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## **PARENTING** **BY AGI PLENK, PH.D.**

Parenting is a challenge to young and old, mothers and fathers, partially because we try to be “perfect parents” – whatever that is. “Perfect” might be different for each child. Is perfection really what we should aim for? Maybe we as parents need to remember the positive experiences with our own parents, the *angels in the nursery*, rather than remembering the *ghosts* of painful times.

The concept of the *good-enough parent*, coined by Ronald Fairbairn, an English psychologist, stresses the individuality of the parent-child relationship, providing each child with love, trust, and permission to be an individual. This demands acknowledgement of developmental stages. For example, a toddler defending her toys is not being mean but asserting herself appropriately, just like the first-grader wanting his dad to read to him, even when the baby is crying, is seeking appropriate attention.

Parenting is certainly different in different cultures and different social groups. Parenting standards change over time as well, influenced by society, professional groups, economics, and the like. To a large degree, parenting is influenced by the self-confidence, happiness level of the parent herself or himself.

It seems to us that the earliest challenges in the parent-child relationship occur in three areas:

- 1- Toileting.
- 2- Handling of sibling rivalry.
- 3- Talking to young children about sex.

And let's not forget about play.