

Is Your Home Safe and Secure

A vivid childhood memory I have is of a summer electrical storm interrupting our work on my grandparent's farm. With lightening flashing around us and the crash of thunder booming through the sky, I ran for shelter. Once inside I found a corner in which to sit, for I had been told that I should stay away from windows and doors in case a bolt of lightening entered the house. That corner was a place of safety and security.

Edith Schaeffer describes the family as a shelter from the storms of life, offering us a place of safety and security. A young girl was asked what home meant to her. She replied, "Home is the place you go when it gets dark." What a blessing it is for a child to have the security of a loving home. How sad that for many children home is not a place of safety and security.

What conditions create insecurity for a child? Parental conflict is one. Few things are more threatening to a child than to see the people on whom his life depends frequently clashing. I must confess that Cindy and I have had a few combustible conversations witnessed by our children. After an impassioned session of speaking our minds, one of our daughters asked if we were headed for divorce court. We assured her we were not and nothing we said would stop us from loving each other or her. To have differences and to resolve them in a loving manner teaches a child how to positively handle conflict in his own life. This is not true where parents are always in conflict.

A lack of clear boundaries for behavior is another condition that creates insecurity. Children need some rules for life in order to enjoy a sense of well being. They may balk, complain, and even accuse us of treating them unfairly. But secretly, they are pleased because the boundaries give them a sense of Mom and Dad's loving care.

Absent parents inhibit a child's sense of security. I heard a news story of a six-year-old who, upon waking on Christmas morning, found no presents and no mother. Thinking Santa Claus had been involved in a terrible accident, he called the "911" emergency number to report his concern about Santa and his mom. The police officer assured him that Santa was not harmed and would soon be there. Other officers quickly gathered up what toys they could find. Dressed in a Santa suit, one of them delivered

the toys to the child and a younger sister.

Where was Mom? She had left the children alone to be with her boyfriend. That is an extreme case but not far from the experience of many children. The absence of parents in the crucial formative years is a growing problem as increasing numbers of children are placed in substitute homes and day care centers. Our material priorities must be balanced with the effect on a child's sense of security.

A child is crushed if she thinks her parents do not like her, do not have time for her, or did not want her in the first place. A sense of belonging is essential for a child's security and feeling of worth.

How are feelings of belonging generated? John M. Drescher advises that a family do things together. Share common concerns and trust each other with responsibilities. Keep the person rather than the gifts central when celebrating birthdays. Offer prayers for the child in his presence. Value his opinions and include him in the serious and fun experiences of the family. Emotional and spiritual security are much more important than economic and physical security. Even a child can endure poverty, hunger, suffering, and danger to an amazing degree when emotional and spiritual security are present.

We can build a secure environment for our children by turning the preceding negative conditions into positive statements. As we do, our homes will become places where each of us can feel loved, accepted, and secure - a shelter from the storms of life.

The author of this article, Rev. William Batson, has been married for more than three decades, has two married daughters, and is the Founder & President of Family Builders Ministries.

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Those who fear the Lord are secure; he will be a place of refuge for their children.

The Bible
Proverbs 14:26



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