



NORTHWEST PARENTS' CORNER

Winter 2009

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

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One Mother Reflects

When my sons were little, I remember the sage and sentimental advice from older parents... "They grow up so fast. ...Enjoy them while you can!"

And it's true. One minute your days are filled with the incessant demands of parenting... preparing yet another meal of macaroni and cheese until you can't stand the sight or smell of it anymore; scraping mud off hundreds of little shoes; bandaging dozens of scraped elbows and knees; cleaning countless sticky little faces, ears, fingers, and toes; and tenderly mending numerous broken hearts and bruised egos... and the next thing you know the kids are gone and you're looking forward to them coming home for a visit for the holidays!

I remember H. Stephen Glenn, the renowned parent educator asking, "Do your children know that they are an asset to your life? Do they know that they are unique and that their contributions to the family are meaningful and genuinely needed?" And I had to ask myself, "Am I so caught up in the millions of little tasks that must be accomplished in the course of each day that I forget to tell the boys, and more importantly take time to show them, how valuable their contributions are? Do they realize they are an essential part of my life?" Or, due to expediency and a need to get things done in a rush, do they feel like objects, the target of lectures, directives and demands; or recipients, being taken care of, having things done for them that they could do for themselves, and getting privileges without responsibilities? The questions Dr. Glenn asked that day changed the way I viewed my role as a parent, the way I related to my children, and the course of my life.

This summer I found myself sitting across from my three sons on a subway in Barcelona. At ages 27 and 24, two of them are now grown men, and my youngest son isn't far behind. They were standing together on the train, smiling, happily engaged in some brotherly conversation. It was a simple moment, really, the kind that can slip away many times each day and pass unnoticed. But this moment seized me. It was as if shot through a camera lens for a movie, when all noises go silent, and the focus suddenly zooms in on one subject and a concept becomes crystal clear. I was instantly overwhelmed with emotion, realizing the incredible passage of time and the gravity of all that has been encompassed in that period. And I thought, "Oh, my! Look at them! They are strong, healthy, and happy, and they are good people. Kind. Thoughtful. Generous. Their love for one another and their good humor is obvious. They are grown, they are started on lives and adventures of their own, and I will soon be an old woman." And I felt content. That one, single moment seemed like everything I could need or want, the satisfaction of a job well-done, the culmination of everything I have worked for.

It's been almost thirty years, and yes, it goes by in a heartbeat. So, now, I'm the older, wiser friend, and my advice to young parents is a reminder, we have so little time to really be with our children, to get to know them, to influence them, to instill our values and morals, to laugh and play and cherish them. Amidst all the work of parenting and the hectic pace of family life, remember to treat children as assets. Remember to have fun with your children and enjoy them while you can.

*Wishing you and your family a joyous new year,
~ Jill Gibbons*

Keys to Responsibility

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they accept and take personal responsibility. In *Raising a Responsible Child*, authors Don Dinkmeyer, Ph.D. and Gary McKay, Ph.D. point out four keys to instilling the value of responsibility in children.



things away. Anything that wasn't put away would be put in a box in the garage. Children gradually took responsibility for putting things away because they got tired of walking outside to the garage to dig through a box to find their things.

Key #1 - Let your child do it.

Too many parents do tasks for their children, instead of letting their children do them. Why? Some parents think that their children are incapable of accomplishing the task (which is true if they're never given the opportunity to learn.) Also, our busy lifestyles often keep us from taking the time to let our children learn and master skills.

Key #2 - Expect it to take time.

The best time to teach children responsibility is when you're not in a hurry, when you both do not have pressures to be elsewhere or doing other things. Children will become discouraged, self-conscious, and uncooperative when they sense they are being rushed or if they're not living up to a parent's unrealistic expectation.

Key #3 - Ask, don't demand.

Instill responsibility by invitation. Begin by asking your child to help you with something, such as doing the laundry. Do it together. Gradually teach your child so that your child can do it by him/herself.



Key #4 - Use consequences.

When your child does not follow through with something that he or she is solely responsible for, stop talking and nagging. Let natural and logical consequences occur. For example, one family said each family member should take responsibility for putting their

Another important way to encourage responsibility is to model it yourself. Follow through on your commitments, especially to your child. When you can't or don't do something you should have, don't make excuses. Talk with your child about how you plan to avoid getting into a similar situation in the future.



Ways to help your child become more responsible:

- 1. Break new tasks into smaller steps and teach them one by one, until your child can take responsibility for the entire task alone.*
- 2. Use lists for keeping track of responsibilities. Encourage family members each to maintain their own list.*
- 3. Recognize your child's responsible behavior. Say something when it's small. Celebrate when it's big!*

Your job as a parent:

As a parent, give realistic responsibilities to your child. Take time to teach them, and don't nag or rescue them when they "forget." Instead, create a home environment that allows children to identify new ways they can succeed in being responsible so that they can try again.

- Used with permission from The Search Institute

Cold and Flu Prevention Checklist

Teaching children these healthy habits will help everyone feel better this winter!

Stay Home If You're Sick

We want to teach our kids the importance of working hard, but it's just good sense to stay home from work or school when you're sick, to prevent the spread of cold and flu germs.

Keep Your Hands Clean

You never know what germs you might be picking up in the course of the day. It's a good idea to wash your hands frequently, especially before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the bathroom. Use warm water and soap, and make sure you lather up for 20 seconds!

Cover Your Nose and Mouth When Coughing or Sneezing

Avoid spreading cold and flu germs to others by coughing or sneezing into a tissue. If none is available, don't cough or sneeze into your hands! Instead, turn your head away from nearby people and, if necessary, aim for your shoulder.

Don't Touch Your Eyes, Nose, or Mouth

Germs that might otherwise languish on your hands can easily infiltrate your system when you rub your face. Try to keep your hands away from your face as much as you reasonably can.

Get Plenty of Rest

Your body works overtime to hunt and destroy harmful germs when you're resting or relaxed, but high stress levels leave you susceptible to invasion. Get some rest and give your white blood cells the time they need to do their job.



Avoid Unnecessary Close Contact

It's an unfortunate fact that a person can spread flu germs a full day before exhibiting symptoms, and then up to five days after that. Steer clear of those with flu-like symptoms - they'll understand. And if you're sick, avoid close contact with others.

Eat Plenty of Fruits and Vegetables

Eating right is always important, but particularly during cold and flu season. The vitamins and minerals found in fruits and vegetables can buttress your body's immune system against invaders.

Get Fresh Air and Exercise

It's a myth that low temperatures cause cold and flu. In fact, the culprit is increased, prolonged contact with greater numbers of people. Going outside for a walk means you'll get exercise and get away from potential germ-bearers.

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Part II of **Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World** *Seven Building Blocks for Developing Capable Young People*

A parenting curriculum by H. Stephen Glenn, Ph.D.

Although this is the second half of the course that began in the fall semester, we welcome new participants as well as returning students. While the fall coursework focused on helping children develop healthy perceptions of him/herself, these sessions will focus on helping children develop the necessary skills of self-discipline, communication, responsibility and good judgment. These are the character-building values and traits that will serve your child throughout his/her lifetime.

The class will meet at Housatonic Valley Regional High School on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 -8:30 pm, on February 25, March 4, 11, 18, & 25, 2009. There is no charge. Interested parents may wish to purchase the book in advance. Babysitting is available with advance request to HYSB.

To register, call:
Foothills Adult Education
1-800-300-4781

New Books in Our Parenting Library!

“Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves” by Naomi Aldort. For parents who want to give up scolding, punishing, and threatening, her S.A.L.V.E. formula can transform parent-child relationships from reaction and struggle, to freedom, power and joy.

“Positive Time-Out” by Jane Nelsen, Ed.D. With more than fifty suggestions for avoiding power struggles in the home and classroom, Dr. Nelsen proposes ‘time-out’ as a positive experience, teaching problem-solving skills, building self-confidence and motivating children to handle their own behavior.

Stop by our offices to see more books available for borrowing. We ask that you borrow one book at a time, and return books within 8 weeks. Please sign your name and telephone number on the check-out card in the back of the book, and leave the card in the box on the shelf. Then we’ll know who to call when we’re looking for our book!

“Who Moved My Cheese?” by Dr. Spencer Johnson. An amusing and simple parable that reveals profound truths about ways we deal with change in our lives. This little book is a quick read, but its unique insights can last a lifetime.

Housatonic Youth Service Bureau

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www.hysb.org

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