

# Marriage and Families

Summer 2007



Family Crucibles pg. 6  
How to Find Decent Movies pg. 15



# This kid looks like he needs a vacation.

(And we'd like to tell him where to go)

## **We Create Colorado Family Vacations For Short Attention Spans.**

Planning a vacation with the kids is tough. Staying sane and keeping your kids happy on vacation is almost impossible. *Kids Go Too* will take the hassles out of traveling with the kids and put the memories back in — for you *and* your kids.

Visit our website today to find out how the family vacation planning experts at *Kids Go Too* can make that next trip a lot easier and a lot more fun for you and your family.

And this time, you won't feel like you need a vacation after your vacation is over.



*Call or click today to receive your FREE Family Vacation Planning Kit!*

800.638.3215 | [mtnlodging.com](http://mtnlodging.com)

*An Introduction to Helping and Healing Our Families: Principles and Practices  
Inspired by “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”*

From the editors

Family life holds the promise for our greatest happiness in this life and the next. While family life includes much joy, it also involves discovering, solving, and working through the problems of everyday living. Many families face daunting challenges arising from divorce, single parenting, mental illness, long-term health problems and physical disabilities, death, marital and parent-child conflict, wayward children, and children with special needs—to name a few.



In support of all those who are working to strengthen families, the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University has recently published *Helping and Healing Our Families: Principles and Practices Inspired by “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,”* edited by Craig H. Hart, Lloyd D. Newell, Elaine Walton, and David C. Dollahite (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005). The purpose of this volume is to provide hope, principles, practices, and eternal perspectives in addressing the many issues affecting families today.

*Helping and Healing Our Families* is based upon prophetic principles of marriage and family life, particularly doctrines taught in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”<sup>1</sup> At the creation of the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, President Boyd K. Packer of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles delivered a charge that BYU faculty produce textbooks on the family that would be worthy of a great university. He admonished faculty to fill these books with moral and spiritual truths in full harmony with the restored gospel. These books were to help students and others be good spouses and parents.<sup>2</sup> The concerted efforts of 125 authors, including faculty across many disciplines at Brigham Young University and individuals with professional and personal experience in topics related to family life, culminate in an offering that responds to this apostolic charge. In addition, publication of this book coincides with the tenth anniversary of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which President Gordon B. Hinckley introduced in a general Relief Society Meeting in September 1995.<sup>3</sup>

This issue of *Marriage & Families* draws from *Helping and Healing Our Families*, as it presents three feature articles and two essays representative of the content of the book. Future issues will feature selected articles as well. Although it would be impossible to capture the depth and breadth of the book—which deals with topics ranging from finding balance in family life to intimacy in marriage to dealing with addictions and other destructive influences—our hope is to provide our readers with a sampling of the book’s content (the book is available through LDS-oriented and other bookstores throughout the United States and online at [www.deseretbook.com](http://www.deseretbook.com)). All royalties will go to support teaching, research, and outreach in the BYU School of Family Life.

It is our sincere desire that the principles and practices found in *Marriage & Families* and in *Helping and Healing Our Families* will help families move closer to the ideals set forth in the family proclamation and, in the process, find greater happiness and joy in family life.

### Notes

1. First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles (1995, November), *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*, *Ensign*, 25(11), 102.
2. See D. C. Dollahite (2000), “Introduction: The proclamation as prophetic guidance for strengthening the family”; in D. C. Dollahite, ed., *Strengthening Our Families: An In-Depth Look at the Proclamation on the Family* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft), 3.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley (1995, November), “Stand strong against the wiles of the world,” *Ensign*, 25(11), 98–101. ♦

## Marriage and Families

Summer 2007

### Staff

James Bell, Editor

I-Shüan Warr, Director of Art and Design

Jonathan Roberts, Editorial Assistant

Thomas B. Holman, Ph.D., Senior Faculty  
Advisor

James M. Harper, Ph.D., Publisher

Editorial Council

D. Russell Crane, Ph.D.

James M. Harper, Ph.D.

Alan J. Hawkins, Ph.D.

Thomas B. Holman, Ph.D.

David B. Magleby, Ph.D. (ex officio)

### Editorial Board

Scott Anderson, M.F.T., Ph.D.

Brent Barlow, Ph.D.

Reed Bell, M.D.

Susan Easton Black, Ed.D.

Earlene Blaser

Sean Brotherson, Ph.D.

Allan C. Carlson, Ph.D.

Eugene C. Cole, Ph.D.

John M. R. Covey, Ed.D.

Mary K. Dollahite, J.D.

Stephen F. Duncan, Ph.D.

Paul C. Hardin, Ph.D.

E. Jeffrey Hill, Ph.D.

Bron Ingoldsby, Ph.D.

Glen O. Jenson, Ph.D.

Tamra F. Kriser

Janet L. Chamberlain

Thomas Lickona, Ph.D.

Dianna Lightfoot, M.A., M.Ed.

Elaine S. Marshall, R.N., Ph.D.

John L. Montgomery, M.D.

Lloyd D. Newell, Ph.D.

Terrance D. Olson, Ph.D.

Alan Osmond

Richard A. Panzer

Fred M. Riley, M.S.

A. Lynn Scoresby, Ph.D.

Robert F. Stahmann, Ph.D.

Leslee J. Unruh

Elaine Walton, Ph.D.

Richard G. Wilkins, J.D.

K. Richard Young, Ph.D.

*Marriage & Families* is published by the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University. Material in this publication strives to reflect the values of its sponsoring institutions.

*Marriage & Families* is a journal for young couples, husbands and wives, parents, and professionals—including educators, counselors, therapists, psychologists, physicians, social workers, nurses, public health people, teachers, clergy, experts in family law, and everyone interested in marriage and families. Our editorial board members belong to many faiths—with a common belief in the importance of traditional families. *Marriage & Families* is dedicated to strengthening families. Without apology, our name begins with the word marriage—a concept that many dismiss or completely ignore these days. However, since marriage and fidelity are essentials, not options, in a healthy society, we are pleased to bring you a publication containing credible data supporting this and other time-tested principles and values related to the family.

Permission is given to reproduce articles from this issue for personal and non-profit use with the following credit line:

© 2004 Marriage & Families, used by permission.

ISSN 1535-2528

Manuscripts may be submitted by attaching a PC-compatible electronic file to an e-mail sent to [marriage-families@byu.edu](mailto:marriage-families@byu.edu). Or, a double-spaced manuscript may be submitted to Editor, Marriage & Families, 370 SWKT, P.O. Box 25500, Provo, UT 84602-5500. Please include your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address (when applicable).

Marriage & Families

370 Kimball Tower

P.O. Box 25500

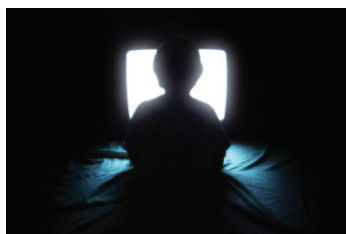
Provo, Utah 84602-5500

E-mail: [marriage-families@byu.edu](mailto:marriage-families@byu.edu)

Internet: <http://marriageandfamilies.byu.edu>

© Marriage & Families 2004

Printed in the United States of America



## Features

**6** **Family Crucibles**  
*Family life is hard, but with the help of God, you can do hard things.*

**15** **How to Find Decent Movies**  
*Indecent content in movies has skyrocketed in the last ten years. Learn about how and where to find good movies.*



## Departments

**4** **Constructing Family-Friendly Careers**  
*A growing number of women are finding ways to make their careers family-friendly.*

**21** **BYU Website Changing Attitudes and Behaviors:  
[foreverfamilies.byu.edu](http://foreverfamilies.byu.edu)**  
*The Forever Families website operated by Brigham Young University's School of Family Life is impacting the families of site visitors.*

**22** **Laughter—The Perfect Family Medicine**  
*Find out how laughing away your troubles is both emotionally and physically healthy.*



## Constructing Family-Friendly Careers

Tonya Fischio

**A** new study explores ways women can have more time for family while maintaining a passion for their career. The dramatic increase of women entering the working field during the past 30 years has placed women in a position where they are often expected to choose between a full-time career and staying at home. However, a growing number of women are experiencing the best of both worlds as they explore the uncharted territory of family-friendly careers.

These women are the creative pioneers, challenging the idea that an individual must work 40 hours a week during regular business hours to make a legitimate contribution.

Unfortunately, while the number of such women may be growing, the number remains small. Researchers Aaron P. Jackson, Ph.D., assistant professor of counseling psychology at Brigham Young University, and Janet S. Scharman, Ph.D., vice president of student life BYU, recognized the on-going battle of the either/or option and set out to discover how women can successfully develop a family-friendly career.

“We’re both involved in counseling, and we began noticing how so many of our women students saw their choices as dichotomous. They felt they could either have a career, or they could have a home and family,” Scharman said. “But we think there are a lot more choices. We want them to be aware there’s a wide range of possibilities.”

According to the research, the possibilities are not limited to specific career tracks; but, rather, family-friendly careers are created in many fields as options are investigated and unusual vocational tracks are considered. Many women are finding high levels of satisfaction in all areas of their life by implementing flexible hours, flexible location, and often cutting back to less than 30 hours a week. They creatively construct their careers to maximize time with their families. Now, they plan their work around their family instead of their family life around their work.

“These women have found great satisfaction in the fact that they have achieved a level of success professionally while maintaining their priority of being a mom first,” Jackson said. “However, most of the women enjoying a successful balance between their work and their career had to take considerable risks as they paved the way. They were often the first in their company to identify and pursue the possibility of an alternative work schedule and other creative options. Many also had

to trade some of the perks of their job, but, interestingly, did not consider it a sacrifice.”

While each woman who participated in the study had to make her own sacrifices and negotiate her own working arrangements, the following themes emerged for most of them: partner/family decision making, creative pioneering, work satisfaction, pleasant stress, ambiguous preparation, peaceful trade-offs, surprise feelings, and partner career flexibility.

### Partner/Family Decision Making

Participants did not decide the “if, how, and when” of their flexible career alone. Most shared the decision making with their spouse as they reviewed goals and responsibilities. Compromises had to be made on both ends. Children also played an integral role in the decision-making. Inasmuch as children contribute to a successful transition, their opinions were often requested and considered. Results also showed a pattern of ongoing reevaluation of the situation.

“Most decision making was done with the spouse,” Jackson said. “Some of the women also expressed a reliance on the entire family. They would request feedback from their spouse and children on how the situation was working.”

### Creative Pioneering

Often times without precedent or an existing structure to support a flexible career, research participants had to take considerable risks to develop, negotiate, and implement their plan. They were able to create or identify the possibility of an alternative work schedule. Some took a smaller work or client load, worked more from home to accommodate children’s schedules, contracted for 30 or less hours a week, worked weekends, or worked nontraditional hours of the day.

Each working arrangement was as different as the lives and family situations of each woman. No one formula or schedule works for all or it would once again cease to be considered a flexible career.

One woman shared the schedule that worked for her, “My situation is I’m home every day until 4 p.m. Then I go to work from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. I come home and have dinner and then get the homework and the practicing and all that kind of stuff done. I go back about 8:30 p.m.”



## Work Satisfaction

Participants emphatically reported that they enjoyed their work. They reported feeling their work was meaningful and personally very satisfying.

“I love my life right now,” said one woman. “It’s a good amount of work. I feel that I’m stimulated and excited by my work, but then when I go back to being with my daughter, I feel fresh and excited to be with her again.”

## Pleasant Stress

Although a contradiction of terms, pleasant stress was a common theme found throughout the research. Juggling a career and family can often wear a woman thin as she is pulled from each end. While women in flexible careers recognized the stresses, they did not feel overwhelmed, but were rather satisfied with their current situation. The flexibility gave them the control they needed to keep the demands of work and family life in balance.

“I’ve been happy with being able to juggle both work and my son and my husband,” one woman said. “Sometimes, I think I’d like to have more time, but I think I have a good balance.”

## Ambiguous Preparation

While participants all had a general plan for their family and career, they also had to accept a level of uncertainty as their situations evolved. Not knowing how their current flexible career would accommodate family life from year to year demanded that the participants live with ambiguity.

“What makes me happy now, I might not be satisfied with next year. I don’t know. But I realize that, hey, maybe that’s true, and I’ll reassess at that point. I’ll just continue to do this for as long as it makes me and my family happy, as long as it works for us,” reported one woman.

## Peaceful Trade-Offs and Surprise Feelings

Participants acknowledged that they had made some important trade-offs in the process. Some passed up promotions, turned down pay increases, or gave up personal outside interests and hobbies. However, they did not feel they had made sacrifices

or paid a price. Jackson said this semantic difference seems to reflect the level of personal satisfaction and peace the participants reported.

“I feel like I’ve lost the prestige that I used to have. I feel like I’ve lost power. I think everything I’ve lost has been worth it,” said one woman.

A passion for both work and family drove the women who participated in the study to pursue a flexible career. However, many reported that they did not know just how strong their feelings were until their plan was implemented.

## Partner Career Flexibility

Many of the women who participated in the research found that a successful flexible career required small vocational adjustments from their partner as well. While some women enjoyed their partner’s support and flexibility from the beginning, others reported that it was something that had to evolve.

One woman shared how her husband made adjustments to accommodate her evolving career, “We’ve had to make a couple of changes in our family. My husband has been very good about it. He changed his schedule around a little bit. He goes into work earlier. He’s at his desk ready to work before 7 a.m. but he’s home by 4 p.m. So that gives us a little bit of family time.”

Although the work experiences for the participants were quite different, these eight common themes emerged from the interviews.

“Given the high levels of satisfaction reported by the participants, creating a family-friendly career may be a viable option for many parents,” Scharman said.

Jackson and Scharman hope career counselors will use these findings to help women construct their careers in a manner that will allow for the desired family time while maintaining their contributions to their profession. ♦





# Family Crucibles

Finding Peace in Trying Times

by E. Jeffrey Hill





**B**righam Young University is where I met, courted, and married my wife of 28 years, Juanita Ray Hill. One particular memory of that era stands out in my mind. I wanted to present my future wife with an engagement ring in an out-of-the-ordinary location. So while riding the Wilkinson Center elevator I surprised her with her glittering gift, the symbol of my affection. In delight, she threw her arms around me and gave me a very affectionate hug and kiss, right up to and even a little after the elevator doors opened wide at the Sky Room Restaurant. What an exciting moment!

Ever since then Juanita and I have had the tradition of embracing and kissing in elevators. When others ride with us, I just give her a discrete tap on the shoulder and a peck on the cheek. But when we find ourselves alone, we recreate those romantic feelings of young love with very affectionate hugs and kisses. I like elevators! Back then I thought that when we married we would live happily ever after. I thought there were no challenges love would not conquer.

However, over the years we have found our family life is like an elevator with many ups and downs. We have also found that the building in which our elevator of family life resides is still under construction. It is growing taller now because our family joys are higher and more exhilarating than ever. Unfortunately, there also seems to be some minion excavating in the basement because our challenges, heartaches, and trials also seem to be more profound.

Through it all, however, Juanita and I continue our elevator tradition. Our kisses were joyful in the hospital elevator at Tacoma General Hospital as we brought home our first healthy baby daughter, but our embraces were somber and consoling in that very same elevator three years later after Juanita's first miscarriage. We hugged each other tightly and sobbed when Juanita was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. Our family

life has been a series of ups and downs, but our faith has given appreciation to our happiness and meaning to our suffering, helping us find peace in trying times.

Many of my students have come from great homes and are quite optimistic about family life. In fact, I fear that some students may be overly optimistic about family life, and may be setting themselves up for disillusionment, despair, and even depression.

To add a bit of perspective I ask my students at the beginning of each semester to memorize three sayings that I believe will help them as they seek for family peace in these trying times.

**1** Life is hard, but you can do hard things. You never know what life will deal you, nor can you even imagine how hard it's going to be, but it is so worth it.

**2** Make the best of it. Family life never, ever turns out the way you planned. What I tell my students is that when things don't go as planned, don't get frustrated, just make the best of it. Don't dwell on what's gone wrong, don't focus on what you can't do. Focus on what's gone right and what you can do.

**3** T.T.T. = Things Take Time. Family life is a journey of a thousand miles that is made up of single steps. We must learn to have patience.

*T.T.T.*

*Put up in a place where it's easy to see*

*The cryptic admonishment: T.T.T.*

*When you feel how depressingly slowly you climb,*

*It's well to remember that*

*Things Take Time.*

*—Piet Hein (1966)*

These three succinct reminders—life is hard but you can do hard things, make the best of it, and T.T.T.—apply very much to understanding my topic, “Family Crucibles: Finding Peace in Trying Times.”

Not surprisingly, in the BYU School of Family Life, we use a family lens to examine relationships, activities, and structures in a way that strengthens families (Carroll, et. al., 2000). While we may not choose them, parents and children can use trials, afflictions, hardships, challenges, problems, sorrow, and grief to strengthen their families. In fact, it is possible to learn from, deal with, and give meaning to the trials of life in such a way that we can maintain hope and not despair in our families. By having a family crucible perspective, we can find peace in trying

times. Let's lay a foundation first for understanding these principles. First of all, what are crucibles?

Dr. Susanne Olson has written, "[Crucibles are] furnace-like vessel[s] that [can] endure intense heat and chemical reactions. [This] result[s] in the refinement and transfiguration of raw materials. Crucibles facilitate a catalytic process that purges away impurities and creates a qualitatively different final product. In industry, crucibles are used to create high-grade steel and alloys of unusual strength that actually differ in quality from the original ingredients themselves" (Olsen, et al., 2000, p. 278). You may have seen movies showing the fiery furnace of a steel mill where you see the glowing molten iron ore bubbling in a large cauldron. This container is a crucible, and it facilitates the creation of a useful product of great strength.

For the purposes of this article, think of a family crucible as the process by which trials, afflictions, hardships, challenges, problems, sorrow, grief, and other adversity all can facilitate positive family growth, rather than negative family outcomes.

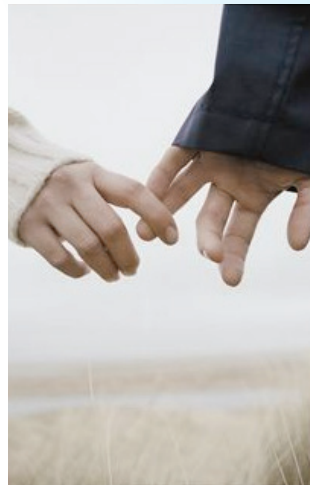
Family research shows that family crises tend to bring out the best and the worst in families. They can rip families apart or cause families to reorganize themselves in more positive ways.

### Consider these possibilities:

- » By successfully passing through the heat and pressure of family crucibles, family members may become more humble, more sincere, more united in prayer, more dependent upon God, more faithful, and more sensitive to spiritual promptings.
- » They may also become more charitable, more service-oriented, and more compassionate to the needs and suffering of others.
- » Family relationships may be strengthened, as the whole family is more motivated to be founded upon ennobling principles.
- » Ultimately, family crucibles can create unbreakable bonds between the members of the family.

Aren't these wonderful possibilities? Don't they make you want to pray for your own trials? In truth, probably not, because

**Think of a family crucible as the process by which trials, afflictions, hardships, challenges, problems, sorrow, grief, and other adversity all can facilitate positive family growth, rather than negative family outcomes.**



we have all seen that the positive doesn't always come out in trials. Unfortunately, adversity can also severely cripple and even destroy families. It is very hard, extremely hard, to ever recover from some trials, much less use them as a catalyst for family growth. It is hard, but we can do hard things! Barbara Johnson (1990) wrote a book whose title I really like, *Pain is Inevitable, but Misery Optional*. It is my opinion that though we may not have control over pain, we can often choose not to become miserable.

Almost all families go through several experiences that are so difficult that sufficient heat and pressure are generated to create a family crucible experience. Let me just share a few of them, and as I go through the list, note how many of these you and your family have gone through and how many you are going through right now.



### Family Crucibles Related to Family Formation:

- » inability to find a mate and marry
- » broken engagement
- » bad start to marriage (horrific honeymoon, disastrous wedding)
- » entering a blended family

### Family Crucibles Related to Marriage:

- » disability (chronic illness, accident)
- » spouse is of another religion
- » husband or wife loses religious faith
- » spouse undermines faith or moral development of children
- » extreme marital conflict (shouting, throwing things)
- » marital abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- » addiction (alcohol, drugs, pornography)
- » infidelity (an affair or emotional triangle)
- » depression (one or both spouses)
- » husband or wife deserts the family
- » suicide
- » separation, divorce
- » death

### Family Crucibles Related to Procreation, Birth, and Infancy:

- » infertility
- » problem pregnancy
- » miscarriage, stillborn child
- » very premature delivery
- » multiple births (twins, triplets, quadruplets)
- » S.I.D.S.
- » baby with colic
- » baby with disabilities (mental, physical, Down syndrome, deformities)

### Family Crucibles Related to the Nurturer Role and Parenting:

- » hyperactive child
- » abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- » addiction (alcohol, drugs, pornography)
- » adolescent in family prematurely pregnant
- » child loses faith, refuses to go to church
- » child attempts and/or succeeds at suicide
- » prolonged or serious depression

- » teenagers, wayward child
- » runaway children
- » adult children returning home
- » adult children who never marry, never leave home

### Family Crucibles Relating to the Provider Role:

- » financial problems (job, debt, bankruptcy)
- » husband refuses to work
- » unexpected financial windfall
- » job requires relocation to a new city
- » job requires very long work hours
- » extremely poor relationship with boss

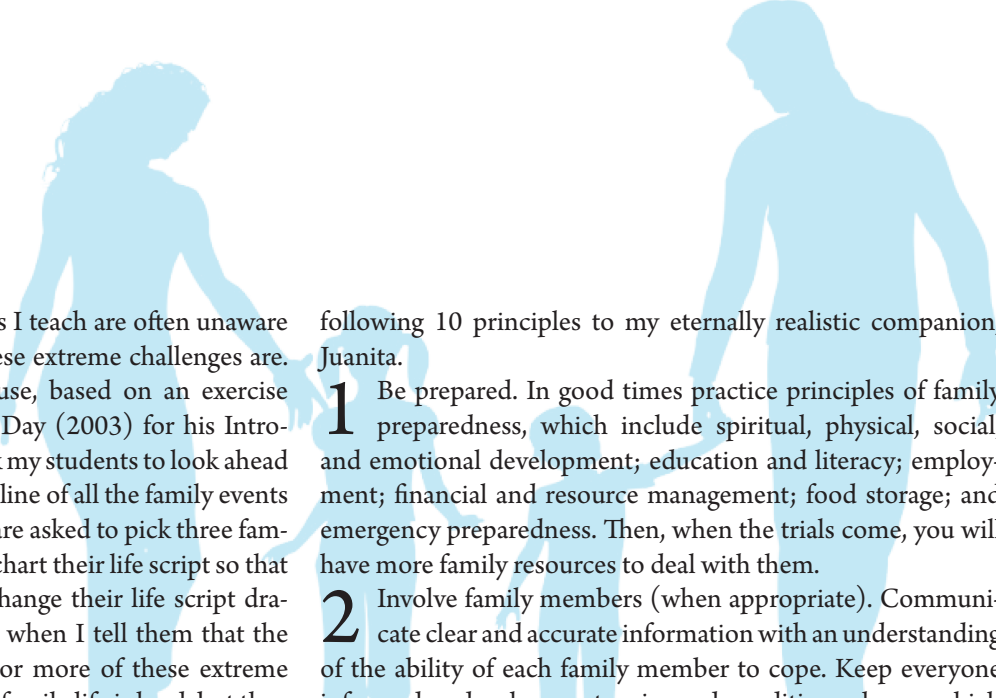
### Family Crucibles Related to Extended Family:

- » relative moves in (temporarily, semipermanently, permanently)
- » serious problems with in-laws
- » abuse by extended family members (physical, emotional, sexual)
- » elder care (failing mental or physical capacities, Alzheimer's)
- » death (grandparents, parents, sibling, other extended family)

### Family Crucibles Centered in the External Environment:

- » natural disaster (earthquake, tidal wave, tornado, hurricane, flood)
- » legal problems (family member arrested, sued, etc.)
- » extremely demanding civic or church responsibilities
- » war, terrorism, civil unrest





This is just the start. The students I teach are often unaware of how many and how common these extreme challenges are. In one illuminating assignment I use, based on an exercise developed by my colleague Randy Day (2003) for his Introduction to Family Process class, I ask my students to look ahead the next 50 years and develop a timeline of all the family events they hope will transpire. Then they are asked to pick three family crucibles at random and then re-chart their life script so that they see how these crucibles will change their life script dramatically. The students are sobered when I tell them that the average family goes through three or more of these extreme family crucibles. I remind them that family life is hard, but they can do hard things. I remind them that if they want to claim the blessing of peace in trying times, they will have to make the best of less than optimal circumstances. And I remind them that on the path to family joy, many things just take time. They must develop the virtue of patience, if they want to claim this joy.

I would ask you to consider how many of these trials you have gone through. Perhaps three? At least five? More than 10? Family life is hard, isn't it? But guess what? We can do hard things. Certainly pain in family life is inevitable, but I want to make the point that misery is indeed optional, and, in fact, we can make choices that will also lead us to family joy.

I am by nature a very optimistic person. On the other hand, my wife Juanita is a realistic person. This difference could be a trial, could trigger constant and unbearable frustration, and could ultimately lead to the destruction of our marriage! However, we have chosen to frame this difference as a strength in our marriage, and I choose to appreciate that Juanita has the characteristics to temper me. I keep her from sinking into pessimism, and she keeps me from floating away into the clouds.

Juanita likes lists and specific suggestions, so when I asked her for suggestions for this article, I was not surprised when she said I should create a practical list of principles and practices to help families deal with trials. I have done so. To create this list I asked my colleagues from the School of Family Life to offer suggestions, I talked with family members and friends, I asked students in my classes, and I studied both academic research and religious writings. With that preparation, I dedicate the

**“We can do hard things. Certainly pain in family life is inevitable, but I want to make the point that misery is indeed optional, and, in fact, we can make choices that will also lead us to family joy.”**

following 10 principles to my eternally realistic companion, Juanita.

**1** Be prepared. In good times practice principles of family preparedness, which include spiritual, physical, social, and emotional development; education and literacy; employment; financial and resource management; food storage; and emergency preparedness. Then, when the trials come, you will have more family resources to deal with them.

**2** Involve family members (when appropriate). Communicate clear and accurate information with an understanding of the ability of each family member to cope. Keep everyone informed as developments arise and conditions change which involve the present crisis. Talk together openly and frequently. Communicate one-on-one. Go for walks and just listen. Ask for ideas for better dealing with the situation and coping as a family. Express and share feelings. Exhibit empathy for family members. Be sensitive to the capacity of each family member to deal with strong feelings. Cry together. Encourage family members to write about their experiences in a journal. Share your desire to accept the will of God.

When my wife Juanita was diagnosed with breast cancer the first time, we struggled with how, where, when, and how much to tell the children. We finally decided that the crisis was so big we needed everyone in the family to be part of the team to deal with it. We first sat the older children on the couch and sensitively but directly told them the facts, the size of the tumor, the prognosis, the treatment and its side effects, etc. We spent almost an hour explaining the situation and answering every question honestly. There were a lot of tears. The hardest question was whether or not Mom would get over the cancer. We told them we honestly didn't know what would happen, but we had a strong conviction that we could be an eternal family in the presence of God.

We then told the younger children in a shorter, more concise manner, more in harmony with their developmental stages. When we told our four-year old Seth that Mommy was very sick, he just laughed. With a chuckle he said, “Mommy’s don’t get sick.” That’s what we wished too. That’s what we wished with all our hearts. Then we prayed together the most sincere prayer in the history of our family, amidst a lot of sobbing and sniffing. We felt a deep sense of peace and comfort wash over us in this trying time.

After the prayer Seth pointed his finger at us and admonished, “No more crying!” His action released the tension and we all laughed and laughed, until we cried some more. This was

just the beginning of our trial, but by sharing openly with family members we set the stage for family growth and a reservoir of strength to deal with the extreme difficulties that lay ahead.

**3** Seek outside resources and support. Look to extended family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, church leaders, support groups, professional counselors, scriptures, books,



Professional counselors can provide support to struggling couples.

the Internet, and other resources. They can all help in different ways. However, be selective in the resources you use. Find a family that has successfully dealt with the trial you are experiencing. Visit with them and learn from their example. Use them as mentors.

**4** Develop a long-term, growth-oriented perspective. See the trial as an opportunity for the family to grow and develop. Look for the positive aspects of the stressful events. Be mindful of what your family needs to learn from this adversity. Note and share even seemingly insignificant steps of learning and progress. Celebrate small victories with family members. Find the meaning in your trials. Count your blessings with your family. Be grateful for all that does go right. Remember T.T.T. (Things Take Time).

**5** Take positive action, do what you can. When family adversity strikes, it tends to envelop us completely. Sometimes we feel a sense of helplessness. A key to finding peace in trying times is to go out and take positive action. Don't dwell on what you can't do, but move forward in what you can do.

Emily Pearl Kingsley (1987) gave birth to and raised a child

with a serious disability. This child took much of her time and emotional energy. She tells the following story about her experience and I believe it captures very well the point of focusing on what you can do, and not dwelling on what you can't do.

### Welcome to Holland

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip—to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. Michelangelo's David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting. After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy." But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay. The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine, and disease. It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met. It's just a different place. It's slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around. . . . , and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills. . . . , and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy. . . . and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned." And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away. . . . , because the loss of that dream is a very, very significant loss. But. . . if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things. . . . about Holland.

While undergoing cancer treatment, there were lots of things Juanita couldn't do. She had always been a very active woman, with a full calendar. Now it wasn't safe for her to be in public, she couldn't go to church, she couldn't go shopping, she couldn't go to the dentist. She could have wallowed in self-pity, but she didn't. When I'd come home from work she'd comment, "Isn't it great that I now have the time to get the family photo albums up to date? And aren't we blessed that I have the

time to read Seth stories for hours every day?"

Concentrate on what you can do, not what you can't do.

**6** Find comfort in everyday family life. In the midst of family trials we may become so disoriented that we stop doing the everyday things that have fortified our families in the past. We must make the effort to continue everyday life. It is comforting to join together for family dinner each evening and then do the dishes together. Plant and care for a garden. Weeding the garden together can be therapeutic and provide the context for needed family communication. Continue to engage in wholesome family recreation. Go camping together. Play games together. Go to an amusement park or a movie together. These activities can provide your family space away from the trial in which you may gain some perspective. Go on fun vacations. Continue to celebrate birthdays and holidays. Doing the day-to-day things brings comfort and patience as you endure the affliction.

**7** Seek out soul-soothing environments. Go for a family hike along a mountain stream in a forest filled with songbirds. Play soothing music in your home. Read poetry and uplifting literature. Use uplifting media.

**8** Take care of yourself and your family. Eat healthy family meals. Get sufficient exercise. Go swimming, biking, jogging, walking, golfing, bowling, or skiing. Set a regular bedtime and get sufficient rest. Drink lots of water.

**9** Trust in a Higher Power. Research demonstrates the importance of faith in dealing with stress. My religious tradition has taught me to pray often, and look to God in my every thought. I believe that as you become reconciled to God, you grow to become more like Him and your capacities multiply. You are developing faith, humility, purity, charity, and compassion through this trial.

During Juanita's cancer treatment, I took the opportunity to pray more frequently with my children and plead with God in behalf of their mother. Often times I would kneel with a child and each of us would offer a prayer. We often shared tears together. Seth would pray sincerely, "Please bless that my

*"It is my sincere belief that though we cannot control what circumstances may befall ourselves or our families, we can control our response to those circumstances."*



Mommy will get better.” I felt strongly that the Lord was listening to this son’s prayers.

**10** Endure to the end. Become more charitable, more service-oriented, and more compassionate to the needs and suffering of others. Be patient. Jettison all bitterness. Be thankful for what you have learned through this trial. Life is hard, but your family can do hard things. Rejoice when the trial has passed.

Remember: “Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional.”—Barbara Johnson

I hope these ten suggestions are helpful to you in making sense of, and dealing with family crucibles. It is my sincere belief that though we cannot control what circumstances may befall ourselves or our families, we can control our response to those circumstances. Remember that life is hard, but we can do hard things. It may be true that pain is inevitable, but misery is certainly optional.

In this article, I have used personal examples of how our family has dealt with adversity, especially Juanita’s cancer. The good news is that after nine-months of treatment and major surgery, Juanita went into remission. The bad news is that after a year and a half the cancer relapsed and her prognosis is not positive. Yet this crucible has indeed changed our family in many positive ways. We are much more sincere in our prayers. We have a much greater recognition of how fragile life is. We are so very, very grateful for the blessing of health. We appreciate every day of life we have together. We have learned to not put things off, but to do them while we have the chance. We all recognize what is most important. We are much closer to God. These are all wonderful blessings for which we are grateful.

Though family life is like an elevator with many ups and downs, you can find peace in trying times if you remember three things. Family life is hard, but with the help of God, you can do hard things. When things don’t go as planned, make the best of it. And remember that often the changes most important in family life take a long time, so we must be patient and remind ourselves of T.T.T. things take time.

## About the Author

Dr. E. Jeffrey Hill has been an associate professor in the School of Family Life since coming to Brigham Young University in 1998. Before that time he was a senior HR professional at IBM where he was a subject matter expert in work and family issues. Professor Hill received a BA in Communications from BYU in 1977, a Masters of Organizational Behavior from BYU in 1984, and a PhD in Family and Human Development from Utah State University in 1995. He teaches a variety of courses in the School of Family Life as well as a Work and Family class in the Marriott School of Management. Jeff and his wife, Juanita, have been married for 28 years and are the parents of 9 children.

This article is adapted from a keynote presentation given at the Families Under Fire Conference held at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, October 3, 2003.

## References

- Carroll, J. S., Robinson, W. D., Marshall, E. S., Callister, L. C., Olsen, S. F., Dyches, T. T., & Mandelco, B. (2000). “The family crucibles of illness, disability, death, and other losses.” In D. C. Dollahite (ed.), *Strengthening our families: An in-depth look at the Proclamation on the Family* (pp. 278–92). Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft.
- Day, R. (2003). *Introduction to family processes*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Johnson, B. (1990). *Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional*. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing.
- Kingsley, E. P. (1987). Welcome to Holland. Retrieved 18 October 2003 from: <http://www.nas.com/downsyn/holland.html>
- Some of my ideas come from two chapters in the book *Strengthening our Families: An In-Depth Look at the Proclamation on the Family* (Carroll, Robinson, Marshall, Callister, Olsen, Dyches, & Mandelco, 2000; Pehrson, Thursby, & Olson, 2000). This book was produced by the School of Family Life and edited by David Dollahite. It contains input from more than 100 family scholars.







# How to Find Decent Movies

*"It's a Good Show—Except One Little Part."*

by Glen C. Griffin

**H**ow was the movie?"

*"Great—except for one little part."*

*"One little part?"*

*"Well, there was one sex scene, but it only lasted a minute—  
or so."*

The problem is that "one little part" may effectively teach kids, and others, that it's okay to play around with sex without bothering to get married.

In movies, sexual content is at an all-time high, and on prime-time television, it has more than tripled in the last ten years. If anyone doubts that movies and TV sell products and ideas, think about the million-dollar Super Bowl ads and the \$37.5 billion sponsors are willing to spend each year for 30- and 60-second TV commercials.<sup>1</sup> Advertisers also pay large fees for their products to be seen in motion pictures. If these brief exposures didn't do such a good job of selling products and ideas, sponsors wouldn't spend so much money on them.



Few people would choose to eat something that contained a small dead mouse or a little date-rape drug. Yet many choose to fill their heads, often repeatedly, with movies that have “one little part” that’s disgusting and possibly dangerous.

Suppose the hot pizza you ordered arrived with all your favorite toppings—plus a tiny little mouse that had crawled onto it before being popped in the oven. Would you eat this pizza that was perfect except for one little mouse? And what if someone put just a little date-rape drug into a serving of fat-free frozen yogurt? It doesn’t matter that this would otherwise have been a healthy dessert if “one little part” was not a scary drug that could fog a person’s brain and wipe out control. Few people would choose to eat something that contained a small dead mouse or a little date-rape drug. Yet many choose to fill their heads, often repeatedly, with movies that have “one little part” that’s disgusting and possibly dangerous.

Years ago a Wall Street Journal article explained the effectiveness of repeating brief messages and slogans that people remember for decades, such as “Things go better with Coke” and “See the USA in your Chevrolet.” Advertising creates familiarity—and familiarity sells. As you think how this effect is multiplied by repetition, keep in mind that teens often see a movie more than once and children often watch favorite videos over and over.

Developmentally, children learn what is acceptable in life by watching the behavior of family members, friends, and others. Sometimes the imitative behavior of little children as they play “house” is so real that it’s amusing. And sometimes it’s alarming.

Children and adults often imitate the speech patterns of someone who speaks differently. Almost without thinking, people may copy dialects, slang, and language idiosyncrasies from other people. And as it is with children’s play and with speech patterns, so it is with other behavior.

Television, movies, and videos bring several sets of new friends into a child’s home. These “friends” have a profound influence in viewers’ lives. Within hours or days, children, teens, and young adults across the country pick up hairstyles, clothing patterns, expressions, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior trends from television and movie characters. Is it any wonder that children and others copy anger, temper, and violence from television and movie friends? By the time the average teenager finishes high school, he or she has watched 26,000 murders on television and who knows how many in movies?<sup>2</sup> Is it any wonder there are so many violent copycat crimes in schools?

Professors Brad J. Bushman and L. Rowell Huesmann have summarized overwhelming scientific evidence that television violence has a significant effect on children's aggressive and violent behavior. They add that "The relationship between TV violence and aggression is about as strong as the relation between smoking and cancer."<sup>3</sup> Just as some soldiers in battle may become desensitized to the horrors of killing and death, children can become desensitized to violence by watching it on the screen. Citing some excellent research, the authors explain that the more violence children see, the more accepting they are of aggressive behavior.<sup>4</sup>

And lest one think that on-screen violence can be avoided by choosing G-rated animated films, a recent study by Harvard researchers concludes that "a significant amount of violence exists in animated G-rated feature films."<sup>5</sup>

A 1992 press release by the American Psychological Association warned, "After review of hundreds of research findings, three major national studies have concluded that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the significant causes of violence in society."<sup>6</sup> This report noted that after more than forty years of research on the link between TV violence and real-life violence, the "scientific debate is over," adding that "Sexual violence in X- and R-rated videotapes widely available to teenagers have also been shown to cause an increase of male aggression against females."

More and more popular movies that are otherwise worthwhile contain "one little part" that is not. And since it is so hard to find a movie without gratuitous violence or nonmarried

sex, it's easy to rationalize that it's okay to choose a movie that doesn't have "too much" of these things.

"I can handle it," a teenager once told me.

"I'm not sure I can," I answered in all seriousness.

**The relationship between TV violence and aggression is about as strong as the relation between smoking and cancer."**

I said this because our memories are likely to store images about sex and violence for a long time.

Joseph Fielding Smith said that even though we may have lapses of memory, "In reality we cannot forget anything."<sup>7</sup> Randal A. Wright puts it this way: "Think of the best movie you've ever seen that had just one bad scene. Now think specifically of what the bad scene was. Can you still recall it or have you

totally forgotten the inappropriate scene?"<sup>8</sup> Chances are that those images are there, ready for instant recall.

When you or I become involved in a story, we are likely to imagine ourselves as a character in that story. Indeed, escaping from everyday problems while our imaginations play someone else's exciting role is one reason people enjoy reading stories and seeing shows. When this happens, a person vicariously does what his or her movie character does, good or bad. If a person chooses to relate to a grossly violent hero or heroine in a show, he or she imagines being violent. If someone watches a passionate bedroom scene, it's easy to imagine doing what one is seeing. On the other hand, people who identify with a worthy character in an uplifting movie may imagine themselves doing helpful, kind, and good things. Because the more we imagine doing something, the more likely we are to do it in real life, it's important to be careful of the roles we allow ourselves (and our children) to play.<sup>9</sup>

## [www.screenit.com](http://www.screenit.com)

This informative movie review web site provides detailed and comprehensive reviews of recent movies and videos. The films or videos are listed alphabetically, and a click of the mouse will display a screen that shows a chart of 15 different categories of possible alerts: Alcohol or Drugs, Blood or Gore, Disrespectful or Bad Attitude, Frightening or Tense Scenes, Guns or Weapons, Imitative Behavior, Jump Scenes, Scary or Tense Music, Inappropriate Music, Profanity, Sex or Nudity, Smoking, Tense Family Scenes, Topics to Talk About, and Violence.

Besides these alerts, a background of the film is given with more details about each of the 15 categories—including descriptions of the sex and nudity, violence, the exact profane language used and its frequency, and an explanation of the imitative behavior. This information and the comments in a section called "Our Word to Parents" makes [www.screenit.com](http://www.screenit.com) an excellent place to check a particular film. Sometimes the information about a film will be reassuring; however, it will often provide good reasons to choose something else to see.



Every once in a while a great show comes along that is entertaining and uplifting . . . it's our job to choose wholesome entertainment for ourselves

### [www.moviepicks.org](http://www.moviepicks.org)

This web site is an excellent place to find out about good movies, videos, and TV shows that are not contaminated with sex or gratuitous violence. Suggestions and reviews about current movies and videos that meet a high standard of morality and character building can be found on [moviepicks.org](http://moviepicks.org)—as well as suggestions and commentaries about older films available on video.

Because interests vary, videos are categorized under drama, real stories, comedies, musicals, family, and children. And since the standard of decency is the same for all categories, anyone seeking uplifting entertainment can feel confident that movies, videos, and television programs found on [moviepicks.org](http://moviepicks.org) will be good—noting that language or other programs are mentioned in the commentaries.

Reviews about movies and videos don't appear on this web site if they don't meet a high standard of decency as set by the American Family League because the staff, national advisory board, review teams, and student interns don't want to put gross thoughts in their own minds from reviewing such films.

The [moviepicks](http://moviepicks.org) web site also provides tips about worthwhile programs and outstanding new movies that are upcoming on television.

Information about the American Family League's CAMIE awards for outstanding movies and television programs that reflect Character and Morality In Entertainment can be found at [www.CAMIEawards.org](http://www.CAMIEawards.org).

Note: The author is president of the nonprofit American Family League, Inc., which manages the [MoviePicks.org](http://MoviePicks.org) web site.

### Other resources for family films, filters, and editing:

[www.FamilyFilms.com](http://www.FamilyFilms.com)  
[www.FamilySafeMedia.com](http://www.FamilySafeMedia.com)  
[www.BristoneFilms.com](http://www.BristoneFilms.com)  
[www.EditMyMovies.com](http://www.EditMyMovies.com)  
[www.FamilyTV.com](http://www.FamilyTV.com)  
[www.TXGuardian.com](http://www.TXGuardian.com)

Moreover, in these days when so many movies, videos, and television programs are filled with sex and gratuitous violence, what used to be shocking is becoming more and more accepted. Desensitized movie reviewers accept nonmarried cohabitation without hesitation. And many give shows a pass even if there is on-screen sex, especially if it's what the industry calls "simulated sex"—meaning that it's under the covers or somewhat obscured, but often leaving little to the imagination.

Another way some movie reviewers give a pass to sexual content is with the code words "brief sex"—as if to say a short length of exposure makes it acceptable. One may wonder "How brief is brief?" while remembering how effective brief television commercials are in selling products. Another current term that many reviewers use to describe a film's sexual content is "discreet sex." In reality, there is no "discreet" sexual immorality.

The standards of decency have sunk to an all-time low. Ratings are almost worthless. More and more gross violence, blatant sexual talk, and open sex play have crept into popular TV shows and films with ratings that used to be relatively innocuous.

The generally accepted movie rating system completely misses the point about what is decent. The ratings are also undermined by a major flaw of labeling what's appropriate according to age. From the ratings, one would think a 13-year-old should be able to handle sexual content that is inappropriate for a 12-year-old who is a few days or a month younger. The system's designers must have imagined that when a person reaches the age of 17, magical abilities suddenly appear in the brain making it possible to cope with explicit sex and gruesome violence. This is nonsense. The more you think about it, the more ludicrous it becomes. In reality, if something is garbage for 8-year-olds, it's garbage for 12-year-olds, 16-year-olds, 18-year-olds—and all of us.<sup>10</sup>

Steamy bedroom scenes are always inappropriate—for a person of any age. And to say that watching various levels of sexual intimacies under the covers is appropriate for 13-year-olds, while seeing such activities without covers or clothing is appropriate for 18-year-olds, is the height of intellectual arrogance and poor judgment. Those involved in the movie rating system just don't get it.

A 9-year-old who saw a blockbuster movie in which teenagers were having sex reassured her grandfather that the unmarried sex by the teenage heart throbs was okay because "they loved each other." This is the sad new standard of acceptability that children and teenagers are learning today from seeing nonmarried sexual encounters in movies and on television.

No wonder so many teenagers, and even younger children, are playing around with sex, sleeping together, and cohabiting. It's time to teach children and teenagers that sex is for marriage and that infatuation and physical attraction are not love. It's time to help them choose uplifting, entertaining, and decent movies instead of ones that are not. Look for uplifting movies that help build character, not weaken it. Good motion pictures can entertain while teaching lessons on overcoming adversity, solving life's problems, and living moral lives.

Obviously, on-screen sexual encounters, with or without clothing or covers, are inappropriate. But so are shows without on-screen sex but whose characters are cohabiting without marriage, reinforcing this mistaken idea. Shows that model cohabiting without marriage, along with inappropriate sex-education that teaches kids anything is acceptable as long as no one gets pregnant, are major contributors to this misguided lifestyle.

So, how can one sort out entertaining and decent movies from those filled with filth? In searching for decent films, some can be eliminated quickly by looking at the title, tag lines, or previews, which often give plenty of clues that a movie is inappropriate. Movie reviews that give a heads-up about films that contain sex, nudity, and violence can help scratch a film from consideration—even when reviewers give the film an enthusiastic endorsement. Photos and descriptions on video and DVD packages can sometimes help exclude a film—but packaging often doesn't provide assurance that a show is appropriate. Word-of-mouth recommendations are sometimes helpful, but may be misleading unless they come from someone who understands that “one little part” can sell destructive ideas.

Some helpful, free online resources provide background information about movies and videos so we can choose decent movies and exclude those we want to avoid. The web site [www.ScreenIt.com](http://www.ScreenIt.com) provides detailed information about movies and videos that have been produced in the last few years—good and bad.

Another web site, found at [www.mediaandthefamily.org](http://www.mediaandthefamily.org) rates the level of violence, fear, illegal/harmful, language, nudity, and sexual content in movies, videos, television programs, and video games according to age, using green, amber, and red icons. Parents can find a wealth of information on this

**It's fun to watch good shows—but finding them is time-consuming and difficult. And it's easy to be misled into seeing movies that are supposedly good—except for “one little part” that may be as effective in selling inappropriate behavior as radio and TV spots are in selling products.**

site. However, if one's standard is that a show should contain no inappropriate sexual messages, the site's amber warnings about the sexual content of many movies and television shows should more appropriately be red warnings—meaning they are not appropriate for teenagers or anyone.

For those who want to find entertaining and decent films without any inappropriate sexual content, created by the American Family League, Inc. This web site provides suggestions for movies, videos, and television programs that are entertaining and decent, with a high standard of morality that excludes shows where there is cohabiting or nonmarried sex without consequences.

It's fun to watch good shows—but finding them is time-consuming and difficult. And it's easy to be misled into seeing movies that are supposedly good—except for “one little part” that may be as effective in selling inappropriate behavior as radio and TV spots are in selling products.

The bad news is that there is more sex and violence on screen than ever before—and these shows are filling kids' heads with destructive ideas that can lead to destructive behavior.

Much of the foul language on television programs and videos can be filtered out with a TV Guardian profanity filter that works on the closed-caption track to clip out obscenities (for more information go to [www.TVGuardian.com](http://www.TVGuardian.com)). Of course, a language filter cannot remove inappropriate visuals and the story lines of many shows are so bad that eliminating the crude words in them is not enough.

Many wonder why edited films that exclude inappropriate scenes are not made available to the public. The technology exists to do this. Already, many DVD releases contain versions of a film in several languages. Many could just as easily be marketed without inappropriate bedroom scenes or gratuitous violence. Some of the editing done on films for television or the airlines has turned unacceptable shows into ones that are decent. Unfortunately, the movie industry has not allowed the showing, distribution, or sale of these edited movies. The industry's policy is hard to understand.

Michael Medved, the well-known film critic, and Robert D. Cain, the director of research for the Screen Actor's Guild, analyzed the box office revenue figures of movies released in



1991 and found that “R-rated films generate substantially less revenue, return less profit, and are more likely to flop than films aimed at teen and family audiences.”<sup>11</sup>

Even if on-screen sex scenes were edited out, as they are in some airline-edited shows, some films would fail the standard of not promoting nonmarried sex. However, for those films that are outstanding except for a few moments that could be clipped out, individuals can edit these scenes from videos they buy. Or until the industry provides the option of purchasing already-edited films, a service used to edit one’s own videos is available from [www.EditMyMovies.com](http://www.EditMyMovies.com) and by some local video businesses.

The entertainment industry is not likely to change overnight. But efforts are being made by a number of individuals and businesses to make airline and edited videos and DVDs available. And many are working quietly behind the scenes to encourage writers and producers to create entertaining and decent films and programs.

The good news is that every once in a while a great show comes along that is entertaining and uplifting. Now it’s our job to choose wholesome entertainment for ourselves, lest we become desensitized—and as parents, youth leaders, professionals, and friends to help children and others find uplifting and decent entertainment.

### About the Author

Glen C. Griffin, M.D., is editor-in-chief of Marriage & Families, president of the nonprofit American Family League, Inc., and the author of *It Takes a Parent to Raise a Child* (1999, 2000).

### Notes

1. Parents Television Council, “What a Difference a Decade Makes.” [On-line]. Available: [www.parentstv.org/publications/reports/Decadestudy/decadestudy.html](http://www.parentstv.org/publications/reports/Decadestudy/decadestudy.html) (2000).
2. D. Sweet and R. Singh, “TV Viewing and Parental Guidance.” In *Education and Consumer Guide* (April 2, 1997).
3. Brad J. Bushman and L. Rowell Huesmann, “Effects of Televised Violence on Aggression.” In *Handbook of Children and the Media*, edited by D. G. Singer and J. L. Singer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage., in press). Available via e-mail: [bushman@iastate.edu](mailto:bushman@iastate.edu)
4. M. H. Thomas, R. W. Horton, E. C. Lippincott, and R. S. Drabman, “Desensitization to Portrayals of Real Life Aggression as a Function of Television Violence.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 35: 450–458 (1977). R. S. Drabman and M. H. Thomas, “Does Media Violence Increase Children’s Toleration of Real-Life Aggression?” *Developmental Psychology* 10: 418–421 (1974).
5. F. Yokota and K. M. Thompson, “Violence in G-Rated Animated Films.” *Journal of American Medical Association* 283: 2716–2720 (2000).
6. The Surgeon General’s Commission Report (1972). The National Institute of Mental Health Ten-Year Follow-up (1982). The Report of the American Psychological Association’s Task Force on Television in Society (1992).
7. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973).
8. Randal A. Wright, *Why Good People See Bad Movies*. (n.p.: National Family Institute, 1993).
9. Glen C. Griffin, “We Live the Movies We See.” [Online]. Available: [http://www.principles.org/%20solutions/living\\_%20movies.htm](http://www.principles.org/%20solutions/living_%20movies.htm) (1999).
10. Glen C. Griffin, “What do we mean by decent movies?” [Online] Available: [http://www.moviepicks.org/what\\_is\\_decent.htm](http://www.moviepicks.org/what_is_decent.htm) (1999).
11. Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992). ♦

## BYU Website Changing Attitudes and Behavior: foreverfamilies.byu.edu

The Forever Families website operated by Brigham Young University's School of Family Life is impacting family life by changing visitors' attitudes and behaviors, according to a just-completed year-long study by the School.

"We wanted to create a website that would provide families of all denominations with legitimate, practical, research-based information and articles to strengthen and enrich their lives," said Stephen Duncan, BYU professor of family life and website project lead. "Results from our study indicate that we are accomplishing our goal."

During the study, the Web site received more than 35,000 unique visitors from more than 60 countries. Of those who participated in the study, 57 percent said the site led them to reconsider former attitudes. More than 66 percent said the site helped them change their behavior as they "decided to do something differently."

"In the course of my professional life, I've learned how thirsty people are for good information to make their marriages and family lives better," said Jeffrey H. Larson, professor of marriage and family therapy and one of the site's contributing authors. It is rewarding to see the impact this information has on families—that it is actually changing attitudes and behaviors."

The Forever Families website is organized around the themes of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," a pro-family document authored in 1995 by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Although the proclamation on the family is written by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it contains principles to which many religious people adhere," said James M. Harper, director of the School of Family Life. "At the Forever Families site, visitors will be able to discover how social science supports these principles and how to apply them in their daily lives."

Forever Families Web site features include:

- » Up-to-date, scholarly and practical faith-based information relating to the topics: marriage preparation, marriage, family, parenting, stepfamilies, extended family, family challenges and issues facing families.
- » Two options for many articles—one article which discusses a topic in a concise manner, and an expanded version of the same article, which provides more in-depth information for those who are interested.
- » A search engine for easy access to topics of interest.
- » Links to related website.
- » Ease of use.
- » An option to e-mail articles. ♦

"We wanted to create a website that would provide families of all denominations with legitimate, practical, research-based information and articles to strengthen and enrich their lives."  
—Stephen Duncan



## Laughter—The Perfect Family Medicine

Gary K. Palmer

One Sunday in a church meeting, my 4-year-old son was making a major disturbance. He had a bad case of the wiggles.

After several minutes of trying to calm him down, I abruptly picked him up, tucked him under my arm like a sack of potatoes, and marched down the aisle to the nearest exit. With his head bobbing, my son looked up at me and said, “Hey Dad, where we goin’?” He had no idea he was in trouble. My anger was defused instantly. Through the years, I have learned that one’s ability to laugh at everyday family calamities keeps life in perspective.

If we learn to laugh and play more with our families, we will not only feel better but so will they. Studies show that humor and laughter help people live longer, happier lives, be more creative and productive, and have more energy with less physical discomfort.<sup>1</sup> Laughter reduces stress, fear, intimidation, embarrassment, and anger.<sup>2</sup> Laughter has extraordinary healing power.<sup>3</sup> When a person laughs, blood pressure decreases, heart rate and respiration increase, the body releases endorphins, and depression declines.<sup>4</sup> After the laughter subsides, that good feeling has a lasting effect, even until the next day.<sup>5</sup> There aren’t many medicines that will do that. It’s like “a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down.”<sup>6</sup>

Children laugh four hundred times a day, while adults laugh fifteen.<sup>7</sup> Why the gap? Did we lose something? Have we forgotten the way we use to be? Why is it that children seem to cope with life’s oddities better than adults? Perhaps it’s simply because they laugh. As we grow older, we get way too serious. Watch children play. They don’t need things. Everything is fun to them. They’re spontaneous. It’s only when we become adults that we start to get boring. Humor is the way we see things; it’s the way we think; it’s an attitude, not an event. Perhaps the key lies in becoming more childlike.

When I return home from work each day, I conscientiously think about what I’m going to say the moment I enter the door. I usually shout some outlandish remark to get my family’s attention. A typical loud entrance for me is “Hello, all you lucky people; I’m home!” Visitors to our home may have a few questions, but for the rest of the family, they know that it’s just Dad. I find that it helps set the tone for a fun home and instantly puts everyone at ease. I’m sure that it occasionally embarrasses my

children, but the good outweighs the bad. It also helps me to make the change mentally from work to When I return home from work each day, I conscientiously think about what I’m going to say the moment I enter the door. I usually shout some outlandish remark to get my family’s attention. A typical loud entrance for me is “Hello, all you lucky people; I’m home!” Visitors to our home may have a few questions, but for the rest of the family, they know that it’s just Dad. I find that it helps set the tone for a fun home and instantly puts everyone at ease. I’m sure that it occasionally embarrasses my children, but the good outweighs the bad. It also helps me to make the change mentally from work to

I think laughter is more important than a family vacation, because it’s always available, it can happen every day, and it’s free. Happy families are those living together every day and making the most of it. Laughter is like getting away without going away. It gives you a break. “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Prov. 17:22).

Play and laughter are closely related. Does this mean we should play with our kids? Absolutely. Laugh more, play more, swing out of familiar places. Play puts everyone on an equal footing, first by the nature of play itself and second because you can change the rules to fit the situation. Play brings families together. It is a subtle tool for interaction and talk. It builds confidence. Inhibitions are minimized while our real personalities emerge.

Years ago, I saw through my kitchen window a man playing with his children in a park sand pile. He was right down there on his hands and knees in the sand, building a small imaginary town with streets, cars, trucks, trees, houses, stores, and schools with his children. I watched him push a wooden block like a bulldozer, pretending to build a road and including the sound effects. I remember thinking, now there is an example of a great dad who knows how to play with his children. He was seen by every passing car. Was he embarrassed or ruffled? Not at all. Such enthusiasm for play encourages growth in children, relieves stress, and builds friendships among family members. Laughter and play become a calming influence in the home environment.

Laughter also improves communication and builds relationships because everyone laughs in the same language. Your





children will remember your humor much longer than they will the things you buy them. Children are more receptive when they are having fun. Laughter helps us remember. Humor creates an unforgettable learning experience because it makes us laugh and feel good. And we remember what we feel.

Early in our marriage, my wife said, “Let’s make our home more fun for our kids than any other place our children could be.” Laughter and play are the best ingredients for that. We cannot duplicate Disneyland, nor should we. A family firmly rooted in love and wholesome recreation is far better than any commercial entertainment. In other words, home should be a fun place to hang out with family and friends.

Laughter builds friendships. Families that laugh together are inseparable. Laughter makes us approachable. It removes barriers. If you want to talk to your children about a serious matter, try a lighter approach. Family meetings and interviews would be far more effective if play, laughter, and refreshments were added.

Humor, used with sensitivity, can unite spouses. While I was serving as a bishop of a singles ward, one engaged couple asked me if they could have their wedding reception at our house. I quickly replied, “Of course you can.” I forgot to tell my wife.

When my wife received the wedding invitation a few days before the big event, she happened to notice that the reception location was the same address as our house. When I got home from work, she asked me if I had forgotten to tell her something important. After considerable thought, I said, “Not that I can think of.” “Are we having a wedding reception at our house?” she asked. I knew I was in trouble. “Ooooooh, you mean ‘that’ reception,” I replied. I quickly volunteered to prepare our home for the reception—under her able direction, of course. We laughed together and went to work.

Humor disarms most family tension. Once while talking to my children about some family issues, one of our teenagers crouched over, wrinkled up his nose, and, with a tone of disapproval, blurted out some outlandish comment about what I had said. I found myself taken aback by his behavior when suddenly I crouched over, wrinkled up my nose, and, with a tone of disapproval, blurted out some outlandish reply, perfectly mimicking his behavior. The entire family burst into laughter and the tension vanished.

Of course humor will vary depending on our personalities. While some people seem to have a natural sense of humor, most of us must work to develop it. Some of us will tell stories,

while others will share jokes and one-liners. Still others will use art, humorous clippings, and e-mails. For some of us, smiling will be our humor. Smiling is something we can all do, and smiling leads to laughter. As Sister Marjorie Pay Hinckley said, “The only way to get through life is to laugh your way through it. You either have to laugh or cry. I prefer to laugh. Crying gives me a headache.”<sup>9</sup>

There are some cautions with humor. Family members must be careful not to offend, intimidate, or embarrass. We should laugh with rather than at someone. No one likes to be teased. No one likes to be the brunt of a joke. By learning to laugh at ourselves, we usually become safe from offending. As Sister Hinckley said about her husband, “he didn’t take himself very seriously and was often the first to poke fun at his own quirks.”<sup>10</sup>

Most family calamities, given enough time, provide humor. Like the time I took my misbehaving 2-year-old son, Tyler, home from sacrament meeting. After turning on cartoons for my son, I fell asleep. I didn’t wake up when my 5-year-old showed up to take Tyler back to Primary. Trouble was, Tyler had stripped down to moon boots and training pants and picked up his popgun rifle on the way out the door. Sacrament meeting was not quite out, and the bishop was pouring out his soul to the congregation. It was whisper quiet when Tyler, wearing moon boots and training pants, marched up the aisle with his rifle, took aim, and shot the bishop. It woke up the congregation. Of course, it wasn’t funny then. Time helps humor emerge gradually. The trick is finding the humor in the event now. So does this mean we go around laughing all the time? Of course not. But we certainly could laugh a lot more.

Gary K. Palmer, Ed.D., is a teaching professor in the Department of Recreation Management and Youth Leadership at BYU. He and his wife, Shirley, have six children and fourteen grandchildren.

## Additional Reading

Jack Canfield (1998), *Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul: 101 Stories of Courage, Hope and Laughter* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications). George D. Durrant (1976), *Love at Home, Starring Father* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft). Bruce Lansky (1999), *Laugh Twice and Call Me in the Morning* (Minnetonka, MN: Meadowbrook Press).



## Notes

1. R. Robinson, D. N. Khansari, A. J. Murgu, and R. E. Faith (1990), How laughter affects your health, *Effects of stress on the immune system*, *Immunology Today*, 11(5), 170–175.
2. W. S. Hamerslough (1995, June 22), Laughter and wellness; paper presented to the Southwest District of AAHPERD; Kahuku, Hawaii.
3. N. Cousins (1979), *Anatomy of an Illness* (New York: W. W. Norton).
4. L. S. Berk (1989), Neuroendocrine and stress hormone changes during mirthful laughter, *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, 296(7), 390–396.
5. K. S. Peterson (1996, October 31), A chuckle a day does indeed help keep ills at bay, *USA Today*, 10D; Berk (1989), 390–396.
6. R. M. Sherman and R. B. Sherman (1964), Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down, *Mary Poppins* (Walt Disney Pictures).
7. Robinson (1990).
8. Anonymous.
9. Quoted in Virginia H. Pearce, ed. (1999), *Glimpses into the Life and Heart of Marjorie Pay Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), 107.
10. Sheri L. Dew (1996), *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), 106. ♦

# Pet allergies aren't a problem for me—I Live Claritin Clear!®

I can't imagine my home without my cat – but I'm allergic to her! I take 24 Hour Non-Drowsy Claritin to relieve my symptoms so that I can spend time with my favorite pet!

*Josie Maurin*  
– Pet Lover

**WIN \$10,000 & BE A STAR!**

This is Josie's story. Go to [LivingClear.com](http://LivingClear.com) and tell us yours for a chance to win \$10,000 and star in an online commercial.

Itchy, watery eyes  Runny nose  Sneezing



**Live Claritin Clear.®**

©2010 Schering-Plough HealthCare Products, Inc. Use as directed.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. A PURCHASE WILL NOT INCREASE THE CHANCE OF WINNING. The Claritin® Living Clear Promotion is divided into 2 phases. The 1st phase, the Share Your Story Contest, starts 12:00:00 pm ET on 3/1/10 and ends at 11:59:59 am ET on 4/20/10; and the 2nd phase, the Vote and Win Instant Win Game, starts 12:00:00 pm ET on 5/6/10 and ends at 11:59:59 am ET on 6/3/10. Open to legal residents of 50 U.S. and District of Columbia (excluding Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico) who: A) are 18+ years as of entry date; B) are seasonal or indoor allergy sufferers; and C) have used Claritin® or Claritin-D® as of 3/1/10. Void in Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico and where prohibited. Subject to Official Rules, available by visiting [www.LivingClear.com](http://www.LivingClear.com) or [www.claritin.com](http://www.claritin.com) between 12:00:00 pm ET on 3/1/10 and 11:59:59 am ET on 6/3/10 or by sending a BASE for receipt by 7/5/10 to: Claritin® Living Clear RULES, P.O. Box 13199, Bridgeport, CT, 06673-3199. Sponsor: Schering-Plough HealthCare Products, Inc.

