

Healthy Children – Healthy Planet

An Eight-Session Discussion Circle for the Home, Faith Center or Workplace

Purpose

∞ To understand how the pervasive effects of advertising, media, and our consumer culture can influence a child's view of the world.

∞ To discover ways to create meaningful family times and healthful environments for children.

∞ To explore ways to develop a child's connection to nature, and to foster creativity.

“My husband read the readings also. And for the first time in our married life we sat down and talked about our values.”

- *Healthy Children – Healthy Planet* circle participant.

Session Themes

1. Cultural Pressures: A powerful fusion of pop culture and peer influence creates a *social smog* that has a strong influence on today's children, says author and doctor Ron Taffel. How should adults respond to these pressures?

2. Family Rituals and Celebrations: Meaningful family time can provide an antidote to cultural pressures of consumption. Explore how ritual can enrich a child's family experience and examine alternatives to elaborate celebrations and gifts.

3. Advertising: The average child sees an estimated 20,000 commercials every year. What are the effects on our children, and what steps can adults take to lessen the impact?

4. Food and Health: Many schools serve high-fat lunches, soda, and candy is readily available on school grounds. What is the link between diet and learning? How can adults encourage children to include healthy foods in their meals?

5. Time and Creativity: Today's children may have schedules that rival the busiest adults. How can adults help children find balance between activities and unstructured time, which is often the source of creativity?

6. Technology and the Media: Opinions differ on whether computers hinder or help the natural process of child development. Watching TV can displace more valuable experiences. What steps can adults take to create a healthy media environment at home?

7. Exploring Nature: Children have an affinity for the natural world and as Rachel Carson says, “an inborn sense of wonder.” As children spend more time indoors, they connect less to the wild places in their neighborhood. How can we give children the opportunity to connect with the natural world?

8. Call to Action—Wrap-Up

For information on how to join or start a Healthy Children—Healthy Planet discussion circle in MD or DC, please visit www.simplicity-matters.org/info



Simplicity Matters Earth Institute

Simple living for a sustainable future

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Readings and Excerpts

1. CULTURAL PRESSURES

“Introduction” by Jeanne and Dick Roy ♦ “The Parents’ Bill of Rights” by Jonathan Rowe and Gary Ruskin ♦ “Taking a Year Off from Buying” by Kym Miller ♦ “Thirsty in the Rain” by Mary Pipher ♦ “Resisting the Peer Cultures of Children and Parents” by William J. Doherty ♦ “Two- Wheel Drive” by Susan Vogt

2. FAMILY RITUALS AND CELEBRATIONS

“Expecting Participation in Family Life” by William J Doherty ♦ “Simplicity” by Katrina Kenison ♦ “The Christmas Fulfillment Drama” by Amy Dacyczyn ♦ “Parties Without Presents” by Jean Sherman Chatsky ♦ “The Mother of Men” by Denise Roy ♦ “Simple Pleasures and Family Rituals” by Marie Sherlock ♦ “Principles for Family Rituals” by William J. Doherty

3. ADVERTISING

“The Religion of the Ad” by Brian Swimme ♦ “McTeachers and Coke Dudes” by Eric Schlosser ♦ “Crossing the Line” by Brita Butler-Wall ♦ Excerpts from *Born to Buy* by Juliet Schor ♦ “Communicating Your Convictions/Coping with Peer Pressure” by Marie Sherlock ♦ “What Do Children Want that Money Can’t Buy?”

4. FOOD AND HEALTH

“Unhappy Meals” by Barry Yeoman ♦ “Food for Thought” by Nathaniel Mead ♦ “Field of Dreams” by

Theresa Johnston ♦ “Children at Risk” by Jennifer Bogo ♦ “Farmers’ Markets” by Deborah Madison

5. TIME AND CREATIVITY

“Human Beings – Or Human Doings?” by Marie Sherlock ♦ “The Cauldron of Creativity” by Nancy H. Blakey ♦ “Nurture Your Child’s Creativity” by Katrina Kenison ♦ “Access Overload” quiz by Mimi Doe ♦ “What Ever Happened to Play?” by Walter Kim and Wendy Cole ♦ “Strategies for Protecting Families” by Mary Pipher

6. TECHNOLOGY AND THE MEDIA

“Turning Off the Television” by JoAnn Farb ♦ “It’s Not What You Watch” by Marie Winn ♦ “Education: The Best Investment” by Bill Gates ♦ “Developmental Risks” edited by C. Cordes and E. Miller ♦ “Parents: The First Line of Defense” by James Steyer

7. EXPLORING NATURE

Excerpt from *The Sense of Wonder* by Rachel Carson ♦ “Coming Home” by Gregory Smith ♦ “Ecophobia” by David Sobel ♦ “Slowing Down” by John L. Bower ♦ “The Story of the Sunflower House” by Sharon Lovejoy ♦ “A Child’s Sense of Wildness” by Gary Paul Nabhan

8. WRAP-UP. Evaluation and Next Steps

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