Discussion Guide

Parenting Well in a Media Age: Keeping Our Kids Human

I wrote Parenting Well to help you meet the parenting challenges of the industry-generated. This Discussion Guide provides a list of questions for the introduction and for each chapter from the book so that you can share insights with others, raise more questions, and take strategic actions in your homes and communities. It is my hope that with your friends you can support one another to usher in the world of the personally-generated culture! In this world, we parents make sure our own needs are met so that as mothers and fathers we have the energy, vitality, and optimism to meet our children’s needs. In this world, our children’s cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual needs come before anything that the media tells us to do or to buy. Living in a personally-generated culture means we are supported in our parenting by our friends, our family, our schools, and our churches. We all want our children to experience unconditional love so that know they belong and are so very important. In our personally-generated culture our children know they are precious and that is why we set boundaries. They know they are talented, and that is why we amplify their skills and creativity. In this world our children know they are our future, and that is why we take time to let them know that the industry-generated culture does not have their best interests at heart. But we do.

I sincerely affirm you for all the hard work, sacrifice, and utmost care you bring to your parenting each and every day. May your discussions catalyze fruitful ideas that help you stay the course in these rough waters of the industry-generated culture. If parents talk with each other long enough, I believe they can transform this world into a personally-generated culture—in fact, we are the only people who can do it!

I welcome your comments about the book and how it impacted your parenting. I can be reached at gloria@thepci.com.

Thank you for your courage to parent well in this media age!

Gloria DeGaetano
Introduction

1. What does it mean to you that we inhabit a culture that we don’t create?

2. Give an example of your experience with a difficulty you encountered with advertising’s influence on your child and what you did about it.

3. How do personal influences affect your parenting?

4. How do social influences affect your parenting?

5. How do cultural influences affect your parenting?

6. How can you inhabit the industry-generated culture while creating a personally-generated culture?

Chapter 1:
Today’s Parenting Challenges

1. How do you parent differently than your parents did? What are some similarities you share with your parents in your parenting priorities?

2. What do you consider the greatest challenge presented by the media that seems to impact your parenting the most?

3. Review the six parenting challenges presented. Which one/s seem to give you the least difficulties? Share why you believe this is so.

4. What works best for you to protect your child from media violence?

5. What new information was presented to you in this chapter? What do you plan to do with it?

6. How do you see yourself and your family as a “living system?”

7. How do you define “unsanity?” Give an example where you felt you were pushed by the industry-generated culture into making an unsane choice. How can parents support one another when they feel like the unsane choice is their only choice?
Chapter 2: Reclaiming Our Parenting Identity

1. What parenting choices do you make that amplify your family’s aliveness?
2. How would you define your basic values and priorities as a parent?
3. How did you come to these values and priorities?
4. Would you say you are a confident parent? Why or why not? If not, what could you do to become more confident?
5. How do you participate in life with your child? What do you notice when you are not fully participating with your child?
6. What intentional choices have you made as a parent that significantly impacted your child/ren?
7. Share a time when you made a parenting decision against popular culture. What happened? How did your child react? Would you have made the same decision? Why or why not?
8. How do you know when you are making parenting decisions from your parenting integrity?
9. What do you do that works to help you gain clarity as a parent?

Chapter 3: The First Essential Need: A Loving Parent-Child Bond

1. How do you come back to being fully present with your child at those times you find yourself distracted?
2. Share a story about a time when you felt a special bond between yourself and your child. What were you doing and thinking at the time? How can parents create more of these special moments with their children?
3. Does the TV or other forms of screen technology interfere with your bonding with your child/ren?
4. Is your family experiencing as many shared moments as everyone would like to? Why or why not?
5. What works for you to create a special time together for you and your child?
6. Was there an idea or a parenting strategy in this chapter that will help you bond more effectively with your child? If so, share how you plan to use it.
7. What types of appreciative statements or questions have you used with your children?
8. How does your family express that they value each other?
Chapter 4:
The Second Essential Need: An Interior Life

1. Are you finding enough time for introspection and reflection? If not, how can you slow your life down to have more down time?
2. Do you set a limit on the number of activities your child can participate in during the school week? If so, why do you do this? What benefits have you found from this decision?
3. How do you help your child nurture his or her inner life?
4. How does your child demonstrate his or positive self-image?
5. What do you notice when your child has time for mental meanderings?
6. What works for you to keep your home inviting for inner reflection?
7. How do you know when you need more down time? How do you know when your child/ren need more down time?
8. Examine the diagram on page 116. What components of intrinsic motivation seem to work for your child right now? Which ones would you like to see more of? Share ideas for increasing these components in your child's life.
9. What inspires you? Who inspires you?
10. How do you best cultivate your inner life?

Chapter 5:
The Third Essential Need: Image Making

1. What did you find most interesting in this chapter?
2. Did you consider image-making as a necessary need before you read this chapter? Why or why not?
3. How do you nurture your child's imagination?
4. How do you nurture your own imagination?
5. Share a story that shows the power of media images on children.
6. Share a story that shows the power of media images on adults.
7. What has worked for you to interpret media images for your child/ren?
8. What does this quote from David Cooperrider mean to you? “We are made and imagined in the eyes of one another.”
9. What works for you to discover your child's mental pictures of media messages? How do you know when your child is interpreting media messages thoughtfully?
10. How can you use your image making capacities in your parenting?
Chapter 6:
The Fourth Essential Need: Creative Expression

1. Tell about a time when you doubted your own creativity only to find that it was validated by another person. How did this experience make you feel? What did you learn from it?
2. Why do you think we are so fragile when it comes to believing in our own creativity?
3. What do you love about your child’s creativity?
4. What elements of creativity—fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration — seem to come easy to your child? Which do you want to amplify more for your child? Why?
5. How do you model to your child that you take your talents seriously?
6. How do you tap into your own creativity to make your parenting more enjoyable?
7. If you considered your parenting as an art form, how would it change? How would you change as a result?
8. What do you love to do that catalyzes your creative expression? How can you get more of it into your life?

Chapter 7:
The Fifth Essential Need: Contribution as Relationship

1. How do you help your child know that he or she is a meaningful contributor to your family?
2. What works for you to build competency and a sense of self-worth in your children?
3. What is your child connected to that gives him or her meaning and purpose?
4. What daily chores help your child feel competent and purposeful?
5. Do you believe service is a natural impulse in people? Why or why not?
6. What do you notice when your child feels of service to others?
7. What works for your child to see him or herself as an integral part of your home community?
8. What motivates your child to share with others? How do you affirm your child when he or she does share with others?
9. How do you understand the role of a parent as a servant leader?
Chapter 8: Toward a Personally-Generated Culture

1. The Vital Five are vital to the personally-generated culture. Which of the Vital Five do you want to make more a part of your child’s life? Why?
2. Which of the Vital Five do you want to make more a part of your life? Why?
3. How do you see the Vital Five supporting you in the six challenges presented by the industry-generated culture?
4. What gives you energy and brings you enthusiasm as a parent? How will you make room for more of that in your life?
5. How can you promote more personal connections between your family and the community? Who are your supporters? Who can you go to for inspiration and encouragement? Who can your children go to for inspiration and encouragement?
6. What motivates you about getting out from under the industry-generated culture?
7. What would you need to begin addressing the industry-generated culture more proactively in your family? In your community?
8. How can you promote and celebrate “boutique consciousness?”
9. What is your parenting vision? How will you make that vision a reality?
10. How will you communicate your parenting vision to your children?
Because we live in an industry-generated culture — a culture created and maintained by businesses — children's real human needs don't get met. *Parenting Well in a Media Age*, like no book before it, articulates the challenges of parenting in our depersonalized society. It helps parents tap the well of wisdom within and offers hopeful alternatives for parents and concerned adults wanting to maintain the humanity of our children and the integrity of our culture.

"Gloria DeGaetano confronts the most important questions about the long-term impact of media immersion and provides common sense answers that concerned parents will appreciate. She has made an important contribution to a crucial discussion that too many families try to avoid."

Michael Medved, Nationally Syndicated Radio Host
Author of Hollywood vs. America

“Trust Gloria DeGaetano to come up with clear and compelling information for parents trying to navigate the minefields of media and corporate pressures on kids. Follow her advice and your children will be the winners!"

Jane M. Healy, Ph.D., Educational Psychologist
Author of *Endangered Minds*

“Whether you are a new parent, an old parent or not a parent at all, if you are concerned about incivility, consumerism, and violence in modern society you need to read this book. If you are not concerned, you really need to read this book.”

Craig Anderson, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Psychology
Iowa State University

Gloria DeGaetano is a best-selling author, popular speaker, and the founder and CEO of the Parent Coaching Institute (www.thepci.com)

For more information, please visit: www.ParentingWellinaMediaAge.com