

## Startling Statistics

- Studies of public school students have shown that as many as 22% of adolescent girls from financially comfortable families suffer from clinical depression.
- As many as 30 - 40% of 12-18 year-olds from affluent homes are experiencing troubling psychological symptoms.
- 10 - 15% of those who suffer from depression eventually commit suicide.
- When depression occurs in adolescence, there is a strong likelihood that it will recur later in life. More than half of all depressed teens have a recurrence of depression within 5 years.
- Depressed adolescents followed into adulthood show an elevated risk for additional episodes of depression, as well as for poor social skills and marriage choices, impaired academic and job performance and increased risk of substance abuse, suicide attempts and both psychiatric and medical hospitalization.
- Families who eat together five or more times a week have kids who are significantly less likely to use tobacco, alcohol or marijuana, have higher grade-point averages, less depressive symptoms and fewer suicide attempts than families that eat together two or fewer times a week.
- Half of all adolescent girls in America are dieting at any one time and one-third will go on to have some form of an eating disorder in college.

## **Common Costs Found in the Culture of Affluence**

- When a family is affluent someone is usually working overtime. Often this means long hours and excessive time away for the family. Moms (mostly) can feel like single parents raising their kids.
- In families that are financially successful, there is often a power imbalance, with the parent who is making more of the money calling more of the shots.
- Parents from affluent families don't like to "rock the boat." Developing wealth takes tremendous effort and energy. An unhappy status quo may continue indefinitely out of fear of threatening the financial security of both parents and children.
- Busy schedules and/or preoccupation with material things interfere with those factors that are known to increase quality of life: friendships, spirituality and community involvement.
- Loneliness can become a prominent part of an affluent lifestyle because perfection is highly valued and showing vulnerability is frowned upon. These values inhibit the development of truly close, nurturing relationships.
- Mothers become overly dependent on their children for emotional support and comfort. High-powered husbands are often physically and/or emotionally unavailable. While women (mostly) may be compliant toward their husbands, they know that in the long run their best emotional bet is on their children, increasing the risk of over involvement and intrusion.
- Highly capable people are accustomed to managing things on their own. While they may ask for help "fixing" their child, they may be reluctant to face their own weaknesses, neediness and vulnerabilities.
- As a result of this reluctance to seek help, problems may escalate from the easily treated to difficult issues.

- Expecting excessively high levels of achievement, both from themselves and their children, cultivates perfectionism, a well documented precursor of depression.
- Affluent communities emphasize competition and extrinsic markers of success such as high grades, trophies and admission to prestigious schools. This cultivates external, as opposed to internal, motivation, putting children at risk for a host of psychological difficulties.
- Substance use/abuse rates are high in affluent families. Whether acknowledged or not, someone may have an illicit drug, prescription-drug, or alcohol problem, often as a result of untreated depression.

# Teen Stressors

Academic, sports and materialistic  
competition

Over involvement in community/school  
activities

Living up to an image of the "Perfect  
Naperville"

# Three Keys to Success

**Social Skills**

**Thinking Skills**

**Sense of Self**

# What is a Healthy Self?

- Healthy selves are ready and able to own their lives.
- Healthy selves can control their impulses.
- Healthy selves can be generous and loving.
- Healthy selves are good architects of their internal "homes".

# Challenges to Effective Parenting in an Affluent Culture

- Bucking the tide - if everyone is doing it, that doesn't make it right
- Holding ourselves accountable
- The poison of perfectionism
- Overcoming myopia about the "good life"
- Handling the isolation that makes us vulnerable to being bullied