Improving Family Relationships By Margie Ryerson, MFT

In my work with couples and families, I often see situations where people have been "beating their heads against the wall." This is because we all develop patterns of thought and behavior that cause us to repeat ourselves, despite the realization that it is getting us nowhere. Couples nag and criticize each other about the same old issues. Parents repeat themselves with their children, hoping maybe one day their children WILL finally put away their toys or do their homework or clean up their rooms. Teens often just turn off to their parents rather than participating in arguments that never get resolved.

Sometimes there are deep-seated issues than can only be addressed with ongoing therapy, but often it is possible to handle these impasses within the family. When you are locked into these sorts of battles, it's time to step back and work on forming an agreement. It's a problem-solving approach that involves compromise, but in a way where no one has to lose.

To take a common example, Denise and Scott are highly frustrated with their son, Chris, age 12. Chris has begun to neglect his homework, his room, and his younger brothers. Instead, he spends most of his time in his room either listening to music or on the computer. Both parents have tried asking, encouraging, complaining, and finally ordering Chris to comply with their requests. Nothing seems to make a difference. Chris becomes increasingly defiant and resentful.

Denise and Scott decide to re-group and try a different strategy, a more solution-based approach. They ask Chris when would be a good time

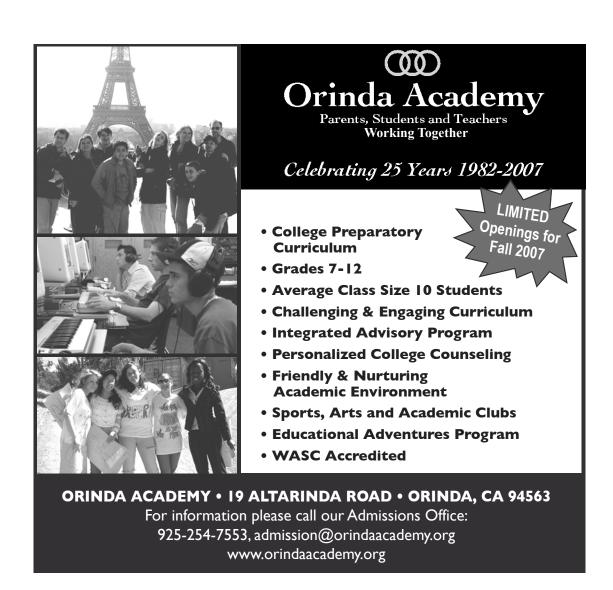
for them to talk with him. When they meet, both parents talk to Chris about what they appreciate about him and what they miss in their relationship with him. They ask Chris to tell them what he thinks they could do or say differently, promising no recriminations. They don't repeat their complaints. The objective is to promote understanding and good will, not to continue criticizing.

Depending on the level of distrust and resentment a child has developed, this process may need to be repeated several times before he is ready to cooperate. Then it is time to hammer out some agreements. When there is a "buy-in," there can be more



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist with offices in Orinda and Walnut Creek.

progress. And when the agreement hits an inevitable snag, all parties can meet again to determine how they can get back on track. Working together toward an agreement can help diffuse emotionally-charged situations and promote closer relationships.



Your child's probably ready to go to UC Berkeley.

Your children are precious, aren't they? And one of their most precious gifts is their eyes. That's why we encourage you to have your children's eyes examined first at nine months of age, again at three years, and regularly after that.

Who are we? We're the University of California Eye Center in Berkeley, a key part of UC's top-rated School of Optometry. And we can offer you a great deal of expertise with youngsters' eyes.

In fact, here at UC we've developed ways to test kids' eyes while they play, and to diagnose and treat any vision problems even before they can read an eye chart.

We take most vision insurance plans, and accept all major credit cards. So bring in the whole family for their eye exams. (You'll absolutely love our Eye Wear Center, with its incredible selection of designer frames!) We'll look for you!

OPTOMETRY Open to the Public 7 Days a week www.caleyecare.com Free parking next to Cal Memorial Stadium with appointments. 510.642.2020

UC BERKELEY

P

Pacific National Bank

The deal just got better!

A limited time only special rate for your Home Equity Line of Credit*

One Time Offer Ends 8/31/07! 599% Intro APR* Fixed for 12 months

And thereafter, 0.75% under prime for the life of the loan currently at

50%

APR* Home Equity
Line of Credit

NO application fee
NO closing costs

NO appraisal

For a limited time, apply today at (877) PNB-4082 or stop in your favorite neighborhood location

Lafayette 3528 Mount Diablo Boulevard Layfayette, CA 94549 (925) 284-9054 **Moraga** 1470 Moraga Road Moraga, CA 94556 (925) 376-2120 Walnut Creek — Rossmoor 1910 Tice Valley Boulevard Walnut Creek, CA 94595 (925) 407-0001





*Annual Percentage Rate (APR) is based on the Prime Rate published in The Wall Street Journal. APR is subject to change monthly. For lines of credit with a maximum combined loan to value of 80% or less, the rate will be prime minus .75%. For lines of credit with a maximum combined loan to value of 80.1% to 90%, the rate will be prime plus .25%. As of June 13, 2007, the Prime Rate is 8.25% and the following rates would apply: 7.50% APR for credit lines of 80% or less maximum combined loan to value and 8.50% APR for credit lines 80.1% to 90% maximum combined loan to value. The maximum APR is 18%. The minimum line amount is \$5,000. There is no annual fee. An early termination charge of \$495. is assessed if paid off and closed within 24 months of loan date. Subject to credit approval and property valuation. Program terms and conditions are subject to change any time without notice. Property insurance is required and flood insurance may be required. Available to owner occupied 1-4 family residential or condominium properties. Offer is for new HELOC customers of Pacific National Bank.