

Hal Runkel Raises National Awareness with his ScreamFree Parenting

This Austin Grad alum may preach calm, but he's making quite a noise

"If I've told you once, I've told you _____!"

"Don't make me _____, young man!"

"If you do that one more time, I'm going to _____! I mean it!"

Can you finish those sentences without much effort? Chances are, if you are a parent or if you were once a child who had parents, you had little to no trouble figuring out what to put in those blanks. Like you, Hal Runkel also fits in the categories of having been a child and now a parent. He is also familiar with those phrases and could certainly fill in the blanks "correctly", but his parenting style does not include them. His family uses phrases such as: respect, choices, apology, responsibility for self, calming down self and taking care of self. Good in theory but hard to believe it really works, right? He has hundreds of first-hand testimonials to show otherwise.

As a licensed marriage and family therapist, Hal became acutely aware of reoccurring problems in families with children. Specific problems were showing up in family after family and while he could help them one at a time, he knew that there were so many families experiencing the exact same issues that he would never reach. At the prompting of his wife, Jenny, he tapped into his years of counseling and first-hand knowledge of parenting his own two children, and put the solution on paper. The result was ScreamFree Parenting.

If you go to Amazon and look under Parenting Books, ScreamFree Parenting is the number one choice. The book was independently published at first, but after its visible success Random House picked it up last summer. It is due for re-release in September 2007. It is also being released in a Christian version through Waterbrook Press.

"ScreamFree Parenting changes lives. It is the absolute best material on practical parenting I have found in 20+ years of ministry. In raising five children ages 15 to 21 my wife and I are sold on the wonderful impact of the principles taught in ScreamFree. The program material is revolutionary and the delivery is unsurpassed. As a Senior Minister, if I could urge you to consider one program to take on this year, this would be it. The rewards for you and your church will be immediate and measurable," said Don McLaughlin, Senior Minister of the North Atlanta Church of Christ

Hal's revolutionary parenting ideas stem from his belief that people need to focus on themselves first. Similar to the request flight attendants make for a parent to put their own oxygen mask on before assisting their children in an emergency. This is Biblical teaching. In Matthew 7:5, Jesus teaches to "first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's [or child's, spouse's, co-worker's] eye."

Hal says, "Parenting is about parents. It is not about kids or it would be called kidding." It's funny, yes, but the baseline of that way of thinking is foreign to most parents. The typical plan is to make all things about the children, but Hal warns that places too much

pressure on parent and child. He says, “The best thing I can do for my family is to focus on me, improving me by quitting smoking, being more patient or compassionate, losing weight or developing kindness. The litmus test is to ask, ‘Is it benefiting those around me?’ And to focus on my relationship with God is to focus on me. Either I live for God or I live for me.”

Some of the very principles Hal is now teaching families were influenced by his time at Austin Graduate School of Theology. He was working on his undergraduate degree in communications at the University of Texas when he was baptized by Scott Sager and turned his life over to Christ. The decision was pivotal for Hal in more ways than the obvious. He began working as an intern with the Longhorns for Christ, preaching for the Taylor Church of Christ, and he left UT to become part of the Austin Grad community, where he received his BA in Ministry. Before his senior year, he married his wife of now 12 years, Jenny.

“I learned to think at Austin Grad,” Hal says. “I learned to think critically. I was influenced greatly by my Introduction to Theology class, especially as Michael Weed introduced me to Soren Kierkegaard. His philosophy is foundational to what I am working on now—becoming an individual and helping kids become individuals.”

After leaving Austin, Hal and Jenny settled into Abilene Christian University where Hal received his graduate degree in Bible and then another degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. He had done some ministry work and realized that his passion fell towards counseling and helping others find health in their relationships. Through his years of studying communication, Bible, and counseling, Hal found a voice that has reached into the hearts of families and promoted the kind of relating that Christ modeled.

“I wanted to communicate in a way that impacts people’s lives. I wanted to make the complex understandable without dumbing it down,” Hal says. “What is the greatest enemy I have in relationships? It is *me*. God is interested in me growing and becoming a servant, not in having everyone else serve me and my needs. My kids are not here to meet my emotional needs. I need to learn to love me and take care of me for the benefit of others.”

Hal and his Atlanta team offer *ScreamFree Parenting* CD’s, DVD’s, seminars across the U.S. and even allow for personal coaching when possible. In addition, *ScreamFree Marriage* and *ScreamFree Worklife* have been added to help people with those relationships. He is regularly on the radio and television, helping people understand the enormous benefits of simply calming down.

Austin Graduate School of Theology and area Churches of Christ are hosting Hal Runkel on October 26, 2007 at the Brentwood Oaks Church of Christ. The seminar begins at 7:00PM and runs through 8:30PM. The cost is \$10 per adult before October 15, \$15 per adult after October 15. Childcare is provided. Register by visiting www.austingrad.edu or calling 512-476-2772.