

**Ask Dr. Steve...  
How Can I Build  
a Great Relationship  
With My Children?**

ALIVE & WELL PUBLICATIONS  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Copyright (2004 Alive And Well Publications)

Printed and bound in the United States of America. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system—except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages to be printed in a magazine or newspaper—without permission in writing from the publisher.

For information, please contact Dr. Steve Frisch, Psy.D. at  
Info@AliveAndWellNews.com  
(847) 604-3290

Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information contained in this book, we assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or any inconsistency herein. Any slights of people, places, or organizations are unintentional.

For years I have been the collector of a wide variety of quotations. Too often, however, I carelessly neglected to note sources. In preparing this book I have spent countless hours attempting, unsuccessfully, to locate the origins of some of the quotations cited. If you know the sources please contact me at the numbers listed in this book. My apologies to the authors, and to the readers for the absence of credit.

Cover Design: Michael Ross  
Book Design: Karen Marousek  
Editor: Karen Marousek

ISBN: 0-9651511-9-0

# Table of Contents

<b>A Message From Dr. Steve...</b>	10
<b>Introduction</b>	13
<b>1</b> Closing the Barn Door Before the Horse Gets Out	21
<b>2</b> Knock Knock? Who's There?	31
<b>3</b> Buckle Up For Safety	43
<b>4</b> Offering Presence Rather Than Presents	59
<b>5</b> Talking to Rather Than At Your Child	71
<b>6</b> The Mirror of Love	85
<b>7</b> Let's Learn to Talk Things Out	101
<b>8</b> Putting Out the Fires With Love and Understanding	117
<b>9</b> Tools of Understanding	135
<b>10</b> Building a Bridge to an Even Brighter Tomorrow	151

## *D*edication

*Sophia:*  
*Thank you for allowing me*  
*to enter your world.*  
*I love you!*

## About the Author

Dr. Frisch is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Chicago, Illinois and Northfield, Illinois. He is a graduate of the Adler School of Professional Psychology where he received his doctorate in clinical psychology. He received his masters degree from National-Louis University where he specialized in addictions counseling. His undergraduate degree was awarded to him by the University of Cincinnati, where he graduated with honors.

Dr. Frisch received post-doctoral training in two specialties at the Adler School of Professional Psychology. He completed a certificate training program in clinical hypnosis at the Center For The Advanced Study Of Clinical Hypnosis. He also completed a certificate training program in Marriage and Family Counseling. He is licensed by the state of Illinois as a clinical psychologist. He was certified in Illinois by IAODAPCA as a certified drug and alcohol counselor in 1988.

Dr. Frisch's first book, *The Comparative Effectiveness of Group Therapy Versus Individual Therapy As Measured By Self-Concept, Interpersonal Orientation, and Degree of Emotional Adjustment* was an empirical investigation of the treatment modalities he utilizes in his private practice. This book was based on a study he conducted to demonstrate the effectiveness of his treatment protocols.

His treatment philosophy has grown out of his diverse clinical background in which he has worked with a variety of different clinical populations. From these diverse experiences, Dr. Frisch has assimilated a variety of assessment and treatment interventions into his integrated treatment philosophy.

Dr. Frisch has worked on the staff of both inpatient and outpatient chemical dependency programs. This experience provided the foundation for his work with the issues that arise from the impact of chemical dependency

on the individual, the family, and the workplace.

As a result of his work in the field of chemical dependency, Dr. Frisch founded the Adult Children Institute. This treatment clinic specialized in working with adults who were raised in families emotionally organized around the influences of drugs and alcohol, sexual and physical abuse, and emotional neglect.

The Adult Children Institute developed treatment interventions that enabled the program's participants to develop effective ways to heal from the aftereffects of trauma experienced in their earlier development. These aftereffects included substance abuse, depression, anxiety, low self esteem, shame, and relationship issues such as fear of emotional intimacy and commitment.

Dr. Frisch co-developed and was the coordinator of a mental health program for homeless adults who required treatment for substance abuse and emotional disorders. He developed an individualized assessment and treatment protocol that provided the impetus and support for each individual to rebuild their lives within their local communities.

The Pathfinders programs represent the integration of Dr. Frisch's ongoing research and work in the area of human growth and potential development. Program participants develop the necessary awareness and skills to create an empowered life that maximizes their full potential for both their interpersonal and professional lives.

Whether by individual consultation, group experiences, workshops, or seminars, Dr. Frisch engages his audiences with a mixture of common sense and sound psychological principles of change that awakens and inspires his audiences to the possibility of what their lives can potentially become. He consults with individuals, couples, groups, and organizations that are seeking to implement the principles of development, change, and growth in their lives.

## *A* Message From Dr. Steve...

*Hi. My name* is Dr. Steve. I am a clinical psychologist in private practice in Chicago, Illinois and Northfield, Illinois. *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Build a Great Relationship With My Children?* is the tenth of fourteen books in my series about alcohol and other drugs prevention and chemical dependency. In this series you'll learn how to:

- Create connectiveness with your children
- Empower your children to resolve conflict
- Encourage your children to express their feelings
- Affirm your children's desire to have their emotional needs met
- Communicate with your children about alcohol and other drugs
- Set appropriate limits for your children
- Identify the warning signs of alcohol and other drug use
- Set, teach, and model values for your children
- Take action when your child is abusing alcohol and other drugs

The books in the Ask Dr. Steve series are continually updated with new exercises, new information, and specific answers to your questions at my website, [www.AliveAndWellNews.com](http://www.AliveAndWellNews.com). This service is available to you free of charge. Simply go to my website, [www.AliveAndWellNews.com](http://www.AliveAndWellNews.com). Find the link, Dr. Steve's Workbooks, and click it on. There you'll find additional continually updated exercises designed to help you raise your children to be alcohol and other drugs free. Be sure to explore the other links at

[www.AliveAndWellNews.com](http://www.AliveAndWellNews.com) for more information about chemical dependency, Recovery, personal improvement, relationship enrichment, communication skills, relationship skills, parenting skills, and emotional and spiritual development.

For information about the other books in this series go to [www.AliveAndWellNews.com](http://www.AliveAndWellNews.com). Find the link, Book Release Info, and click it on. There you will find information about the following books.

- *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Tell If I Have a Problem With Alcohol and Other Drugs?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... What Do I Need To Know About Chemical Dependency?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Stop Abusing Alcohol and Other Drugs?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Stay Clean and Sober?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Cope With a Loved One Who Abuses Alcohol and Other Drugs?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Heal Those Relationships Harmed By Chemical Dependency?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Build a Great Relationship With My Children?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... How Can I Raise My Children To Not Use Alcohol and Other Drugs?*
- *Ask Dr. Steve... What Should I Do If My Teen Is Using Alcohol and Other Drugs?*

G.B.U.

*Steve*

## Introduction



*You know and I know that a lot of the problems facing our children are problems of the human heart, problems that can only be resolved when there is a one on one connection with every child in this country entitled to live out their god given destiny.*

-William Jefferson Clinton

*"We invest heavily in rule development, but that's not where the action is. The action is in adults' connecting with kids."* So says Dr. Robert William Blum, noted researcher for the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health—the Add Health study, when commenting on how parents can best apply the findings from a national survey of more than 90,000 adolescents.

When I first read the findings of the Add Health Study in *The Journal of American Medicine*, I imagined just what the headlines generated by the findings from the study might be:

*Rx For Your Children: Emotional Connectiveness With Parents Helps Children Avoid Smoking, Substance Abuse, Violent Behavior, and Early Sexual Activity.*

Or: *Emotional Connection Provides 24 Hour Protection For Your Child's Emotional and Physical Well-Being.*

How about: *Provide Your Kid a Daily Dose of Emotional Connection to Lessen Onset of Emotional Distress.*

Perhaps: *For The Relief of Aches and Pains Associated with Your Child's Negative Behavior, Parents' Emotional Connection With Child Is Significantly More Important Than Parents' Physical Presence.*

Talk about the proverbial out of the mouths of babes. Here we had a major study involving over 90,000 children from all over the United States confirming what would seem to be common sense. Namely, there's no way to overstate how important a strong emotional connection between you and your child is to their emotional, physical and spiritual well-being.

Now, listening to what these children tell us is one

thing; knowing what to do about it is something else. For knowing that there's a relationship between emotional connectiveness and your child's well-being only begs a larger question—how do you create and maintain an emotional connection with your child? The answer to that question is the focus of this book.

In *Ask Dr. Steve...How Can I Build a Great Relationship with My Children*, I will introduce you to a process of building an emotional connection with your child that will enable you to effectively create, maintain, repair, and sustain an emotional connection with him. Mastering this process will empower you to influence your child's growth and development before problems begin to arise.

More than insurance for your child's well-being, the lessons from *Dr. Steve...How Can I Build a Great Relationship with My Children* will enable you to create a bond that will be a source of emotional nurturance for both you and your child. Imagine how enriched your life will be by creating a relationship that celebrates both you and your child. The lessons you'll take from this book will transform parenting into something more than just an overwhelming responsibility.

Think about what I'm suggesting: mastering a set of relationship tools that will enable you to better understand your child and communicate that understanding to her. The payoff for you? How will you and your family benefit from investing your energy in creating and maintaining this special bond? What's to be gained from taking the time to examine how to strengthen the bond with your child? Do you see any value in emotional connectiveness, a more cohesive family, a protective factor

against adolescent behavioral health problems, a way of activating you—and your child’s—personal growth and emotional well-being?

Balance that against all the reasons you have to say “no” to any new course of action: It’s too hard. There’s never enough time. This child is so ungrateful, he doesn’t deserve my extra attention. I barely have a life of my own as it is. Things have gone too far—the damage has already been done.

As you learn how to use the relationship tools I map out in this book, you’ll discover just how much fun your child can be. Joy will brighten your world as you begin *connecting to* rather than *battling with* your child. All it takes is knowing the *what* and learning the *how*.

Here’s the game plan. After a brief overview in Chapter 1, we’ll focus on the bond you want to create with your child in Chapter 2. I’ll introduce you to the relationship process, *entering the world of your child*, which will enable you to build a strong, long lasting emotional connection with your child. I also will show you the single most important choice to make before you can enter your child’s world.

In Chapter 3, I’ll discuss the foundation for the process of entering the world of your child—emotional safety. I’ll discuss the importance of creating an emotionally safe climate so that your child will feel comfortable letting you into her world. We’ll focus on the rule of thumb for creating an emotionally safe relationship—how to respond rather than react to your child.

Chapter 4 focuses on the most magical way to establish an emotional connection with your child—fulfilling your child’s emotional needs. I’ll discuss with you two

very important energy sources that live within you and your child—your offering spirit and your child’s seeking spirit. You’ll discover how the act of fulfilling your child’s emotional needs happens when there’s a link of love and respect between your offering spirit and your child’s seeking spirit.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the two most powerful communication tools I know of that will forever leave your child feeling loved and honored by you. One reason *entering the world of your child* is such a potent relationship process is because it empowers you to communicate with your child in a new way. As you begin to understand your child through the way he experiences life, the way you communicate with him will change. No longer will you talk *at* your child. Instead, you’ll discover the joy of talking *with* your child.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on how to defuse the inevitable tension and conflict that will arise between you and your child. Utilizing the spirit of the process of *entering the world of your child*, you’ll learn how to use tools of encouragement, support, and understanding so that your child can talk *through* rather than *act out* her conflicts.

I use Chapter 9 as an opportunity to share four general tools to help you keep the connection with your child alive and well. These tools will give you more choices as to how to best keep your connection safe and intact.

You’ll find familiar features—Bridge Builder’s Tips and Bridge Builder’s Tools—from my previous relationship books throughout this book as well. These are concrete ways to think about the essence of the skill we are discussing in a particular chapter.

At the same time, I have added a new feature to this

book. At the end of Chapters 1 through 8 you'll find a Bridge Builder's Checklist. This checklist will help you review the important points of each chapter and think about how you can apply these points to your relationship with your child.

What you learn about yourself, your child and the skills necessary to bridge the gap between the two of you will greatly enrich your relationship with your child. You only need bring an open mind and a willingness to experiment. Not everything I suggest will feel comfortable to you. If you encounter some level of discomfort or awkwardness with what I am suggesting, please don't be discouraged.

I don't pretend that this is the only way to raise a child or that this is all there is to raising your child. What I do know is that you and your child can greatly benefit from your willingness to better connect by entering their world. Developing a level of comfort with this takes time, patience, and much practice.

You know that old saying about how all roads lead to Rome? Think of the skills in this book as your means of transportation for your very personal journey with your child, but in the end, you'll create your own path for building a loving connection with your child that brings honor and dignity to you both!