



PROMOTING POSITIVE AND HEALTHY BEHAVIORS IN CHILDREN

Rosalynn Carter



ROSALYNN CARTER

The 1998 topic for our symposium is a bit different from previous symposia. This year, we decided to focus on something positive that addressed children, so our topic is *Promoting Positive and Healthy Behaviors in Children*. Our intent is to direct attention to the need for fostering positive and healthy behaviors in children, which then can increase the likelihood of their developing into well-adjusted young people and decrease the chances of problem behaviors later in life.

All of us in the mental health field recognize that if we give children a good start in life, they have a much better chance of growing up healthy, both physically and mentally. Today, there is great concern about the healthy development of children. With so many unfortunate, often severe, incidents involving children, we are beginning to think more about not only trying to prevent and treat problems, but about promoting behaviors, skills, and characteristics that equip children to cope more effectively with life's challenges.

Why do some young people emerge from high-risk situations with their self-esteem intact, blessed with the capacity to work well, play well, love well, and respect well? I have heard that these so-called resilient children have somehow been "immunized," making them more resistant to the ill effects of life's stresses and risks.

We are going to look at children in their total environment — in their homes, schools, and communities. Of course, we will not be able to cover all of the problems nor all of the possibilities, but this symposium will hopefully serve as a first step toward devoting more of our attention and resources to what is *right* with children.