



Partnership for Children
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Registered Charity Number 1089810



MISSION

To help children and young people, throughout the world, develop skills which will enhance their present and future emotional wellbeing.

Bringing Up Happy Children

Twenty years ago, when one of her daughters was two years old, Doro Marden went on a parenting course. She found it so helpful that she trained to run the course herself, and has since devoted herself to promoting good parenting.

She is Chair of Partnership for Children and a Trustee of Britain's largest parenting charity, Parentline Plus. She still runs training courses for parents, and has now co-authored a new book, *Bringing Up Happy Children*.

One of more than 500 titles in the hugely successful Teach Yourself series, *Bringing Up Happy Children* combines latest research with tips and activities for parents of children aged four to 12. It is written in clear, accessible language and offers practical advice on all sorts of issues.

'We've tried not to be prescriptive,' says Doro. 'We hope parents will see the book as a set of tools, which they can use in a way that suits them and their child.'

She and co-author Glenda Weil, another experienced trainer, begin their book with a confident prediction: 'When you use the skills that you teach yourself in this book, you will find that your children become more co-operative, considerate, expressive of their feelings, responsible and independent, and confident. They will be happier, and you will be too.'

Doro's own childhood was spent in Hong Kong. She had a twin sister, and a younger brother and sister. Was she a happy child?

'Yes, I had a happy childhood. There were four of us within three years, so I always had someone to play with. My parents were around a lot – much more than many parents are these days – and my grandparents lived in



Doro Marden, co-author of *Bringing Up Happy Children*, and Chair of Partnership for Children

the same house. We did a lot of family things together, and were always outdoors – picnics, boating, swimming. In those days in 1950s Hong Kong, you could go to the beach and be the only family there.'

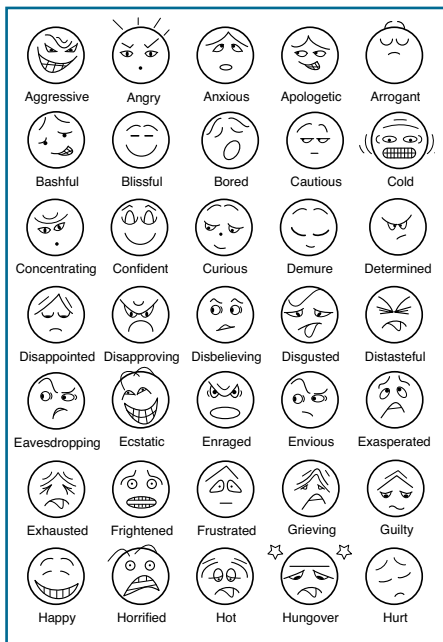
Has her experience of growing up in a secure family environment coloured her own approach to parenting?

'Yes, as I get older, the more I see people who haven't had that, the more I realise that it is so important.'

But with divorce rates rising in many countries, it is a security that fewer children feel.

'It is the quality of the relationship that matters. In the book we quote research which found that boys whose fathers were still involved in their lives after a family break-up were more likely to be self-confident and high achieving. It didn't matter that the father wasn't living at home, what mattered was that the son could talk to him.'

This supports the book's central message on happiness, that 'the number one ingredient is connectedness. Children who feel secure and loved have an inner warmth which is the foundation for building future relationships themselves, as



Recognising feelings

well as a springboard to launch them out into the world to achieve their goals.'

Doro adds: 'The key to being happy is to be connected, and for most people that means family. Relationships are the bedrock of a happy family life, indeed of a happy life.'

'We all say "I want my child to be happy," but what we really want is for our children to be able to cope with whatever life throws at them. That's where the connection with Partnership for Children comes in, the importance of helping young children to develop coping skills.'

Another clear message of the book is that children need time. Contemporary parents often feel squeezed for time, and Doro's biggest fear for her own daughters becoming mothers is how they will cope with this extra pressure.

'Families come in all shapes and sizes,' she says. 'You have to find a way that works for your family – and it isn't just about mothers. But there's no getting away from the fact that children need time. Building up memories with children, and having traditions that are repeated every year – these are very important.'

'As we say in the book, children often 'talk sideways', telling you something important or something that's worrying them when you are doing something together. If you don't give them enough time, they may not tell you.'

Bringing Up Happy Children is a resolutely practical book.

'Yes, well, people talk about "being in love", but love is doing, not just being,' says Doro.

Much of the practical advice is based

on the resources and experience of Parentline Plus, and the key tip is 'ACT don't REACT', a three-step process that works like a set of traffic lights. A (Adult) is the red light that tells you to stop and think. C (Child) is the amber light, reminding you to wait and consider what is going on for your child. T (Tools) is the green light to go ahead and use the best strategy for dealing with the situation.

Partnership for Children invited a mother of two boys aged 10 and 6 to try using ACT, to see whether it helped her and her children. Her feedback was positive.

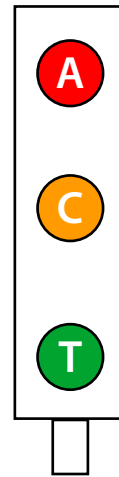
'It's good at making you think more about a situation. You haven't always got time, but you can think about it afterwards and decide 'Right, the next time that happens, I'm going to do this' – and then you follow it through.'

'It's good too to think about how the child is feeling. It's easy to say 'you've got to get to school, I've got to go to work, so just put your shoes on,' but it has helped me with my younger boy to think about what he's feeling and why he's not doing as he's told. Younger children are less expressive of their feelings and sometimes don't even know how they're feeling, and the book helps you to understand them a bit more.'

Although much of the material in it is based on experience in the UK, the book will be published in the US later this year and is intended for an international audience. Doro's own parenting experience saw her bringing up three daughters in England, Hong Kong, Australia and California.

'Despite all the research, parenting is not a science,' she says. 'A lot depends on a child's temperament and on how their personality fits with yours. Parenting is an art, but even professional artists feel they can learn new techniques.'

- *Bringing Up Happy Children* is a Teach Yourself book by Glenda Weil and Doro Marden, published in the UK by Hodder Education (ISBN 978-0-340-96879-6). It is available online at www.amazon.co.uk and will be published in the US in May by McGraw-Hill.



The ACT formula - a three-step process, like traffic lights, which helps parents to consider their children's needs and feelings

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