

Parents Need Friends Too

Tip – Having a couple of good friends is a matter of self-preservation.

Are there any parents who think rearing children is an easy job? Parenting is such an all-encompassing and relentless job that you desperately need a few good friends who understand the stresses of parenting and support you.



These people are often other parents, but they don't have to be. For our author Shari Steelsmith, her sister is one of those people. She has children roughly the same age and, for the most part, instantly relates to Steelsmith's parenting issues on any given day.

"Once, after a particularly difficult afternoon with my then 9-year-old daughter, I phoned her from the car and whispered into the phone, 'She's in the back seat. Can I just drop her off at your house for the rest of the summer?' My sister laughed and proceeded to talk me down," recalls Steelsmith.

Therapists Jennifer Brown and Pam Provonsha Hopkins, authors of *What Angry Kids Need: Parenting Your Angry Child Without Going Mad*, say, "Close friends, extended family, childcare providers, teachers, and coaches can all help create a web of relationships that parents need to avoid making the parenting journey alone."

This is even more important if you have a child who has special needs, an intense temperament, or you're struggling with difficult circumstances such as divorce, deployment, another family member's chronic illness or bereavement.

Tools – Brown and Hopkins make an important point, "Children need us in so many legitimate ways that consume our physical and emotional energy, it requires us to guard our energy in the places we do have some control."

This means eliminating or setting firm boundaries in adult relationships with those individuals who are needy or critical. Our children deserve our best; if there is a friend or relative who routinely drains your energy or causes tension, then it makes sense to reduce contact.



The following are a few "Characteristics of a Rejuvenating Friendship" drawn from Brown and Hopkins's helpful book.

- Shared values, parenting beliefs, and goals
- Shared sense of humor about life
- Trust in each other's judgment and positive intentions
- Safe place to complain, brag, and ask for help
- Freedom to discuss mistakes without fear of criticism

You'll find more practical tips you can use right now in *What Angry Kids Need: Parenting Your Angry Child Without Going Mad* by Jennifer Anne Brown, M.S.W.