



Congregations can be an important factor in nurturing our children

1) Congregations can do what any good community should do: expand the child's network of adults and peers. While parents are important to a child's development, children benefit from the wider circle of relationships a religious community offers. It also conveys that the child is valued.

2) All healthy affiliations bring with them a sense of who one is and hopefully, a positive self-expression. All children need the opportunity to show others they can be the competent caring contributors that we want them to be.

3) A child who experiences a sense of belonging is a much healthier child and more able to withstand life's stresses. Belonging means more than relationships. Belonging is the sense that our life matters to others.

4) Religion, at its best, reaches out to the most vulnerable and shields them from hatred and exclusion, advocating for change. Children who are witnesses, and participants, in such acts of generosity are much stronger people as a consequence.

5) A congregation can help ensure their children's needs are being met. Children who have enough food, safe schools, adequate housing, wholesome activities, and access to mentors are children who will be much more resilient.

6) Children who are able to exercise some power over the decisions that affect them are more resilient. For many children, religious activities give them the chance to make decisions, such as the choices and chores at church camp or choosing to be baptized.

7) The rhythm of prayer, sacraments and holidays within families of faith and congregations brings the satisfaction of routine and the sense of predictability and belonging.

Increased emphasis on these seven aspects of congregational life will contribute to the healthy development of our children.

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www.hmacofchrist.org 816-833-1000, ext 1262

Nurturing Our Children...

We know that children are important and we need to protect and nurture them. And we know that the experiences of childhood have effects into adulthood.



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

- Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse
- Physical and Emotional Neglect
- Witnessing Physical and Emotional abuse of household members
- Substance abuse in the household
- Mental illness in the household
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member(s)

Adverse Childhood Experiences Effects into Adulthood

- Improper brain development
- Impaired social and emotional skills
- Impaired learning ability
- Lower language development
- Anxiety
- Smoking, alcoholism and drug abuse
- Blindness, cerebral palsy from head trauma
- Higher risk for heart, lung and liver diseases, obesity, cancer, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol

Ways to Counteract the Effects of ACE in Nurturing of Children

- Skin to Skin Contact: Babies are happier and temperature and blood sugars are more stable
- Hugging and Physical Touch: Increase oxytocin levels, even in older children and adults, which increases happiness, trust, and empathy and decreases anxiety and stress.
- Providing families with concrete help in times of need; food, money, clothing, school supplies, etc.
- Providing emotional support to parents
- Providing emotional and psycho-social support to children