



The **CHANGEmight™** Program Beliefs

1. Communities, parents and kids need to learn to support each other.

-- In today's society, all three of these elements are vital to each other. The interrelationships and dependencies among these three components are paramount and necessary for anyone element to be successful in its role. Over time, anyone missing element will cause the culture as we know it to crash. The support role that each gives to the other has been changing over the past fifty years at what seems to be an accelerated rate. Our culture is changing everyday. Some good changes and some bad changes have occurred. Kids have seen an explosion in "rights" (mostly civil) granted to them by the community but without the corresponding responsibilities. Parents have had an explosion of child-rearing advice made available to them from all sorts of professional sources. Most of these have an underlying tone of "feel-good" parenting where the parent is deemed responsible for the success of their kid through concepts like "good communication", "being a friend" and "bestowing self-esteem". The reality is that most of these concepts, while sounding good, work only with a limited number of kids and certainly not with our kids. So we must work, as parents, to establish and maintain a healthy system of support for the methods, tools and philosophies that will work.

2. We are parents and we take this honor seriously.

-- In the family relationship, parents and kids are not friends or buddies or equals. We recognize that we need to be the parent in the relationship. At the same time, we acknowledge we have emotional and material limits and that sometimes we reach them. While we are not "super mom" or "super dad", we do attempt to use fully all of our rights and responsibilities pertaining to the honorable title of "Parent". Communities and kids need not waste our time and energy and deprive us of our rights. For some reason, we may have relinquished them but we can get them back. One important parental responsibility is nurturing. During adolescence, parental nurturing should be aimed toward demanding the transition of our kid's sense of self from one that is based on external validation to one based on internal validation, i.e., we should provide the environment and situations that build the internal person. As parents, it is honorable to insist that our kids learn to solve their own problems; that they can handle life's situations, make decisions and live with consequences. It is an honor to be a parent.

3. As parents, our goal is to raise self-reliant, responsible and capable young adults by modeling self-respect, accountability and responsibility in ourselves.

-- This is a fundamental statement of our role as parent. We, in large measure, set the stage for our kids' ability to become productive members of the community. To do this, we must first have respect for ourselves as a person, that we have value and worth.

We must also be accountable and responsible in our parental roles by setting limits and boundaries and having effective consequences and follow through. Often, this means rediscovering our set of values or beliefs and clearly distinguishing them from "wishful thinking" or "fantasies" about how things should be or ought to be. This also means learning, or clearly defining, what parent power we really do have and using it prudently, not rashly.

4. Healthy family interactions include conflict.

-- Adolescents are in a phase of testing the values and boundaries instilled in them during their upbringing. This is natural and expected because they are learning to think for themselves as part of the maturation process. Parents need to recognize this and develop appropriate responses instead of "parenting in crisis mode" when this testing gets out of hand. We should view the family conflict or crisis our kid presents to us as an opportunity to effect change and growth, both in us and our kid. To minimize, shrug off or hide what our kids are doing, in order to "keep the peace" is a gross disservice to them. Confronting them about their unacceptable behaviors is necessary and sometimes this leads to physical or emotional separation of the family. But the bottom line is that no matter where or what our kids do, they will have to cooperate at some level and we should demand no less in our household. In addition, we should examine and deal with any perceived internal conflicts that we may have in our thinking, attitudes or feelings, especially the conflict between what we expected as parents and what we got as parents.

5. Everyone learns by doing.

-- This is from Aristotle over 2300 years ago. One of life's greatest schools is the "school of hard knocks" and one of the best educators at that school is "experience". Sometimes that means bumps and bruises or simply failing. But, we learn that we can pick ourselves up and get on with life's adventures. This is an inherent part of the internal validation of self-esteem in all of us. To protect or rescue our kids from negative consequences and failure is to rob them of this vital learning and esteem building experience. Our kids learn by doing for themselves and experiencing the consequences, *not from our experiences, lectures and explanations*. Likewise, as parents, we must recognize what is not working for us and change it. We keep trying until we find what does work. We don't give up. We are proactive in our parenting, we "do it".

6. Change involves hard work that is time--consuming and risky.

-- Family situations and dynamics do not evolve overnight and changing them for the better is not an overnight process either. As parents, we have had basically one role model to follow and that is how we were raised. When those methods don't seem to be working, we need to try other ways. This doesn't mean that our parental ideals are wrong, it means that our methods aren't working as well as they should (or we hoped) with this kid. Doing and thinking differently (i.e. changing) requires some vision and some risk taking. We take a risk when we choose to try a new approach. Some approaches are bold and some are subtle, but all can be said to have some risk of not working the way we hoped. Nevertheless, we change because the potential benefits outweigh the risks. One important risk we take as parents going through this process of change is examining, with other parents, our beliefs, behaviors and feelings (introspection) in an honest and realistic light. Working the *CHANGEinsight*TM program is hard for most parents because it is a self-help program, but the potential rewards and support for positive change are immeasurable.

7. We change ourselves through a rational process of THINKING-PLANNING-ACTING.

-- We must get out of the old way of "gut reactions" and "emotional bedlam" as a response to what our kid is doing. This requires learning the T-P-A process and using the support group to do this. Other parents help us sort out who really has ownership of what problem or responsibility, i.e. "whose crisis is it?" Another part of changing is recognizing what stops us from changing and removing those blocks. We learn to get out of operating in "crisis mode" and instead learn to think about what is going on, plan an appropriate response and then carry it out, repeating this cycle as new ideas or situations arise. We use the Problem Analysis, our stands and weekly small steps to carry out this T-P-A process of change for our behaviors and feelings. Support from others in the group is essential for successful change.

8. Our thoughts, feelings and behaviors are interconnected.

-- Our thinking (attitudes), feelings and behaviors overlap and are intertwined in everything we do. Changing one is likely to lead to substantial changes in the others. This is a fundamental premise of the *CHANGEinsight*TM program and one of the reasons why the program works. We start changing ourselves by changing anyone of the three. Usually it is our thinking that gets changed first. Parents new to the program usually start changing by hearing a new

idea or method and trying it out. Parents more experienced in the program may be dealing with a feeling or emotion and begin the process by thinking about the feeling, its roots and effects, and what they can do to change their attitude or perspective about it. The co-mingled nature of our thoughts, feelings and behaviors is difficult to sort out for most of us without the help of two things: 1) support parents who have been there and lived through it (the support group), and 2) a planned, rational process of active change (the *CHANGEinsight*TM program).

9. Our success as a parent or person is not tied to our kid's choices.

-- Recognition and acceptance of this fact begins the self-reconciliation process for us. Our kids need to have their own identity, to be an individual separate from us. We begin to fully realize that our old parenting methods weren't wrong but in fact we were using the only methods we knew and probably doing them very well, too. "We did the best we could at the time based on what we knew". Self-reconciliation is a healing process of "letting-go" of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that we, as parents, conjured up as part of the "fantasy family" we expected (and may be tried to force) and replacing them with more realistic expectations and relationships. We learn that our happiness is not bound to what our kid does or is and that our love for them is not measured by how much we do for them. In this respect, self-reconciliation is a considerably longer process for most parents to go through and it takes considerable courage to face the realities of what we can and cannot change.

10. Our support group's focus is to nurture positive change in its parents, kids and the community.

-- The support group becomes the extended family, the "neighborhood" or "village" that cares about its members, young and old. The group functions as a catalyst for change and growth by supporting appropriate confrontation, nurturing, empathic and social activities. The support group is made of individuals who realize that, collectively, they are more powerful and effective at parenting in difficult times than doing things by themselves. Indeed, many things that a parent needs to do in order to change simply can't be done by themselves and they need the advice, guidance and wisdom of others who have experienced the same situations. To this end, the success of the group depends on all its members giving back to the group in fair measure.

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