

Hopeful Family Solutions In Tough Economic Times

by *Father Steven Boes*

(NAPSA)—As our current economic crisis puts a strain on more families, it may be time for a Parenting Stimulus Package to keep our homes a nurturing place for our children.

At Boys Town programs across the country, we know raising children is not easy even in times of



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prosperity. Families are struggling and those who are near the edge of despair are being put over the edge.

There is hopeful news for families.

There are free or low cost, simple ways to make life easier and improve your relationship with your children.

First, reassure your children things will work out even when money problems lead to parental disagreements. I am blessed to have grown up in a rural community. That didn't mean we had an easy life and that my mom and dad didn't fight. We sometimes heard heated exchanges, but my parents were reassuring. They made it a point to explain that adults sometimes disagree. They then gave each other a kiss in front of us, telling us they loved each other and us. Let your children know that families who love each other and are willing to work things out can overcome any problem.

My family's example is exactly what Father Flanagan spoke of: "There are no bad boys—Only bad environment, bad training and bad example." Just like my folks, Boys Town tries to reassure its children by showing good examples, providing good environments and good training. You, as parents, can do that, too.

Something we find key to helping Boys Town children is training them to make good decisions. In our Common Sense Parenting® program, we have a process called SODAS—Situation, Options, Disadvantages, Advantages and Solution—that works in any family.

For example, money may be tight, and the children want to buy expensive video games. Parenting with SODAS will present children with the Situation of what resources are available for recreation, food and clothes. The next step is to help them go through the Options of how to use those resources. You can teach your children to weigh the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Options. It will help them arrive at a reasonable Solution like renting a DVD, popping popcorn and enjoying an activity as a family. This solution will not only be less expensive, but will promote family togetherness—which is what children really want.

SODAS can be applied to almost any problem. It will create a bond between you and your children and reduce problem behaviors because your children are part of the solution.

My final message is for families running out of options. Everyone needs help. Parents, no matter how tough it is, never give up on your children. However, if you are so tired and stressed you are about to give up; it is time to ask for help.

Connect with a friend, family member, church or school group to get help. You can reach out to Boys Town. Our Boys Town National Hotline for parents and children is free. You can call (800) 448-3000 any time and find a calm voice, problem-solving advice and a connection to resources in your community. You can visit parenting.org where you can find books and age-appropriate resources such as Common Sense Parenting®.

If we take a healthy body, mind and spirit approach as a family, we can weather this and any other crisis.

Father Steven Boes is the National Executive Director of Boys Town, with a continuum of services helping children and families across the country and at affiliate sites in 12 states and D.C. Father Boes is a 20-year veteran of youth care work and advocacy.