

# Book Review

*Barton W. Knapp, Editor*

## **ParentCraft: Essential Skills for Raising Children from Infancy to Adulthood**

Ken and Elizabeth Mellor

Finch Publishing, 1999, Sydney, Australia

248 pp. (including references and index)

\$13.77 U.S. plus postage (paper)

Available by credit card (Amex, Mastercard and Visa): P.O. Box 271, Seymour, Victoria 3661, Australia; email: [biament@eck.net.au](mailto:biament@eck.net.au); phone: + 613-5799-1198; fax + 613-5799-1132; or website: [www.biament.net](http://www.biament.net).

We think parents have the most important job anywhere. Everything we do as parents influences the lives of our children and helps to shape them for years to come. Through them, the future of the world is also shaped. So let's do a good job. Let's do it right. Let's do it together when it will help. And let's enjoy the process. (Mellor & Mellor, 1999, p. vii)

*ParentCraft* by Ken and Elizabeth Mellor is a concise, well-organized manual for parents, those aspiring to parenthood, and other persons who have caregiving responsibilities. *ParentCraft* is also an excellent reference for therapists and a delightful guide for all those who want to develop a thoughtful, deep-hearted Parent ego state with which to nurture themselves and others. I have been recommending *ParentCraft* in the parenting classes I teach and in my private practice as a way for clients to reprogram their own Parent ego states. The feedback has been unanimously positive. Many of those who have read *ParentCraft* are now purchasing copies to share with their family members and friends.

Ken and Elizabeth's goal in writing *ParentCraft* is to provide the reader with an in-depth understanding of seven themes fundamental to successful parenting:

1. Deliberately planning how we choose to parent makes it easier to be parents.
2. Families, just like personalities, need to be managed as a whole.

3. Everyone's needs are important—those of the children and the parent.
4. Loving acceptance is fundamental.
5. Setting standards and limits empowers children to live freely in adulthood.
6. Balancing loving acceptance and the setting of standards and limits is important.
7. Communicating spiritual beliefs and values to our children helps them grow up to be good people.

The Mellors have been involved with children and parenting in a variety of ways for more than 30 years. Their work during this time has included various forms of social work, psychotherapy, parent education, childcare worker training, marriage guidance counseling, family therapy, and involvement in the custodial and institutional care of children.

"If you want to succeed at something, copy the people who have already succeeded" (Mellor & Mellor, 1999, p. vii). Along with their personal qualifications, Ken and Elizabeth acknowledge "many hundreds of people" who have contributed to the information presented in this work: experts in parenting and childcare, parents who have raised or are raising their children successfully, and the hundreds of children whom the Mellors have helped to raise.

Throughout the book, Ken and Elizabeth thread the aforementioned seven themes that are essential to successful parenting into the material they are presenting. They are referred to, explained, and illustrated through the use of "how to" suggestions, practical advice on dealing with many types of parenting situations, methods of understanding situations and problems so that one can change them, ways to stay on track while attending to the normal pressures of daily life, a system of simple parenting principles, and several informative and entertaining cartoons.

The authors have organized the book into six sections: "Your Role," "Your Family," "Some

Important Skills," "Patterns in Childhood," "Ages and Stages," and "Tools." The first section, "Your Role," discusses the individual's job as a parent and how to succeed at it. "Your Family" looks at the individual's experience of families, family patterns, family dynamics, and ways to balance work and family life. The section on "Some Important Skills" includes working as a team, handling conflict between parents, parenting with love, a sequence of discipline, "standing to decide," knowing when and how to act, communicating clearly, paying active attention, repeating oneself, developing self-esteem, and managing siblings. The section on "Patterns in Childhood" introduces the subjects of natural transitions, a second chance, and "four births, four bonds." The phases of childhood are presented in section five, "Ages and Stages." The last section, "Tools," illustrates grounding, relaxation, family meetings, and time for the parents to be together as a couple.

*ParentCraft* also includes a final word from the authors, their acknowledgments, a useful recommended reading list, information about the Biame Network, a section of notes and references, and a comprehensive index.

*ParentCraft* has proven to be a positive and efficacious addition to my work. Over a period of nine months, the feedback I have received has been tremendously enthusiastic. *ParentCraft* is one of those special books that, once read, moves people to share it with others. My own favorite use of the book is in helping people to structure a thoughtful and loving Parent ego state, and then, to allow that transformation to aid in the healing of the Child.

I want to thank Ken and Elizabeth for sharing their work with all of us so that we might benefit from their knowledge and experience.

*Eric William Sigmund has a master's degree in clinical psychology and is an ITAA Certified Transactional Analyst with a clinical specialty. He was a corecipient of the 1980 Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award, has served on the ITAA Board of Trustees, and is currently a member of the editorial board of the Transactional Analysis Journal. Mr. Sigmund practices on Maui and on the Big Island of Hawai'i.*

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## Books Received for Review

These books have been submitted by publishers who wish to have them reviewed in the *TAJ*. You are encouraged to select one of them to review. Please contact me, Barton W. Knapp, Ph.D., *Phoenix Centers*, P. O. Box 131, Newtown Square, PA 19073, U.S.A., and tell me which book you would like to review. If the book is still available, I will send it to you along with guidelines to help you in writing your review. I also encourage you to review a book that you have read and would like to bring to the attention of other readers of the *Journal*.

- Bilich, M., Bonfiglio, S., & Carlson, S. (2000). *Shared Grace: Therapist and Clergy Working Together*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, \$49.95 hard, \$24.95 soft.
- Johnson, W. B., & Johnson, W. L. (2000). *The Pastor's Guide to Psychological Disorders and Treatments*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, \$49.95 hard, \$24.95 soft.
- Journal of Bisexuality*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, \$36/year (individuals).
- Journal of Neurotherapy*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Medical Press, \$48.95/year (individuals).