

Spiritual Tip

Choose Holiness over Happy Feelings

By Rick Warren

Today we live in an age of irresponsibility, where no one wants to admit that their problems are their own fault. We've all become victims. No problem we have is ever considered our fault anymore; it's always somebody else's problem. We blame others. We blame the government, the media, our parents, the schools, our DNA, and the environment — everything but ourselves.

The truth is that you brought most of your problems on yourself. You just need to accept responsibility and quit blaming others. Every time you blame somebody else, you're not admitting what the real problem is.

If you're facing temptation right now, you're never going to find freedom until you stop fixing the blame and start fixing the problem. Stop blaming other people! Even when other people have hurt you, it's your reaction that's causing the problem.

It's amazing to me that some people even try to blame God for the messes in their lives. But God's will never contradicts God's Word. If God says, "Don't do that" in the Bible, he will never tell you "yes" through a feeling.

I don't care how good the feeling is — when you listen to your feelings instead of God's Word, you're walking straight into a trap. One of the most common excuses I've heard to justify a multitude of sins is, "God wants me to be happy, and this will make me happy."

God wants you to be happy. But God wants you to be holy more than he wants you to be happy. He wants you to obey him. You will never be totally happy when you ignore God's will. In fact, you're heading for destruction. The rules and principles that are in the Bible are not there just to make life miserable. They're there for your own good.

The happiest people in the world are those who hang on to what God says and follow it, regardless of what their feelings say.

Talk It Over

- What are the problems in your life that you've tried to blame someone else for?
- Has blaming someone else ever made you truly happy? How did it actually make you feel?

Marriage Tip

I Thought I Understood About Men, But I Didn't – Part 1

By Shaunti Feldhahn

Have you ever been totally confused by something the man in your life has said or done? Have you ever wondered, looking at his rapidly departing back, "Why did that make him so angry?"

Have you ever been perplexed by your husband's defensiveness when you ask him to stop working so much? Yeah? Me too.

But now, after conducting spoken and written interviews with more than one thousand men, I can tell you that the answers to those and dozens of other common perplexities are all related to what is going on in your man's inner life.

Most are things he wishes you knew but doesn't know how to tell you. In some cases, they're things he has no idea you don't know.

Light bulb On!

It turned out that these men shared some surprisingly common inner wiring. At their secret inner core, many had similar fears and concerns, feelings and needs.

I discovered that there were many things I thought I understood about men - but really didn't. In several areas, my understanding was purely surface-level. Once I got below the surface and into specifics, everything changes. I felt like a cartoon character who suddenly had a light bulb over my head.

Even better, it turned out that those revelations were mostly about things that my own husband always wished I knew but couldn't figure out how to explain. And that was a common refrain from most of the men I talked to. Although I still make many mistakes in my relationship with my husband - and will continue to! - finally grasping these things has hopefully helped me to better appreciate and support him in the way that he needs.

I want that light bulb to go on for you as well.

Seven Revelations

So here are seven revelations - followed by translations from "surface level" to "in practice" - that you, like me, may not have realized before.

Surface Understanding #1: Men need respect.

What that means in practice: Men would rather feel unloved than inadequate and disrespected.

Surface Understanding #2: Men are insecure.

What that means in practice: Despite their "in control" exterior, men often feel like impostors and are insecure that their inadequacies will be discovered.

(Surface Understandings #3 to #7 next week)

The more we understand the men in our lives, the better we can support and love them in the way they need to be loved.

In other words, this revelation is supposed to change and improve us.

-----Ed. Note: Shaunti Feldhahn conducted extensive research into the inner lives of men. She presents the fascinating results in more detail in her book **For Women Only**.

Parenting Tip

Emotion Coaching – Five Simple Things Successful Parents Do

By John Gottman

Every parent knows the importance of equipping children with the intellectual skills they need to succeed in school and life. But children also need to master their emotions.

The book, **Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child**, is a guide to teaching children to understand and regulate their emotional world. And as acclaimed psychologist and researcher John Gottman shows, once they master this important life skill, emotionally intelligent children will enjoy increased self-confidence, greater physical health, better performance in school, and healthier social relationships.

Research on emotion coaching, on the impact of marital discord, and on the transition to parenthood are all elements of Dr. Gottman's parenting research agenda. At the heart of these projects are the emotional lives of children and the emotional communication between parents and their children.

As Dr. Gottman and his colleagues studied parents and children over time, they made a number of observations and discoveries about the powerful impact that emotional processes can have on children and their parents.

"Much of today's popular advice to parents ignores emotion," says Dr. Gottman. "Instead it relies on child-

rearing theories that address children's misbehavior, but disregards the feelings that underlie that misbehavior. The ultimate goal of raising children should not be simply to have an obedient and compliant child. Most parents hope for much more for their children."

Dr. Gottman's research also discovered that love by itself wasn't enough. "We found that concerned, warm, and involved parents often had attitudes toward their and their children's emotions that got in the way ... when the child was sad or afraid or angry," he writes. "The secret to being an emotionally intelligent parent lay in how parents interacted with their children when emotions ran hot."

The researchers ultimately determined that successful parents tended to do five very simple things with their children when they were emotional. Gottman calls these five elements "Emotion Coaching." He discovered that children who had "Emotion Coaches" for parents were on an entirely different, more positive developmental trajectory than the children of other parents.

Dr. Gottman and other researchers also observed that children benefit the most when parents themselves have a strong relationship. "In families where the parents aren't living with each other or are not going to stay married, the parents can best help their children by minimizing their children's exposure to destructive conflict. High levels of parental conflict create emotional distress in children and decrease effective parenting skills."

Dr. Gottman's emphasis on the emotional bond between parent and child emerged from longitudinal research that included emotional content in all family relationships. To our knowledge, his is the first research to confirm the work of the brilliant children's clinician, psychologist Dr. Haim Ginott.

For more information on Dr. Gottman's research on parents and children, see his book **Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child**.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF EMOTION COACHING

What are the five simple elements of emotion coaching discovered by Gottman's research?

1. Be aware of a child's emotions
2. Recognize emotional expression as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching
3. Listen empathetically and validate a child's feelings
4. Label emotions in words a child can understand
5. Help a child come up with an appropriate way to solve a problem or deal with an upsetting issue or situation

Dr. Gottman's research found that children of emotion-coaching parents had more abilities in the area of their own emotions than children who were not coached by their parents. In other words, these "coached" children grew up to become what Dan Goleman has

referred to as "emotionally intelligent" people.

Here are characteristics of these children that are different from normal children?

- They are able to regulate their emotional states.
- They are better at soothing themselves when they are upset.
- They can calm down their hearts faster after an upsetting incident.
- They have fewer infectious illnesses.
- They are better at focusing attention.
- They relate better to other people, even in tough situations like getting teased in middle school.
- They are better at understanding people.
- They have better friendships with other children.
- They are better in school situations that require academic performance.

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