Dear Friends;

Here we are at the sunset of 2020. Certainly, our inboxes and social media feeds are filled with attempts at making sense of this (at every hyperbolic adjective) year. I will not venture to add to this seasonmaking exercise at this time... somewhere, maybe we will do work together, but for now, I'd like to just share one takeaway. You may be familiar with the very old story of the little girl whose parents find her late one night, awake and intently sitting out her window instead of tucked in her bed. When they ask what she's looking at, she says, “I'm watching them punch holes in the darkness”. She was watching the lamplighters, with their ladders and torches, setting the streetlamps aflame for the night.

We are certainly aware of the darkness these days. It has felt all-encompassing at times. The darkness has manifested in many forms such as illness, anger, racism, fear, anxiety, depression, addiction, hunger, poverty... and isolation, and loneliness. These conditions have always plagued us. The events of 2020 have revealed them to those of us who may have been unaware until now. The awareness, while painful, is our starting point.

With awareness – we are called into action. We are called to be the lamplighters – punching holes in that darkness. When we help someone else find a way out of the darkness, we find ourselves moving closer to the light. As we give freely of our light, of our wealth and our privilege, our brightness is not diminished. It is amplified.

Here to 2021 may we bravely and wholeheartedly recognize the darkness, ignite the flames of hope for those around us, and walk into the light, together.

Shine on, dear friends,

Maria

Make a difference in someone's life and support McCall today.

Our mission is to provide comprehensive integrated substance abuse and mental health treatment to help people lead healthier and more productive lives.

Your donation will directly support our prevention, recovery and community programs and help us provide clients with the support they need regardless of their ability to pay. Click here to donate today!

The holidays are wrapping up (pun intended) and we are making our way into the new year. If you just let out a huge sigh of relief, you are not alone. This year, many parents tried to make the holidays bigger and better than ever, perhaps to compensate for all that has been lost this year due to the pandemic. Neighbors put on holiday strolls, cookies were baked, dinners were cooked and presents were arranged. Were you on the hunt for the PSL?? Did you go in your budget? Did you find yourself in tears? Please know you were not the only one.

This year has been especially tough on both parents and children alike. We have all felt anxiety due to the pandemic and parents have put a lot of pressure on themselves to make this time of year perfect, comparing themselves to others along the way. It is hard not to when you receive glittering holiday cards with professional family photos and your social media feed is flooded with filtered realities of picture-perfect family moments. We all know that finding true joy during the holidays has nothing to do with glitter and bows. Then why do we continuously try to live up to the impossible standards we set for ourselves?

The Pressure Mounts

To be a “good” parent today, there is immense, self-imposed pressure to buy into societal driven standards that are just about impossible to meet and now parents have to do it all through a pandemic. Parents are told to feed their children organic food, forget about anything plastic, limit screen time, foster independence, but keep them safe from scrapes, panabens and pesticides. Not to mention ticks, mosquitoes and sunburns. Now due to the pandemic, parents must be germaphobe, teachers and therapists. It is the perfect recipe for disaster and completely overwhelming, especially around the holidays when there is a need to make the mundane into magical moments to be remembered for a lifetime.

While parents stress themselves out trying to plan the perfect holiday, children and teens typically experience intense emotions at this time of year and the pandemic has only amplified that phenomenon. They are struggling just as much as adults, they may not be in school full-time and they can no longer hug their friends, let alone even see their smiles. It is no wonder that they are experiencing a complex set of emotions and their frustration often comes out as misbehavior and not listening. Deep down they are crying out for help and parents shake their heads in frustration, not knowing what to do or how to help their child.

Presence Not Presents with McCall’s Circle of Security Program

All parents worry if we are getting it right. And, truly, there are no perfect families, no perfect parents. What children need is a caregiver who is kind, strong, and wise. The Circle of Security Program, an evidence-based program delivered by credentialed parent educators through McCall, tells us that “good enough” parenting is, well, good enough. What matters is that we are fully present (that means we have to put down our screens, tools, and work to build the life-sustaining attachments that form the foundations of resilient people. The “circle” allows children to go out and explore their world, and then come back to their caregivers’ safe and secure home base to help refill their cup and organize their feelings.

“Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person’s life revolves, not only as an infant or a toddler but throughout adolescence and years of maturity as well, and on into old age. From these intimate attachments a person draws strength and enjoyment of life and, through what he contributes, gives strength and enjoyment to others. These are matters about which current science and traditional wisdom are one.” (Shelby, J. [1988])

Presence also means self-care for parents. We cannot pour from an empty cup. So, let’s be sure to understand our own unmet needs, know how bad to manage our stress, and be kind to ourselves.

Game nights, evening walks,carding, and bike rides do not cost much, and these experiences are time well spent together. Your children will be grateful for it and you will be less stressed and more fulfilled, making unfiltered memories that stand the test of time.

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