



## NORTHWEST PARENTS' CORNER

**Summer 2007**

***A quarterly newsletter of parenting tips, reflections, and ideas***

Funded by a grant from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

### **Raising Resilient Children**

Did you ever notice that certain people can cope more effectively with stress and everyday challenges? They bounce back from disappointments, adversity, and trauma. They set realistic goals for themselves, are capable of solving problems, and interacting comfortably with others. They possess self-discipline, self-respect and dignity. Why do some people overcome great obstacles while others become victims of early experiences and environments?

#### ***The Mindset of Resilience -***

Resilient children share many qualities and ways of viewing themselves with children who have been unsuccessful in meeting challenges and pressures. However, resilient children are capable of translating this mindset into effective action. They feel special and appreciated. They are capable of setting realistic expectations for themselves and they view mistakes, hardships, and obstacles as challenges rather than stresses. They rely on productive coping strategies. They are aware of their weaknesses and vulnerabilities but also recognize their strengths and talents. They view themselves as competent. They can seek assistance and nurturance in a comfortable, appropriate manner from adults who are available to provide support when needed. They can define aspects of their lives over which they have control,

and focus their energy and attention on these rather than on factors over which they have little influence. A resilient child is an emotionally healthy child, equipped to successfully confront challenges and bounce back from setbacks. It is what adults hope for all children, particularly those who face greater adversity than others. It is how parents would like their children to turn out. So, what can parents do to foster resiliency in their children?

#### ***Teachable moments -***

In their book, "Raising Resilient Children", Drs. Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein say that to raise resilient children parents must not concentrate all their energy on changing the world or attempting to insulate children from a seemingly toxic culture; rather, they must begin by changing what they do with their



**This fall, HYSB will offer a five week course on "Raising Resilient Children" (See back page for details!)**

children. Assuming that parents are loving and competent, the authors assert that every parent-child interaction is an educational opportunity. Although the outcome of a specific issue may be important, even more vital is the lesson learned from the process of dealing with each issue or problem. The knowledge gained provides the nutrients from which the seeds of resiliency develop and flourish. For a list of seven guideposts for raising a resilient child, as well as information on HYSB's upcoming course, see page 4!

## **Raising the Kind of Kid Who Is Kind to Others**

Kindness is one of the most important habits that we can help our kids develop. When we do a “good deed” for other people, it makes them feel good and it makes us feel good—but kindness carries other benefits, too. Research shows that being kind can benefit physical and mental health, and it helps people feel more connected to their communities. (Random Acts of Kindness Foundation. *Kindness: How Good Deeds Can Be Good for You*) So, what are the benefits of kindness and how can you raise the kind of kid who is kind to others?



### ***Connecting Kindness With Health***

One of the most compelling studies of kindness involved more than 3,000 volunteers of all ages. Volunteers received a 17-question survey asking them how they felt when they did a kind act. The results showed a clear cause-and-effect relationship between helping and good health. In a nutshell, the researchers concluded, “Helping [others] contributes to the maintenance of good health, and it can diminish the effect of diseases and disorders, both serious and minor, psychological and physical.”

Fifty-three percent of volunteers noted such gains as greater happiness and optimism, as well as a decrease in feelings of helplessness and depression. More than 90 percent of volunteers said that regular volunteering produced feelings of emotional well-being, a powerful antidote to stress.

### ***Connecting Kindness With Communities***

Kindness builds our personal health, but it also builds our civic health! Being kind to friends and neighbors helps people feel happier and more connected to their community.

Why is this important? A sense of belonging to a neighborhood can help protect kids against substance abuse and poor mental health. Strong community connections also help build a “safety net” for your children of neighbors who care, listen, monitor them, and guide them toward safe choices.

### ***Connecting Kindness With Your Family***

So, how do you raise kids who treat others with kindness? Make kindness a habit! Here’s how:

- Make kindness part of your everyday routine. Children learn kindness the same way they learn other important skills—by watching you. How you react when your child interrupts your telephone conversation, how you solve conflict with your spouse, and how you talk about your mother-in-law

before she comes to visit are times when your child can learn about kindness.

- Set rules that encourage kindness such as “no hitting” or “no name calling” and stick to them. Kindness starts with an understanding of what’s okay in your family and what’s not. Oftentimes, kids will test the boundaries that parents set, but be firm. Your child will begin to understand your family values and what is important to you.

- Use good manners at all times. Kindness is about being courteous to people, even if you don’t know them. Call out a friendly “good morning” to the new neighbor, thank the pizza delivery person when he brings the pizza, and smile at people you pass on the sidewalk. Expect your children to do the same! These little gestures go a long way to building kindness.

- Ask your child to think about how other people feel. Childhood is full of times when kids’ feelings get hurt—from being chosen last for a team in gym class to not getting invited to a special event. You can’t always stop these things from happening, but kind-

ness can help heal a hurting child. Use the experiences to talk with your child about other people's feelings: "How do you think Jack felt when he wasn't invited to the big party? What do you think you could do to help him feel better?"

Kindness is a skill for which there is no test, no grade, and no final project—but it has the power to change the lives of your children and the people they meet. As American author Henry James put it, "Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. The third is to be kind." Take time to teach your kids how to be kind. If Henry James is right, it's the most important lesson they'll ever learn.

For more ideas and information go to:  
[www.actsofkindness.org](http://www.actsofkindness.org)

Reprinted from: <http://family.samhsa.gov>

***HYSB offers workshops and support for:***

- ◆ Parents in Recovery
- ◆ Step-Families
- ◆ Sibling Rivalry
- ◆ Divorced and Single Parents
- ◆ Parenting with Positive Discipline
- ◆ Understanding Child Development



HYSB is happy to provide on-site parenting programs at schools and day care centers. Contact us at:

860-824-4720, or  
[info@hysb.org](mailto:info@hysb.org)

**Tips for Parents in Recovery**

It is not what happens to us, but what we decide about it, that determines the course of our lives. When circumstances are tough, a wide variety of decisions are possible. Some people decide, "Life is unfair; I should feel sorry for myself; I will never amount to anything." Others decide, "Life is a challenge; I can handle it." Some decide to be victims of their fate; others decide to be masters.

It is never too late to change decisions and attitudes and take a new direction. Too many people get bogged down in guilt and shame and adopt a victim mentality. They think of themselves as victims, and focus on past injustices and blaming others or circum-



stances. They use these injustices and circumstances to invent excuses for not taking charge of their lives. They spend their lives reacting to the past instead of acting in the present. People who develop a victim mentality focus on the *reasons* for their problems instead of the *solutions*.

You do not want to create a victim mentality in your children by hanging onto guilt and shame. Yes, you did create pain and mistrust during the dependency / co-dependency period. But this is the time to learn from mistakes, adopt attitudes and skills to create change, and build trust in yourselves and your children.

- Jane Nelsen, Ed.D., from  
 "Positive Discipline for Parenting in Recovery"

**More offerings from F.Y.I.**

HYSB's highly regarded F.Y.I. (*For Your Information*) series provides fun, interactive learning experiences for children and their parents to do together. Check our website ([www.hysb.org](http://www.hysb.org)) for our free summer "Camcrafts" Workshop Series with teaching artist and outdoorsman, **Joe Brien**. Space is still available in workshops August 18th, 19th, 25th!

**F.Y.I. Fiber Arts Workshop Series** continues this fall with an invitation for parents and children to enjoy two fun-filled evenings with artist and quilt-maker, **Jill Gibbons**, sharing pizza and creating your own

**Family  
Story  
Quilt**



Two very special "pizza and quilting" evenings are scheduled:  
October 19th and 26th  
6:00 to 10:00 pm

No experience is necessary to preserve memories of your family's special events, characters, pets, places, humorous anecdotes, achievements, hopes, and dreams! This is an opportunity for parents and children to spend time together considering what makes their family unique, and to begin creating a keepsake honoring those qualities! HYSB will provide pizza and soft drinks for supper.

**There is no charge for this workshop, but registration is required! Enrollment is limited to 8 parent/child pairs (grades 5 and up). To reserve your spot, call Foothills Adult Ed: (800)300-4781**

This fall, HYSB's "Family Solutions" will offer a five week course:

**"Raising Resilient Children"**  
through the

Foothills Adult Education Program  
at Housatonic Valley Regional High School  
**Wednesday evenings, 6:30 - 8:00 pm**  
**starting October 10th**

*The goal of this parenting program is to help parents develop the skills to use every situation and interaction as part of a process to build resiliency in their children!*

*The group will explore:*

Seven Guideposts for fostering resiliency

1. Being Empathic
2. Changing Negative Scripts
3. Discipline that Promotes Self-Worth
4. Teaching Children to Solve Problems and Make Decisions
5. Making Children Feel Special and Appreciated
6. Recognizing Mistakes are Opportunities to Learn
7. Experiencing Success through Islands of Competence

**There is no charge for the course.**  
**To register, call Foothills at (800) 300-4781**

Childcare is available with advance request to HYSB at 824-4720

**Housatonic Youth Service Bureau**

P. O. Box 356 , Falls Village, CT 06031

**860-824-4720**

**[www.hysb.org](http://www.hysb.org)**

- Crisis intervention & counseling
- Parent support
- Information & referrals
- Resource library
- Seminars & workshops
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Special events & guest speakers

**Located next to H.V.R.H.S. in the Pupil Service Center. All services are free. Consultations are confidential. Appointments are flexible**