

Resume of Harriet Heath

For the last five years Harriet has been coordinating the Quaker Parenting Project. For more than thirty years she has been a counselor and workshop leader for the Counseling Service of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. She is a licensed developmental psychologist, certified school psychologist, parent educator, mother of three and grandmother of eight. She is the founder and director of the Parent Center at Bryn Mawr College which provides parent programs at the college and in the community.

A convinced Friend, Harriet's journey into Quakerism has paralleled her growing understanding of the parental role. Quakers believe in the Inner Light. Harriet evolved an approach to parenting based on her strong commitment to the belief that parents are the people best able to plan for and guide their families. She found that Quakers question: so must parents. Quakers search for Truths wherever they can find it: parents search for understanding of their children and of their role as parents. Quaker discernment guides their actions; that same discerning process can guide our actions as parents. Her manual for parents, *Planning: A Key to Mastering the Challenge of Parenting*, gives parents a system for deciding how they want to nurture and guide their children. The discussion series, *Parenting Creatively*, leads parents through this system as they discuss their issues and concerns. Harriet has worked in a variety of settings, nationally and internationally, including public and private schools, social agencies as well as religious groups and with people from many socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and with parents of children aged zero through young adulthood. She has trained other professionals and presents regularly at professional conferences. For several years she wrote The Parents' Corner in *Friends Journal* and is author of the Pendle Hill Journal, *Answering that of God in Our Children*.

Her work with the Quaker Parenting Project proved to be an opportunity to expand and deepen her approach to working with parents. The discussions that have been part of the Project have provided a deepening appreciation of the guidance and support that Quakerism can offer parents through its beliefs, testimonies and practices. The belief that we are to walk the talk is a challenge to live our beliefs as we parent. The planning process itself is basically a series of questions, or queries, that provide a means for parents to think through how they want to nurture and guide their children..

Her work in parenting led her to investigate how people learn to care. Her experiences teaching caring in schools and other settings gave her the background for writing the curriculum, *Learning How to Care*, which teaches elementary and middle school students how to care by their learning what is involved in being a parent. This curriculum was adapted for First Day School programs where middle and high school students learn to take on the responsibility for caring for younger members of the meeting, *Learning How to Care for the Meeting's Children: A Curriculum for First Day School Sixth to Twelfth Graders*.

Dr. Heath's research has focused on an analysis of the parenting process, i.e. how parents go about doing what they do and how being a parent affects their own development. Earning her Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr College, her dissertation on Erik Erikson's generativity stage of development, investigated the role of information and support in determining parental behavior.

She has assisted her husband in his longitudinal study of men and women who graduated from college in the late fifties. Her part in this research has been to examine the effects of being a parent on the participants' maturation and how those effects have changed over time. She has written a theory of parenting which identifies the parenting process. A theory about which she is currently conducting further research.

Harriet is an involved grandparent. She tries to visit her grandchildren in western Massachusetts and Down East Maine three or four times a year. She regularly discusses child rearing issues with her daughters. Besides wanting to be involved, she finds parents face issues different from those she faced and that given the work she is doing it is important to keep in touch with current issues. In this way parenting for her has proved to be an ongoing spiritual journey.

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