



## **THE PERFECT CHILD**

Many years ago, a young eleven year old girl was referred to me for problems that she was experiencing in school. Her parents sought my help as a result of her teacher's claiming that she wasn't working up to her potential and that she appeared to be skirting her responsibilities. In other words, she was being accused of being lazy. Initially, I met with her parents in order to gain the benefit of a history which proved negative except for the fact that she dreaded going to school, taking tests or doing her homework. I then met with the girl alone whom I'll call Lisa.

Lisa was a beautiful child who, although shy, had a charming personality. She responded to my questions with some hesitation which wasn't unusual for a youngster her age. Upon asking her what she felt about why she was being seen, she responded that she felt stupid and wasn't doing well in school. She indicated that her mind wandered a lot during class and that she did very poorly in quizzes and tests. She said that the teacher had moved her seat to the front of the room because she felt that Lisa wasn't paying attention to her lessons. She went on to say that she hated homework because she would always "get things wrong" and when she made a mistake, she would not erase but would throw the paper into the wastebasket. She said that it would take her sometimes 2-3 hours to complete her homework assignments which she would tackle immediately upon returning from school.

I assessed the problem as being one of her having excessive anxiety preventing her from doing well. There certainly was no indication of an intellectual deficit. I indicated to her that I was going to teach her a method called "relaxation" that she might enjoy and I made a tape recording that she could use if she wished. In order to enhance her motivation, I said that I didn't want her to tell anyone what she was doing ... including her parents and teachers ... since children love secrets. After teaching her the method, she was to practice it every morning 15 minutes before getting up for school which meant that she had to set her alarm earlier. She was also instructed to practice the method in school before every lesson, exam or quiz, previous to doing her homework and before she went to sleep. She was clearly instructed to go out and play after school and previous to doing her homework.

The method only took about 15 minutes initially but with practice and being able to recall the feeling it brings, it was able to be accomplished within a matter of 10-15 seconds. To

make a long story short, her grades, attitude, homework assignments and test-taking improved and she went from being a C- to a B+ student. I called her teacher and professionally reprimanded her for labeling Lisa. Her parents were elated over the progress that she had made within a relatively short period of time. Some years later, a very attractive young lady approached me in a grocery store and asked if I remembered her which I did not. She identified herself as Lisa and told me that she was about to enter college the following fall and that she was still practicing the relaxation method that I had taught her and that she completed her high schooling without any problems.

There may be many readers who were expected or who expected themselves to be a “perfect child”. This could occur either from adult expectations or from the child’s misinterpretation of what was expected of them to the point of not being able to make any mistakes. Those same children grow into an anxiety-laden adulthood which can present a number of obstacles to their happiness and performance. They should know, though, that they can reverse the process by using methods similar to what Lisa was taught. It’s never too late to learn to change a pattern if one has the need and motivation to do so.

- Does anxiety interfere with your happiness and performance?
- Have others told you to “relax” or that you’re too “uptight”?
- Is the source of your anxiety based on unreasonable expectations?
- Have you tried learning how to relax your expectations of yourself as well as your mind and body to see if that pattern could change?
- Remember, instead of perceiving your anxiety as a “condition”, re-perceive it as a pattern that can be changed.

There are steps that you can take to change those patterns that aren’t good for you. Consider looking into it.

### **A Brief Biographical Sketch**

*After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.*

*Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980’s he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was*

*essentially a “mind game”, he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.*

*He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.*

*Charles invites you to view his website at [www.charlesmbonasera.com](http://www.charlesmbonasera.com) as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address ([charles@charlesmbonasera.com](mailto:charles@charlesmbonasera.com)). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.*