

**CHOICES ≈ MAKING AN
INFORMED DECISION ON
PARENTING**

H. Glenroy Seale

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Dedication

**To Iyanna and Shaquanna, God's gifts to me, my joys,
and my inspiration**

Appreciation

**To my wonderful wife Marcella, for your assistance
with the editing and layout of this book. Thank you
for your tolerance and patience with me. You have
done an excellent job.**

INTRODUCTION

No book ever written can be referred to as an ideal parenting handbook/manual. This is because each child is different. Additionally, there are so many diverse communities, races, cultures, experiences, and realities, that no specific book can provide all of the answers as to what constitutes good parenting.

Many people have, for years, ignored the need to provide a solid foundation for the continuity of our unique, and in some minds, mysterious ways of social living in the Caribbean.

Indeed, it is a puzzle to people from other countries that fare much better financially. Many of them often wonder how our people cope with the many challenges.

Some have even expressed the view that given our rich heritage, if our traditions are not carefully preserved and passed on, eventually there will be some erosion of what has been known and experienced as family life, and by extension community life.

This is becoming a reality as many persons seek to improve their standards of living. Many new developments and living areas have been constructed. Some people consistently struggle to achieve what can be considered the desired *modus operandi* of life.

First among these is what we know today and what exists as the family structure. Many of our youth have strayed from the basic concept of "family" which our fore parents painstakingly created.

The task of good family creation and good values was done with much less than what we have today. The

resources then, were not as many as we have now. Today we have the benefits of advanced technology, better health care, greater access to education and travel, and better commerce opportunities.

This book will attempt to address some of the issues with which some of our young parents find themselves faced with today. This is within the context of many of our Caribbean countries. Some of this information is also relevant for persons who consider themselves older and more experienced parents, as well as mentors and potential parents.

In this discourse, the expectation is that you will actualize enough food for thought, which will lead us to see how important this subject is. It is important to carefully assess, re-assess, and preserve some of the many things to which little attention is being paid. Chief among these is how our youth are trained to understand the importance of the family, and how to prepare for it when their time comes.

This book attempts to present the reader with valuable information, to allow you to identify with and appreciate some of the major issues of concern. Also it is important that you see and identify with what some of the possible solutions are.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This book is divided into two parts. Part one looks at some of the basic concepts as they relate to the core foundational values which are critical to our continued success in parenting. It also looks at the situation as it exists with many of our young adults, and some of their reasons for making certain decisions, whether they are informed or uninformed.

The family unit is also examined. Core values are defined and reasons for the moral and social decline of many of our Caribbean societies are discussed. The book further examines the roles of service groups and religious groups, inclusive of their significance in shaping and moulding the lives of our youth.

Some of the other topics which are discussed are: the challenges of parenting, health, STD's, the social safety net, poverty, education, sports, nutrition and community based activities.

Part two deals expressly with the direct subject area of parenting. Information is presented on such topics as heterosexuality, intimacy, love, conception, pregnancy, maternity and paternity leave, and the effect of the father's active role in child rearing.

Other issues, such as, identifying and developing the talents of children, assisting children with their career choices, mentoring, and sibling rivalry are also discussed.

This book concludes with some positive solutions for good parenting, and presents some tips for young adult parents. A glossary of relevant terms is also included.

It is my hope that the material presented will contribute positively to providing assistance for both our youth and adults involved in the task of parenting. This is in an effort to assist with consistent continuity to positively shape the future for our communities in the Caribbean and the Diasporas, for generations to come.

It is my hope that the reach of this work may eventually lead to some of its concepts being used as a model for other cultures.

An Overview of the Caribbean

Caribbean people have been fortunate to have what can be considered a fairly comfortable standard of living. This, along with other social physical and educational features of the various communities, can be considered strong, holistic and supportive.

Our countries promise the framework for productive, healthy and safe living. Some even boast of having as a goal, the best place to live, work and do business in the next ten years.

However, in the face of uncertainties and challenges, such as, global recession, global warming, declining economies, the HIV & AIDS pandemic, and rising inflation due to increasing oil prices, how do we arrive at an equitable and achievable solution?

The Caribbean has been experiencing an increase in natural hazards such as earthquakes, more violent storms, extended droughts leading to water rationing, plant diseases, as well as insect infestation of some of our crops.

Having said all of this, a sustained effort must be made to secure the foundation which will afford our men and women of tomorrow (our young adults), some of the same benefits which our fore parents strived to achieve. Everyone must take individual responsibility to see that this foundation is not eroded through any myopic vision.

To accomplish this, therefore, the realization is that there must be a consistent continuity of the basic

foundational values. These have been taught to us by our fore parents. They have served all well in the past.

One of the most important virtues espoused is the need to be each other's keeper, not just when there is danger, but also when there is a need. This need can be financial, spiritual, emotional, or physical.

There are rising concerns among many of our citizens today. Some of these issues are increasing illegal drug and alcohol use, increasing crime, gang and domestic violence, and theft. Other similar issues include irresponsible sexual behaviour, peer pressure, materialism, tobacco use and the overall mental health of many of our youth.

It should never be forgotten that attention has to be paid to addressing in a timely and appropriate manner, some of the unavoidable systemic problems which our parents, our families, single parent homes, educators, teenagers and adolescents face.

Unfortunately, too many people have not been adequately trained, or have not been exposed to the necessary skills and guidance to competently and effectively handle many of these issues.

Part 1

Definitions and Brief Commentary on Relevant Concepts/Terms

Parent

A “parent” according to the Oxford Dictionary is “a father or mother” or “one who gives birth to and/or nurtures and raises an offspring”.

The different roles of parents may vary throughout life’s journey. They can prove to be especially complex in our different human cultures and environments.

While an individual’s parents are often also his/her biological parents, there is another type of parent. This parent is different from the person from whom one has inherited more than half of his/her genes. They are also very present in the child’s life. For example, this may be a stepfather, or stepmother, godparent, or a foster parent, aunt, uncle or grandparent.

In many cases being a stepmother or stepfather has been known to work successfully, especially when the step-parent/s bond/s with the child. In many instances they bond as though the two were the actual direct flesh and blood products of each other.

Mother

A “mother” is “a woman in relation to a child or children, to whom she has given birth,” according to the Oxford Dictionary.

The maternal bond defines the feelings the mother has for her child, or for someone else’s child.

Mothers may also be categorized according to their social, or legal relationship with the child.

Whether it is the provision of shelter, clothing, food, access to efficient health care, access to good education or spiritual instruction, mothers will generally try to ensure that their children can enjoy the best of these elements.

Always remember that maternity is almost never in doubt. It is paternity which can be doubtful because of a number of factors which include dishonesty, unfaithfulness and so on.

Father

A “father” is defined as “the biological or social male parent of a child or offspring”. (Askdefine dictionary.com)

Like mothers, fathers may be categorized according to their biological, social, or legal relationship with the child.

The term “biological parent” refers to a parent who is the direct biological mother or father of an individual.

In some cases the role of fathering may also be fully adopted by a godfather, grandfather, stepfather and the child.

In many cases the relationship has been known to work successfully, especially when there is complete bonding with the child. In some instances the two bond as though were the direct flesh and blood products of each other.

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