



## Parenting Beyond the Baby Boomers to millenniums in the 22nd century. by: Dr. Rhea Almeida, MS, Ph.D LCSW

Parents from diverse family forms engage in a therapeutic circle to share parenting ideas and challenges faced by parents of infants, young children, adolescents and young adults. Parents today are stressed by increased work responsibilities, lower incomes, limited recreational outlets and children who emboldened by peers, the internet and busy parents consistently threaten the safeguards of traditional parental authority. Parenting skills on the other hand can range from authoritarian, to permissive to authoritative. Which style is best and does the personality of the child dictate parenting style? These and other concerns are regularly addressed with an on-going system of support and ideas for successful parenting!

To close the circle children, adolescents and young adults are also embraced in a system of support, creativity and identity building.

### **ABOUT CONTEMPORARY FAMILIES IN THE US & DESCRIPTION OF FAMILIES AND THE NEEDS THEY PRESENT IN CONTEMPORARY US CULTURE**

Fast forward to the first decade of the 21st Century, and you will find that the traditional, nuclear family is on the Endangered Species List. Even in nuclear families, homemaker and breadwinner roles have evolved into something that makes it impossible to define and designate an “average” family. In fact, the stereotypic breadwinner and homemaker roles rarely exist; most households require the income of two full-time wage earners just to get by.

Another significant change is the support network parents once enjoyed. It was not uncommon for extended family members to reside in close proximity to each other, if not under the same roof. Today, more and more grandparents are flocking to Florida, Arizona, or similar location to spend their retirement years while young adults are leaving the nest in search of greater career opportunities.

This trend of stretching families around the globe means that there are fewer and fewer built-in support networks in our communities. Extended family members not only served as mentors and role models, but often as a sounding board or emergency caregiver. Parents and grandparents were respected and looked to for guidance during tough times. As a society, we admired and respected their stories of endurance; surviving economic challenges, marital troubles and a myriad of other circumstances associated with their times. As our role models they inspired us to work hard and persevere.

In addition to the extended family, we have lost our sense of community. Our neighbors today are essentially strangers. Fewer and fewer Americans attend church and therefore the support of the congregation is non-existent for many families. Commuters and tel-commuters reduce the opportunity to interact regularly with the people from our own neighborhoods. Instead, we drive 30, 60, 90 miles to work with people from nearby cities. This in itself is not a bad thing, but it further diminishes our sense of community and the support network we once took for granted.

**Today's families come in hundreds of shapes and sizes.**

Stepfamilies are the most common form of "non-traditional" families, but think of the many variables within stepfamilies: everything from two partners with custody of their respective children to households where one partner has children and the other doesn't.

There are still even more types of families: single mothers, single fathers, grandparents raising grandchildren, multi-generational households, the list is endless. Custody arrangements following separation and divorce are almost as unique as snowflakes; no two are the same. Legal and physical custody are no longer automatically awarded to the mother. More and more, kids are bouncing back and forth between two households on a weekly basis.

CCF - The Council on Contemporary Families (CCF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the national conversation about what contemporary families need and how these needs can best be met. Dr. Rhea Almeida has served on the board and is a member of the Board and is a frequently invited presenter at their Symposium. For more information go to: <http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org/>