

---

---

# The Beacon

## *Guiding You through the Process of Change*

Published by Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC  
40 Dale Road, Suite 201 Avon, CT 06001

Volume 14, Issue 1

© 2014 Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC

January - February 2014

---

### ***Understanding and Developing Empathy***

Parents have the biggest influence on whether children learn and become caring and ethical young adults. The capacity for empathy begins developing in infancy when parents respond sensitively to infant's emotions. Children learn empathy by watching their parents and by experiencing it themselves.

There are many things parents can do to make sure their children are kind and caring for other people.

1. Make sure your important conversations are face-to-face in real time. Make caring for other people a primary goal of raising your children. The family's intense focus on happiness as opposed to respect and responsibility for peers, parents, and teachers is a concern. Parents need to shift the focus back to carrying for others.
2. Children need to learn that they have responsibilities larger than just themselves. If they are on a soccer team they cannot just quit if they are unhappy. They have a responsibility to the team. They need to be expected to contribute to the household by setting the table, cleaning up, not using their phones to text when they are eating dinner, and taking the garbage out. These are shared family responsibilities not just belonging to adults in the household.
3. Parents are role-models for their children. If you treat your children fairly and respectfully than they usually reciprocate within the family and the larger community.
4. Teens are more likely to listen when they feel understood. Ask open ended questions to understand your teen's position. Parents want to encourage teens to share their feelings. They will be more likely to share their emotions if they are heard not criticized. Reflect back to them what they are saying. Show them their inconsistencies-gently.
5. Teens are in the process of developing a stronger conscience and greater ability to see others perspectives. Parents need to respect their children's capacity to care about their friends and others. This process involves parents being involved in the larger community such as being part of a religious organization, volunteering by serving food in a shelter one day a month or bringing your gently used clothes to a donation center.
6. Point out social cues to your teen. Teach them how to interpret their siblings' or friends' behaviors, needs and feelings. Let them know the impact their behavior is having on others. They may not be aware of how much they are upsetting siblings, peers, or a parent.
7. Do not make high achievement the goal of life. Too much achievement pressure can diminish your child's sense of self, making them less capable to care for others and more likely to experience their siblings and friends as competitors. Achievement is only one part of the puzzle.

### **References**

Harvard University of Graduate School of Education:  
*Making Caring Common Project*  
APS Journal "*Psychological Science*"  
New York Times section on *Families*  
Bruce Perry, *Born for Love: Why Empathy is Essential and Endangered*  
Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character*

**By Naomi Neuwirth, MSW, LCSW**  
*Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychotherapist*  
**Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC.**  
**(860) 676-9350 x44**

**Beacon Behavioral Services**  
**Guiding You through the Process of Change**

**Clinical Services**

- Evaluations
- Individual, Couples and Family Therapies
- Support Groups
- Psychiatric Services

**Divorce Services**

- P.E.A.C.E. Program for parents with high conflict
- Custody Evaluations
- Support Groups
- Parent Education and Consultation

**Organizational Consultation  
and Training**

- Executive Coaching
- Conflict Resolution
- Violence Prevention
- Stress Management Training
- Customer Service Training

**Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC**  
**1-888-422-8801**

**Avon**

40 Dale Road  
Avon, CT 06001  
860-676-9350

**Bloomfield**

34 Jerome Avenue  
Bloomfield, CT 06002  
860-243-5024

**Glastonbury**

200 Oak Street  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860-659-4370

**Visit us on the Internet at:**

[www.beaconbehavioral.com](http://www.beaconbehavioral.com)  
[email@beaconbehavioral.com](mailto:email@beaconbehavioral.com)

**Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC**

40 Dale Road, Suite 201  
Avon, CT 06001