

## Counselor's Corner

### "What Happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas"

Ever hear of this saying? It suggests a wild time that need not be mentioned when vacation ends and people return to work and family. It suggests a cover-up.

We all have secrets that we prefer to keep, but when our goal is to create situations that cannot be disclosed, we are doing a disservice to everyone. When we make it a common practice to hide things, they can blow up inside of us, often spraying family and friends with emotional shrapnel. When we silence our children and prohibit them from talking about anything that goes on in the home, or voicing any kind of discontent, we may unknowingly create feelings of shame and guilt. We have to teach our children the benefits of being respectful and keeping our problems off the internet or loosely handing them over to gossip mongers, but our children need to talk to special friends or trusted adults like teachers, counselors, and therapists when they are having a difficult time.

Children need to vocalize problems to people who are not living under their own roof. It helps them make sense of things. They get a different perspective, and they often learn that there are so many others with similar problems. That can give them a sense of normalcy and keep them from feeling isolated. It also can provide them with tools to assist with current and future problem-solving.

To free our children, we must free ourselves first by recognizing that we are human and full of flaws. I read once that children are just "small humans". They are imperfect like us, and they are not always eager to hang out with parents and siblings or help around the house. All children will get into some kind of trouble, embarrassing and disappointing us. That is life, and children will grow, depending on how their mistakes are handled. If household situations become overwhelming to us, we must take the next step by admitting it, and then seeking help through therapy and group support.

When things are emotionally trying, we can become too immersed in what we are going through to notice the impact stressful home situations are having on children. Sometimes we are too eager to buy into the resilience and well-being of children when we hear them proclaim they are "fine". When fights are frequent, when someone is abusing alcohol or another drug, when there is marital discontent, a change in jobs and finances, home life is off balance. Our children suffer. They may act out. Sometimes they take on responsibility for their parent's life choices. Sometimes they think they can fix things that are emotionally broken within the house. Sometimes they blame themselves for things out of their control. That is a lot for children to bear. Please allow and encourage children to sort things out with a trusted adult, through individual and/or family counseling, or within a group setting.

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