**RAISING COURAGEOUS CHILDREN**

**WHO CARRY PEACE OF MIND**

We can’t expect our children to find courage and peace of mind in fearful situations any more than we have found them ourselves. The two biggest powers we have against fear are choosing what to believe in ahead of time, and on the spot, what to pay attention to. Our beliefs serve as an *inoculation of peace* to prevent infection by those who would enslave us to fear. In the moment, our beliefs enable us to pay attention to sources of strength and hope that work like *inhalers of courage*, to give us confidence when we need it most.

We need to find healthy role models to follow, ones that grow not fear but faith. *We will know them by their fruits –* the lifestyles and attitudes of wellbeing. We lose our freedom when we trust and pay attention to anyone who puts out words and deeds that bring insecurity, worry, panic, doubt, confusion, and mistrust. By contrast, we gain freedom when we rely on people who trust in some higher power that brings peace, hope, confidence, courage, and calm.

**Share your Past Anxieties**

When news comes into your family of bullies in school and adult life, or of terrifying episodes of traumatic abuse, talk about how the victims could have inhaled courage. *Tell children about your past and present troubles* with these things. Share what happened when you relied too much on yourself, and on other self-centered people. Ask yourself where you go in a crisis to find security. (To learn more, ask your loved ones where *they* see you going for these things.) Children need to see you trusting in a higher source of protection than yourself, one that not only protects you, but indwells you, where it blesses you to bless others.

**Teach them a Fire Drill**

In elementary school, we learned to imagine and rehearse fires and practice getting to safety. Likewise you can teach children to imagine a fearful situation, take a couple of deep breaths, and access the strongest, sweetest spirit they have ever known (their grandmother, maybe you, ideally God’s indwelling spirit of love). Next they can listen to words of affirmation and comfort coming from that sweet strength. They can practice saying these words to themselves, maybe saving them into their journals or phones.

Fire drills can include scriptures like the 23rd psalm, or prayers. One formula some people use is a series of rehearsed behaviors recalled with the letters **S-A-F-E: S**upport and **S**oothe yourself, **A**ffirm your **A**ssets and **A**lliances, **F**ocus on the **F**uture, and **E**ngage your **E**ncouragers. However they do it, practicing their fire drill will help children in the situations below.

**Bullying at School**

When someone tries to bully our children or their friends, they need the inoculating belief that they aren’t alone. Their bodies may be in danger, but *their souls can travel,* to another time and place. They can learn to imagine protective authority coming to their aid. They can soon ask parents, grandparents, school officials, and other effective friends to discipline the bully. More importantly, they can teach children effective responses to make when bullied. For inhaling, pressure-relief responses they can use on the spot, here are ten practical tips:

1. *Never think or talk like a bigot*.
2. *Make your peace with any visible flaws you can’t hide.*
3. *Be kind to your enemies now and then.*
4. *Play it cool—don’t run or walk away.*
5. *Never let bullies see you sweat.*
6. *Don’t surrender territory, money, or possessions to bullies.*
7. *Break the tension with a smile and even a little laugh.*
8. *Don’t let your parents overprotect you.*
9. *Do use the protection and support of your peers.*
10. *Choose friends who try to follow 1 through 9 above.*

**Traumatic Abuse**

All children need to be prepared to deal with being mistreated. For children **not to be** **victimized** by such incidents, they can learn to talk their feelings out with safe people, so they won’t take their anger at the abuser out on themselves and others. The inoculation of peace is to believe that victims of traumatic abuse can learn to *take responsibility for their own healing*.

The central lesson here is this: we can ***feel our feelings*** of fear and talk them out, so we can ***believe our beliefs*** that we are always safe and sound inside our bodies where our higher power lives.