen interests of the Olivers for many years. Married for 26 years, they are the parents of two young adult children, Jessica and Julian. A graduate of Northern Caribbean University (formerly West Indies College), Mandeville, Jamaica, Willie was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1986 in the Greater New York Conference. He holds an M.A. in Religion from Andrews University with concentrations in marriage and family counseling, an M.A. in Sociology from Columbia University in the city of New York, and a Ph.D. in Family Sociology from American University, Washington, DC.

Elaine, whose career has been in higher education and most recently at Washington Adventist University where she has served as Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, holds an M.A. in Higher and Adult Education from Columbia University in the city of New York and a Ph.D. in Family Sociology from American University, Washington, DC.

The NAD FM website that he developed is an outstanding model of resources content and presentation. The Adventist Association of Family Life Professionals (AAFLP) has been strengthened and expanded by his work as its Executive Director, as he has worked closely with the several AAFLP presidents who have served the association during his years in the NAD. Willie Oliver has helped to foster ministry to singles and married ministry in NAD. He has worked with the Center for Creative Ministry and researcher Monte Sahlin to produce the data-rich NAD Adventist Family Study 2009 (Adventist Families in North America available from the Center for Creative Ministry). Recently he has collaborated with GC FM and the Loma Linda Center for Spiritual Life and Wholeness to launch the Adventist Family Research initiative, with Internet access at http://www.llu.edu/wholeness/adventistfamilysitestearchpage

Definitely! Dating has its place and time, but it is not the only way we express our feelings. It is important to maintain a balance between dating and other activities. Dating can be a healthy and enjoyable experience, but it is crucial to remember that relationships are built on mutual respect and trust, not just physical attraction. It is essential to communicate openly with your partner about your values, boundaries, and expectations to ensure a healthy and fulfilling relationship.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How do the personal “hot-button” issues of the counselor cause problems for the counselor?
2. What practical steps should counselors take to minimize the risk of projecting their subjective experience into the counseling process?
3. Is it advisable to assemble an “eclectic” collection of the best parenting ideas from many sources, or is it better to begin with a single Source of wisdom and apply the principles gleaned to parenting practice?

Perspective from page 2

Pastor: Of course it is. As a matter of fact, that’s Child Guidance 17

Teen 2: Definitely! Dating has its place and time, but right now you both need to stay focused to make good grades and to enjoy your youth.

Teen 1: I see why this is so complicated. I guess our parents are right. I was not thinking about marriage, or any of that stuff. I just wanted to feel loved.

Teen 2: This stuff is for us! We have lots of other fun things to do, and besides, there’s always homework to keep us busy!

Pastor: Definitely! Dating has its place and time, but right now you both need to stay focused to make good grades and to enjoy your youth. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 13 that love is patient and kind. You need to be kind to yourselves and to be patient about this important aspect of life. Trust in the Lord with all your hearts and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path. Ps 127:1

Presidentially from page 6

Reflecting on what history has taught us and upon our own parenting style we may find that our practices include elements of several of these philosophies of child rearing. And the counsel we give and our teachings likely mirror our practices. You may ask yourself, what is an appropriate parenting strategy for today? First of all, remember the initial advice, ‘Take time for yourself’ Otherwise the advice you give to others will merely be a reflection of your own need.” Take time for prayer. Forgive yourselves and each other for the parenting mistakes you have made. Be willing to learn new techniques and approaches. Don’t lean to your own understanding, but humbly seek the direction of the Lord.

Next, follow the wise counsel of God in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Also, remember what my favorite writer adds,” It is in the home that the education of the child is to begin. Here is his first school. Here, with his parents as instructors, he is to learn the lessons that are to guide him throughout life – lessons of respect, obedience, reverence, self-control. The educational influences of the home are a decisive power for good or for evil. They are in many respects silent and gradual, but if exerted on the right side, they will become a far reaching power for truth and righteousness. If the child is not instructed aright here, Satan will educate him through agencies of his choosing. How important then, is the school in the home! Child Guidance 17

Jorge Mayer continues to serve as president of AAFLP. His busy life includes his wife and family and his ministry as a vice-president for the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
Healthy Enough?

In her presentation on Saturday afternoon at the 2010 Adventist Family Celebration, Dr. Kiti Freier Randall made a statement that has impacted me to this day when she said, “Take time for yourself! Otherwise the advice you give to others will merely be a reflection of your own need.” How true this is! As counselors, educators, ministers, or family life professionals, we say to others often mirrors the feelings and experiences of our own life path. Is my counseling tainted by the intrusion of subjectivity?

One area of counseling that immediately came to my mind was parenting. As soon as she spoke, I recalled my first counseling experiences as a minister. I remember those that came to me asking for effective parenting skills. They were parents with many concerns about their children. I thought of my own parenting skills, and about my parents and how they had raised me. Then, I asked myself, “Did I guide them to the appropriate answer or did I simply reflect my own need? Was I healthy enough to help them?”

Over the centuries, different cultures have found various ways of describing the role of parents toward their children. Some of these reflect our tendency to treat others from a subjective perspective?

During this time, an early developmental theory emerged. There were only two stages in the period of human development, childhood and adulthood. The former was only significant because it was the preparation for adulthood. As early as age 5-7 years, these extremely young persons were expected to assume an adult status that included many of the responsibilities, behaviors and character traits of mature individuals.

Formal education was limited to boys, while girls were expected to learn to keep house and raise children. Mothers and young children were viewed as the property of men who could abandon them, sell them into slavery, or even drown them. During the Middle Ages, society was rural and primitive, and more generations of families lived together. The father, although he supervised his male children, did not have close emotional relationships with any of them. His role was to provide food, clothing, and shelter for the family.

During the Renaissance, a cultural revitalization was experienced in Europe. The conquest of new lands, significant scientific discoveries, and a proliferation of artistic activity brought about many changes in society. However, there were few changes in the relationships between parents and children. The adult was still the authority whose words were undisputed and whose demands were obeyed.

As counselors, educators, ministers, or family life professionals, what we say to others often mirrors the feelings and experiences of our own life path

During the era of American colonization children were viewed as “cheap labor,” and they were totally obedient to their parents. There were no moments of leisure. The children were kept busy at all times. They were viewed as “cheap labor,” and they were totally obedient to their parents. There were no moments of leisure. The children were kept busy at all times. They were expected to comply with their parent’s wishes in such things as memorizing verses and hymns.

During the era of the Industrial Revolution, three different and contradictory philosophies for parenting were emphasized. Calvinism called for severe and even cruel physical punishment. The strict moral instruction of children was paramount. Empiricism taught that children at birth are like a “tabula rasa,” a blank piece of paper; therefore, they should be exposed to a variety of experiences as they grow.

During this time, an early developmental theory was conceived. The central concept was that children are born ignorant of what is right instead of being born with an inclination toward evil.

In the twentieth century, a variety of approaches to parenting were advocated. There were those who promoted permissiveness (Freud), and others who insisted that training must be firm, authoritative, and restrictive (Watson). With so many options being widely discussed, some of which were contradictory, parents had difficulty deciding what to do with the gift of children that God had placed in their hands.

Positive Parenting

with Susan E. Murray

The Power of a Positive Marital Relationship

God designed marriage to be a place where trust, openness, and vulnerability would thrive. It was to be a place of nourishment, enrichment, and continual growth. Because of Adam and Eve’s choices, these gifts are often the most difficult to find, keep, and enjoy.

Learning how to handle differences is one of the most powerful things a couple can do to protect the promise their marriage offers. Children learn about God by observing and listening in their own family.

Children learn about God by observing and listening in their own family.

Family. Researcher John Gottman found that a parent’s interaction with the child’s other parent influences the child’s attitudes, achievements, ability to regulate emotions, and capacity for getting along with others. When parents nurture and support each other, their children’s emotional well-being flourishes. “Just as a tree is affected by the quality of air, water and soil in its environment, the emotional health of children is determined by the quality of intimate relationships that surround them” (Gottman, p. 138).

Marital discord affects children in adverse ways:

• There is a strong connection between marital relationships and children’s behavior with their own friends. Children whose parents are distressed in their marriages play less collaboratively and have more negative interactions with their playmates than children whose parents are happily married.

• In the long run, children risk failure in friendships, which is a leading indicator of a child’s risk for psychiatric problems.

• Small children react to adult arguments with psychological changes, including increases in heart rate and blood pressure. They typically respond by crying, standing motionless with tension, covering their ears, grimacing, or requesting to leave.

• Nonverbal stress reactions to anger have been observed in children as young as six months. Babies may not understand the content of the disagreement, but they know when something is amiss and react with agitation and tears.

• Marital discord may have a deep and profound impact on children, especially when they are exposed to severe family problems from the time they are very small. The stress of living with parental conflict can affect the development of an infant’s autonomic nervous system, which, in turn, largely determines a child’s ability to cope.

• Parents, distracted by their own problems, have less time and attention for their children.

• Divorce and conflicts leading up to divorce leave parents too exhausted, distracted, or depressed to be effective disciplinarians.

• During the first two years of a parent’s separation and divorce is a time of serious disruption in the parent-child relationship, whether the parents want to admit it or not. A preoccupied and/or emotionally disturbed parent and a distressed, demanding child are likely to have difficulty supporting or consoling each other and may even exacerbate each other’s problems.

• Unsupervised children may drift towards a more deviant peer group.

• By early adolescence, many children from disrupted families experience failing grades, precocious sexual behavior, substance abuse, and delinquency.

• Parents in stressed marriages often provide poor examples to their children of how to get along with others, especially in stressful situations.

• Children raised by parents whose marriages are characterized by criticism, defensiveness, and contempt are much more likely to have difficulty regulating their emotions, focusing their attention, and soothing themselves when they become upset.

However there is hope! The principles for living in a satisfying marriage are the same as for being a good parent. It is not the parental conflict itself that is so harmful to children, but the way in which parents handle their disputes. When parents can be present for their children emotionally, helping

Parenting continued on page 8
The Pastor And The Family: Counseling Teens on Dating and Mate Selection

One of the challenges facing families is the desire of adolescents to date and the reluctance of parents to allow them to do so. The result is that both parents and adolescents struggle with the tension that develops between them and with the uncertainty about how to negotiate this process.

In many cases it seems that neither the parent nor the adolescent knows how to deal effectively with this intense societal pressure. The pastor is frequently sought out by the parents to take up this challenge of counseling teens on mate selection. This can be daunting if the pastor is not prepared. The following is a suggested vignette that may serve as an eye opener for pastors facing this challenge.

Teen 1: Pastor, all my friends have boyfriends but our parents think I’m not ready for dating.

Teen 2: They think the reason we are not doing well in school is because we are spending our time talking to boys, but we don’t think that has anything to do with it.

Pastor: Tell me why you both think you are ready to be dating.

Teen 2: All our friends are dating. We are the only ones who think we’re not.

Pastor: So you think because your friends are dating you should too?

Teen 1: More or less, it’s the cool thing to do, what’s wrong with that?

Teen 2: It’s talking about dating and when you should start.

Teen 2: Cool.

Pastor: Dating is a stage in a relationship when you are getting to know each other for the purpose of selecting a mate. Before you do, you should know yourself really well. You should

Know who you are and what your strengths are.
Know what your personal and professional goals are.
Understand how you feel about yourself.
Ask yourself how emotionally healthy you are.
In essence, what is your level of self-esteem?
Next, you need to understand what mature love is, and whether or not you are ready for it.

Teen 2: What do you mean by mature love? Isn’t love, love?
Pastor: There is a difference between mature love and infatuation.

Mature love:
• Is sensitive and respectful;
• Is kind, patient, and loyal;
• Is honest and trustworthy;
• Places high value on you and builds you up;
• Is not hasty, but is willing to wait until the time is right for marriage;
• Leads to a decision after you have carefully considered your priorities.

Infatuation or immature love on the other hand is:
• Jealous and suspicious;
• Controlling and possessive;
• Insecure and conditional;
• Risky and irresponsible;
• Unforgiving and impulsive;
• Selfish and inconsiderate.

Teen 1: Wow! So how old do you have to be before you are ready to date?
Teen 2: Maybe when we are fifty!

Pastor: You’ll be ready to date when you are mature enough to relate to someone of the opposite sex as a potential marriage partner. You should also want to start dating until you have the skills to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. In other words, when you have a career, a trade or a profession, and you are emotionally ready to leave home.

Teen 2: We’re definitely not even half ready for that.
Teen 1: I see many of my friends getting hurt over relationships and they don’t know how to handle the pain, so they begin to talk about suicide and all that stuff. Actually, two of my friends committed suicide in the past three years because of broken relationships.
Teen 2: And this thing about “sexting.” I am not into that, I am not taking any nude pictures of myself to send to anybody. I think that’s nasty. But the kids at school are into that stuff; it’s kinda weird, don’t you think?

Musings from page 1

(Monte and Norma Sahlin) in 1997; the publication of the Family Ministries Curriculum for Local Church Leaders in English and Spanish, now in its third edition; Journey Toward Intimacy marriage retreats; From This Day Forward marriage conferences; the publication of the From This Day Forward column in Message Magazine; annual Family Ministries Planbooks published in partnership with GC Family Ministries; the institution of Adventist Family Conference (AFC) (1999-2006) in partnership with GC Family Ministries and Andrews University, which succeeded Family Life International, and Family Celebration Sabbath (2007-present) the successor of AFC; the publications of a Quick Reference Guide for Making Homes Abuse-Free, and an updated sequel, Bonding Up Brused Reeds: A Quick Reference Guide for Pastors to Ministry to Families Experiencing Abuse and Family Violence, in partnership with GC Family Ministries; the publication of Putting Families First: How Family Friendly Churches Grow, in partnership with Noeline Johnson and Debra Brill; the publications of the Adventist editions of Building A Strong Marriage Workbook (2007) and the Couple’s Workbook (2009) to go with the Prepare-Enrich pre-marriage and marriage strengthening inventories in partnership with Life Innovations, Inc.; the hosting of a 12-segment TV series Marriage in God’s Hands at SBN, subsequently developed as a DVD for distribution worldwide; the commissioning of a study of Adventist Families in North America (2009); the development of Hope for the Family mini-segments for Hope TV; the development of three family segments for the Hope TV series Gift of Light hosted by the Ellen G. White Estate.

AALFP presidents:
• Don Murray (January 2000-December 2008)
• Roger Dudley (1999-December 1999)
• Audray Johnson (January 2000-December 2003)
• Susan Murray (January 2004-December 2005)
• Jorge Mayer (January 2006-present)

Family Life Editors
• Roger Dudley (1995-December 1999)
• Don Murray(January 2000-December 2008)
• Peter Swanson (January 2009-present)

While there are many omissions because of space, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Karen and Ron Flowers—my colleagues at GC Family Ministries—for being supportive and instructive along the way; all the board members of AALFP during these many years; the wonderful partnerships with the Religious Education program at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University, and the support from the Counseling and Family Sciences program at Loma Linda University.

This experience has at once been challenging and fun. I believe the best days of AALFP are still ahead. Pray with me for the Lord to guide the leadership of the North American Division to choose a new director of Family Ministries at the year-end meetings in November 2010 that will be a spiritual facilitator to help lead this ministry to the next level. Of course, I look forward to still being a part of this collective in the days and weeks ahead, and pledge my uninterrupted support from the vantage point of my new position.

Willie Oliver is the newly elected director of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Opinion from page 2

In its relatively short life since Family Ministries’ reformulation as a department, the emphasis has been on developing the infrastructure at division, union, conference, and local church levels, building a consensus regarding its central foci and curricula, crafting the working policies of the department, preparing leadership training methodologies and resources, as well as core materials suitable for contextualization in local fields throughout the world church.

Broadly acclaimed by leaders and members for its practical application of gospel principles in the context of the home, this ministry stands poised to fill an even greater role in helping the church address the strategic issues of unity, quality of life, and growth in discipleship.

Welcome, Willie and Elaine, to this special post which our church has entrusted to you. May God bless you. AALFP supports you! ✨

Ron Flowers and Karen have recently retired from leadership in the General Conference Family Ministries Department.