

## **The Family Bed - The Last Taboo**

### Understand Your Child's Unique Emotional Needs



By Jill Soderman

The intent of this column, is to free parents of the guilt, shame & anxiety sometimes associated when thinking of sharing the family bed and bedroom with one's children the alternative to the current psychological trend that parents should in no way be allowed to entertain the thought that sharing their quarters or their bed with their child or children is an absolutely unacceptable. The choice as to whether parents wish to share their quarters or their bed with either infants, toddlers, latency age children should be a choice that is open and acceptable to parents based on their own sense of their children's needs and level of development. Parents use the family bed as a vehicle for extending time and contact with children when parents are away, either at work or on business trips for long periods of time. The sense of closeness comes from a non verbal connection between parents and children; it is simply supportive and reassuring to many children who crave and otherwise need that kind of support, reassurance and close contact with their parents.


Many nursing mothers, feel very much reassured to be able to have the infant close to them at night especially during the critical period when they just come home from the hospital. When the mothers have the crib next to her bed and the baby in the crib with one side open so that her arms are easily accessible to the baby or actually having the baby in the bed lying on her chest, or next to her this is a choice that should be open to the mother and the parents without a sense of guilt or shame attached to it. Older children who are going through separation anxiety from acute denial for any number of reasons, an illness in the family, birth of another child, separation and divorce, beginning to attend school or the child's own natural innate tendency to be a more anxious than the usual child, should be allowed the experience of remaining close to a parent in the hours that are considered most vulnerable and most fraught with anxiety for children - and that is bedtime, going into their own rooms into their own beds and being separated from their parents. There are children that are simply not emotionally ready to make that separation every night for the whole night and all the time. The parent needs to be open and willing to evaluate whether the child is in fact experiencing a level of anxiety and discomfort around bedtime that he then be dealt with, by spending some time with the parent either in the parents bed or next to the parents bed, for either part of the night or all of the night depending on the parents assessment of the situation. The parents comfort with this arrangement and the parents judgement as to whether this is an emotionally healthy and authentic need on the part of the child or whether it is manipulative and attention seeking is the parents call.

In cultures other than American society the norm is for children to sleep with the parents, specially from infancy. The cut off age for children to enter their own bedrooms is of a

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## Not Victims---Experts By Experience

by Jill Jones-Soderman, LCSW, ACSW



Alice Walker begins the story of women- "Dear God, I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl."

Women are raised to be good girls-children in blossomed bodies-directed to follow the images and directives of a still-paternalistic society where the word victim is synonymous with women and children. Good manners, obedience, silence are the hallmarks of a socialization that lays the groundwork for victimization by those who capitalize on the assets of the well behaved. Questioning, verbal, assertiveness, independent thought, precocious intellectual development are qualities quashed in children who then become easy prey for predators or women who become easy prey for obsessed abusers.

Public advocacy for victim posturing in misery, helplessness, fear of reprisal, submission; painting the picture of pain and suffering is exacerbating the problem and feeds the perpetrator community. Abusers want to hurt, inflict pain, fear, have a sense of control and power. Stories of abuse teaches how to abuse. Stories feed the imagination of perpetrators who can then plan, refine their craft and teach others of their ilk.

The ranks of the disenfranchised still include women and children whose voices are silenced by excuses. Women are vindictive and manipulative. Children are children; they do not know what they have seen, heard, thought, experienced, believe, unless informed of such by the dominant force in their life and that force will define and articulate, publish their experience.

I do not think so! The ability to talk specifically about what one has done, can do, will do, will persist until the problem is solved and belongs to the expert by experience, because they know with whom they are dealing and what the outcome must be to resolve that which has been experienced. Not the suffering but the solution to suffering must rise above the cacophony of victim chatter. The ability to learn from experience, to transform a crushing event into an event that crushes and then gives rise to new life, liberty and the pursuit of an environment free from harm must be the outcome of terrible events.

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