

New perspectives

Counselling helps parents struggling with emotions

Being a parent means that you experience emotions that are stronger and deeper than you ever imagined. This includes love, happiness, pride, frustration, guilt, fear and others.

Juggling these feelings and ensuring that the positive is always stronger than the negative is not always easy.

Sometimes parents feel they are not always able to be the parents they want to be because they are feeling anxious or fearful or hopeless in some way.

Parents with children who have developmental disabilities or challenges face the additional obstacle of raising their children in a world that is often not flexible enough to include their children's needs. This can easily leave parents feeling defeated.

Counselling is helpful for all parents who are sometimes struggling with their emotions. A counsellor creates the opportunity for the client to review their options and gain new perspectives.

Sometimes just talking about a situation, in an environment removed from the one in which it occurs, leads one to discover

different angles and approaches that may ultimately improve things.

Typically, a counselling session lasts about 50 minutes, during which time the client speaks about what is going on in their life and how they think and feel about it. The counsellor listens and prompts the client to clarify and elaborate, which often leads to the client discovering possible solutions to their problems.

One approach to counselling that is very effective and used by many counsellors, is "cognitive behaviour therapy."

This approach is one in which the client comes to understand how thoughts and self-talk affect how they feel and behave. Positive ways of framing situations, for example, will help the client to feel better and behave in a manner that is more positive and more likely to bring positive results.

Although it takes time and work to confront difficulties, counselling is a worthwhile investment of a parent's time—worthwhile not only to the parent, but to their child as well. When parents are feeling

relaxed, confident and happy, they are better able to meet their children's needs.

It's important counselling be recognized as a healthy choice in improving one's lifestyle and preventing future mental health problems, just like exercise is a means to improving health.

Taking the time to improve your own mental health, and thereby improving the lives of those around you, especially your children, is something to feel good about and be proud of.

To find a counsellor that suits your needs, go to www.counsellingbc.com.

If your child has a developmental disability and you live in Delta, you can access the Reach Child and Youth Development Society Counselling Program by calling 604-946-6622, ext.342.

■ **Lisa Woudzia, PhD**, is the Associate Executive Director and Manager of the Counselling Program and the Positive Behavioral Support program at Reach Child and Youth Development Society in Delta. This year Reach is celebrating 50 years of service. For details call 604-946-6622 or visit www.reachdevelopment.org. 'Reaching Out' is a column you can find in the South Delta Leader the last week of each month.

