

RIDING THE BUMPS

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I've never been afraid of traveling in airplanes. I've been sorely tested and there have been a few scary moments in the hundreds of flights I've been on. Just this week I have traveled 10 thousand miles and over half of that was riding turbulent bumps. It's so uncomfortable that when the plane eventually flies into clear air it is an enormous relief. Personally, I wouldn't want to experience turbulence the whole trip because I don't derive much pleasure from that. When I get to my journey's end it is such a relief!

Some families live in this constant state of turbulence and ride the waves of regular or occasional storms. It has to be very uncomfortable. I've experienced being sued, fired, burglarized, losing thousands of dollars from people who have gone bankrupt owing us money, and being ripped off by a less than honest immigration attorney. Sally and I have worked in the middle of summer in green houses and received less than the minimum wage in order to survive. These experiences were tough to go through, yet the more troubles we face, the more we seem to be able to cope with them. Why?

We decided many years ago to turn negative experiences and failure into opportunities to learn. Is it easy? No way! We also have learned to get out of that turbulence as fast as possible. Often in our travels the pilot will tell the passengers that there is a storm ahead and he is seeking permission to change altitude to avoid the storm.

Families can avoid many of the storms they face by refusing to entertain them. Many are self-imposed, while others are inevitable or even beyond their control. We cannot stop some health problems that come our way because of genetic inheritance or environmental issues we are faced with. We can change the way we eat or go for physical checks to ensure better health outcomes. We may not have been able to avoid the sub-prime mortgage fiasco where we may have lost our homes, but we can avoid loading our credit cards with unnecessary debt because we have not learned fiscal responsibility.

Then there are the relational bumps that many a couple experience. Most of these bumps are avoidable, and parents need to develop knowledge and skills to find amicable solutions to their differences. If we don't, we cannot expect our children to learn to cope with the mountain of experiences and choices they will have to face in their lifetime.

As parents, we are the model that our children will more than likely follow. If we cause bumps, or haven't learned the skills to deal with them, then we cannot expect our children to be any different. I know that I don't want my children to go through some of the experiences we have had to face. I cannot

shield them from what they inevitably will face, but I can model the skills and teach them from my experience how to make wise choices. We owe it to our children for them to be able to do even better in life than we have. Let's be diligent about purposefully training our children how to ride the bumps.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.