



PEOPLE FACTORIES

By Louise Elliott

When it boils down to it, like any manufactured good, people are also a product of their assembly – in this case the assembly block is their families. Society attempts to fix people once built, rather than looking at the original means of production.

The irony is: parents who have been manufactured according to their own 'factory of origin' will usually (unawares) build their 'family factory' to the same specifications of their parents, and therefore manufacture similarly natured children.

If the 'factory of origin' was negative, then it is possible that a production line continues where dysfunctional families spit out more dysfunctional families, or broken adults build broken children, who grow up to become broken adults. This perpetuating cycle is evident in certain, struggling community sectors. The solution to impeding history revisiting itself is to redesign the 'people factory'.

As history shows us, humans are more dynamic than being static products of their families' production; where, in the face of atrocious upbringings, individuals have overcome adversity and pain to better themselves, and not echoed to their children the traumas they've endured back. They have found the power to embrace healing and to change, creating a new 'people factory' to produce more functional offspring for release into the community. The crux to people changing comes down to the realisation they have a need to change.

In your family upbringing, identify whether your parents (or other significant people, like relatives or teachers) subjected you to: impatience or intolerance; criticism, ridicule or belittling; emotional or physical absence; manipulation or blackmail; fear or intimidation. Now pause to decide whether this forms the machinery on which you now produce your children.

A beautiful movie released a few years ago called 'Pay It Forward', described a social ideal, whereby a good turn received would be paid forward to another, thus

propagating goodness throughout the community and further abroad. Our family life is much the same: if we can change the ill-tide of negative ways of relating to one another, the chance of raising healthy children into adults - into healthy families and into healthy communities - is possible.

This two part article (continued next edition) will describe the common belief systems you may have grown up with, which consciously - or unconsciously - affect your adulthood, and that of your parenting endeavours for well-adjusted children.

So what exactly is a belief system? You might be already aware of insecurities or unhealthy behaviours where counselling self-help books have no brought much avail. This is often because your 'belief systems' haven't been addressed or resolved. Just like smoke is to a fire, behaviours, emotions and thought-life come from a belief you hold deep down.

For example: you may be overweight and recently have had a 'slip-up' in a regimented diet regime. By punishing your 'bad behaviour', you still will not have changed the 'ill- feelings' at the time. By nurturing your guilty feelings, you will still not have changed your 'bad thoughts' that possibly you are a 'weak, undisciplined person'. And even if you can change your thoughts to be positive and forgiving about your mistake, it probably won't dismiss the deeper knowing that you really are not OK the way you are, and you need to change to feel better about yourself'.

This deep conviction is called 'shame'; it is the underlying belief system that there is something innately wrong with you. If left unchecked, shame can pervade through and corrupt every part of your life. Unfortunately, you

may inadvertently teach it to your children.

There are many belief systems, but most are addresses in the following four statements of one's identity. [These will be addressed in more detail in Part 2 of next edition of Options]:

Shame – being the deep-seated belief that you are not OK the way you are and need to change. This can be identified in the habits we believe are not fitting for us but that we have difficulty overcoming. It is the belief that we are irreparable.

Approval – the deep-seated belief that you need to be approved by certain others to feel good about yourself. This can be identified in the need to do what pleases other people so that you feel acceptable within yourself. It also identifies the fear of rejection that if you were to be yourself, people would reject 'the real you'.

Performance – the deep-seated belief that you must achieve at a certain level to feel OK about yourself. This can be identified with the belief that achieving a certain standard in your life will bring fulfilment and inner peace, like: owning a nice house, receiving good grades, reaching a high work-output, always having a tidy house, ensuring your kids are always well-behaved, working towards a perfect body figure, or obtaining adequate riches.

Blame – the deep-seated belief that if you fail, you are unworthy of love and deserve punishment. This can be identified with the behaviour of condemning yourself and others, not allowing yourself or others to err, and not feeling Ok to 'relax and just be'.

Usually, if you can recognize destructive behaviours in your life, you can follow the smoke signals back to the belief system. Once

identified, the belief system can be challenged and rectified. Older belief systems are often harder to undo than a developing one - this being the important reason why not to reinforce their development in your children. The healthier your belief systems, the greater chance you will produce children who relate to the world with a healthier outlook.

The point to remember about children (and yourself) is that negative behaviours/feelings/ thoughts from negative belief systems don't represent one's identity – they are just a symptom. Like the old saying of 'judging a book by its cover', you and your children are innately good – this is your 'identity'. But your belief systems (and your children's) are just a cloak one wears or hides behind. Unfortunately, we look too quickly at the 'behavioural' cloak before we remember the goodness underneath.

Your identity is your value and worth, which is priced at 'perfect! It doesn't matter whether you're driving a flash car or struggling on welfare, everyone has the same value. Take a \$50 note: it has the same value whether encased in an expensive wallet or forgotten under a dirty mattress.

Your identity - who you really are – is different from the sometimes transient behaviours, emotions and thoughts that can stem from incorrect belief systems. Once this truth is realized and believed, you can change your own life, plus create a 'people factory' where you release happier and better-adjusted kids into the world. ■

Louise Elliott BSc(HMS) is a health consultant and fitness trainer, published writer, creates and presents health workshops for the community. Louise also is Editor for Options. www.LouiseElliott.com.au.