

Parenting Pages

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership of The Parent Centre includes access to our library, and an outstanding selection of parenting books. Whether you are a parent, or someone working with parents and/or children, you will find relevant and up-to-date titles on a broad range of parenting issues. Membership also entitles you to a discount on workshop fees.

Dear Members,

This newsletter is very, very late. I apologise and trust that I will be forgiven especially when you read that much of my time and energy went into welcoming my second grandson and taking time off to help out on the home front. It's been interesting observing the older grandson's reaction to the new arrival. Of course a heavy bout of flu for a whole week and all those public holidays in between did not help at all. One sort of feels fragmented and a bit all over the place after such an experience. Needless to say, I have a lot to say about being a grandparent! Being a grandparent doesn't mean one's parenting role disappears.

On the contrary, it takes on a different dimension: supporting your adult children as they take on the challenges of raising children today. Supporting without telling them what to do, supporting decisions they make even though it is different to your way, and supporting in practical ways, is not only helpful to them but so rewarding for the grandparent. I have also found that I am more observant of infants' and toddlers' development and what they can do and find myself asking the question: "Did I not see the same things in my children when they were small?" Possible answers: "You have forgotten what it was like!", or, "You are never too old to learn!"

Yours in Parenting

Fouzia Ryklief

Parent Centre takes flight beyond our borders

This seems to be an eventful and exciting time for The Parent Centre with two of our staff, Julia and Venecia, winging their way to Tanzania and Brazil respectively. Julia, who serves as the Vice-Chairperson of the Secretariat of the Parenting in Africa Network (PAN), chaired one of the sessions at the network's first continental workshop held on the shores of Lake Victoria. The title of the two-day workshop was "Parenting in Africa: Voices of African Children". Venecia is presenting a paper on the importance of enhancing the relationship between parent and child from infancy. This is regarded as a means of ensuring the building of strong character and resilience in our children, thereby eradicating violence in families and the broader society. Well done colleagues – not only are you ably representing The Parent Centre, but also spreading the message via international events, about the need to support and sustain the most important element of our society, i.e. healthy and well-functioning families.

We urge parents and caregivers to remain vigilant about the potential dangers of some forms of communication to which our children are exposed, e.g. cyber-bullying, child pornography via cell phones/internet, etc.

Yours in Parenting
Celeste Van der Merwe, Director.



Parents' role in the child's schoolwork (Part 2) (From a workshop by Helen Gosnell)

HOMEWORK AND PROJECTS: How much help must parents give?

It is best to establish a clear homework routine from the first time your child starts getting homework. For some schools, this is in Grade 0.

How much help should be given? This will depend on your child. If you know that your child understands the work and is capable of doing it alone, leave him to work alone.

Always check the work once your child is finished and help out with concepts that your child has not grasped. Some children are uncomfortable with this help and in this case, a note to the teacher explaining the difficulty is a good idea. If your child needs you to be with him all the time, aim to get your child to work independently

with just your company and occasional help. What is important is to not overly involve yourself in the homework and certainly not to do the homework for your child.

When you notice from homework, the report or test results that your child is struggling with something, discuss it with your child, request a meeting with the teacher and formulate some plan for improving on the knowledge. It may be that the teacher will recommend some extra work on your part - make plans to fit it into the schedule.

For school projects, it is best to get some guidelines from the school as to how much they expect you to help.

Here are some other pointers: Expect to help less rather than more. Help can be given in more of a supporting role than an active role.

Helping to read to parameters of the project, questioning your child's understanding of the project and helping with the planning should be about all you need to do. Don't take over the whole planning since this is probably part of the skill set the teacher is trying to test.

When helping, ask yourself this question:

"By helping in this way, am I teaching my child some useful skills for future projects or am I teaching him that he's not good enough to do a project alone?"

STUDYING: We all have different styles of learning

It is helpful to determine what type of learning style your child has in order to help him develop the most suitable studying techniques. There are 3 main learning styles:

Visual Learners: *learn through seeing...*

These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads).

They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. During a classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

Visual learners use colour, layout, and spatial organization in their associations. They can use mind maps

to great effect. Use colour and pictures in place of text, wherever possible. Make sure they have at least four different colour pens. Replace words with pictures, and use colour to highlight major and minor links.

Auditory Learners: *learn through listening...*

They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances.

Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

Teach your child to use sound, rhyme, and music in their learning. Focus on using aural content in your association and visualization.

Tactile/Kinaesthetic Learners: *learn through, moving, doing and touching...*

Tactile/Kinaesthetic learners learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration. Your child should use physical objects as much as possible. Physically touch objects as they learn about what they do. Flashcards can help him memorize information because he can touch and move them around. Keep in mind as well that writing and drawing diagrams are physical activities. Use big sheets of paper and large colour markers for diagrams. Your child then gets more action from the drawing. Use role-playing, either singularly or with someone else, to practice skills. Encourage your child to find ways to act out or simulate what he is learning.

Spirited, not difficult

Why spirited, rather than challenging or difficult?

Webster's dictionary defines spirited as "lively, creative, keen, eager, full of energy and courage, and having a strong assertive personality". Spirited sounds more positive, leaves one feeling better emotionally, acknowledges the child's strength and potential but also manages to capture the inherent challenge for the parent.

Mary Kurchinka stated "when we choose to see our children as spirited, we give them and ourselves hope. It pulls our focus to their strengths rather than their weaknesses, not as another label but

as a tool for understanding". Spirited children are *normal* children who are *more!* ...more intense, more persistent, more sensitive, more perceptive, and more uncomfortable with change than the average child.

Spirited children can cry for hours, and if by chance, they do fall asleep, they'll wake up and start again on the same issue.

They are children who can be triggered by seemingly insignificant things, such as a change in the weather, scratchy socks or sweater or a friend who looks at them "the wrong way".

On good days, spirited children prove to be more delightful than you ever imagined. They would make you laugh, pull your attention to birds, bugs and bees you would have missed without them, and give you an excuse to play. On bad days they refuse to do anything you ask – usually in a loud and angry voice, they spit at you, kick you and rob you of your sleep with their demands and the worries they arouse. Often they make you cry.

They may also leave you feeling a little crazy, even stunned, wondering how, if it is like this now, you will ever survive adolescence.

The Temperamental Characteristics of the Spirited Child

While each child is unique, there are similarities among them. Compared with the "average" child, most are more.....

INTENSE - they feel every emotion deeply and powerfully. Some spirited children are loud and dramatic whilst others are quieter and their intensity is focused inward.

PERSISTENT - they are committed to what they are doing, goal-orientated and do not give up easily. Getting them to change their minds is a major task.

SENSITIVE - they quickly respond to the slightest noises, smells, lights, textures or changes in mood. They are easily overwhelmed in crowds by the barrage of sensations. Clothing with a scratchy texture can be unbearable. They absorb every sensation and emotion.

PERCEPTIVE - they notice everything and are easily distracted. They may often not hear directions.

UNCOMFORTABLE WITH CHANGE - adapting to change for

them is tough. They hate surprises and find it challenging to shift from one thing to the next. They need more time for transitions. Many, but not all, spirited children are also:

IRREGULAR - figuring out when they will need to sleep, eat or eliminate is a daily puzzle. It seems impossible to get them on to any kind of schedule.

ENERGETIC - they tend to be busy – taking things apart, exploring and creating projects from the time they wake up till they finally fall asleep. They may sometimes be perceived as "wild" but their energy is usually focused and goal-directed.

CAUTIOUS IN NEW SITUATIONS - they tend to withdraw from anything new, be it ideas, places, people, etc. They need time to warm up before they are ready to participate.

SERIOUS - they tend to be analytical and their smiles are few and far between.

It is important to remember that children never tell us that they are intense or that change is difficult for them. They simply act it out.

We, the parents, have to learn to read and tune into their behaviour and help them manage it.

Hopefully, learning what is "normal" for a spirited child, will allow us to see our spirited children's behaviour in a more helpful way.

For example, when we see our spirited child struggling with a scratchy sweater we would recognize that she is not being difficult but her reaction is a result of her sensitivity.

Or we'll hear our spirited child who is busy with a task say "just two more minutes" and know that this a persistent child who has a goal to accomplish and not a child who is out "to get us" or to make our life miserable.

Sources

[The Difficult Child](#) by Dr Stanley Turecki

[Raising your Spirited Child](#) by Mary Sheedy Kurchinka

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR PARENTS

These groups provide a space for parents to focus on themselves, to be listened to and understood and to get support and ideas from other parents.

Moms-to-be and Moms and Babies Support Group meets every Thursday, from 10 am – 12 noon at the Kingsbury Hospital, Maternity Section, 2nd Floor, Wilderness Road, Claremont.

Facilitator: Margaret Flack-Davison 021 7620116

NB! Please check the events calendar on our website for the monthly programmes

Woodlands Parent Support Group

This group of mothers, grandmothers and other caregivers meets **fortnightly** on Wednesdays from 10 am – 12 noon at Woodlands Community Hall, corner of Selena Way and Mitchell Avenue, Woodlands, Mitchell's Plain.

Facilitator: Marilyn Matroos 021 7620116

Tafelsig Mother and Child Support Group meets every Tuesday between 10 am and 12 noon at the Youth and Family Care Centre, corner of AZ Berman and Kilimanjaro Roads, Tafelsig, Mitchell's Plain.

The Group caters for mothers and children from birth – 5 years.

Facilitator: Nasiera Ebrahim 021 7620116

Hanover Park Mother and Child Support Group meets weekly at the Hanover Park Community Centre, Hanover Park Avenue, Hanover Park on Tuesdays from 10 am – 12 noon. Mothers and children between the ages of birth – 5 years are welcome.

Facilitator: Sharon Paulus 021 7620116

Gugulethu Parents Support Group

This group consists of parents, grandparents and teenage parents and meets weekly on Wednesdays at 10.30am at The Hall, No 142A, NY1, Gugulethu.

Facilitators: Lephina Makhanya and Bulelwa Kuse
083 257 3541

Gugulethu Men's Group

This group welcomes all fathers – older, younger, teenage fathers and grandfathers, to its weekly support group. The group meets at Nobantu Primary School, NY89, Gugulethu, on Wednesdays at 3.30pm

Facilitator: Charles George 083 257 3541

Silvertown Parents Support Group (run in partnership with the Family Church)

The group meets every Wednesday from 10 am – 12 noon at the Genesis Educare Centre, Lower Klipfontein Road, Silvertown. The group welcomes all parents, grandparents and other caregivers with children between the ages of 0 – 12 years.

Facilitator: Jann Watlington 021 7620116

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING AT WYNBERG HEAD OFFICE

We offer counselling for any parent or caregiver who experiences difficulties with their children. The counsellors are trained professionals. Fees are charged on a sliding scale.

PARENT-AND-CHILD-UNDER-THREE COUNSELLING

This is a new service which is offered at our Wynberg Office. It involves sessions with the parent and child and will cover common challenges such as eating and sleeping problems, presented by young children from birth - 3 years. Fees are charged on a sliding scale.

NB! The above service will not be withheld if prospective clients experience financial difficulties.

PARENTING AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SUPPORT

We offer

- Training courses on parent guidance, counselling, facilitating parenting workshops and groups.
- Single talks on all aspects of parenting to groups of parents and caregivers in community venues.
- Parenting workshops in community venues.
- Support Groups for parents

PARENTING & LEADERSHIP

This Course covers parenting skills and workshop facilitation for professionals and Community Workers who wish to become involved in parenting work in their settings and communities.

It is run at Wynberg office once a school term. Mentoring and Support is offered to those who will be engaged in implementing parenting work in their settings. Quarterly meetings to this end take place at the Centre.

NB: Qualified social and social auxiliary workers will earn 15 CDP points. The course is registered with the SACSSP. Interested parties with other professional qualifications need to enquire from their professional boards whether they will earn 15 CPD points for this course.

For more details contact: Safura Henry at 021 7620116; Email safura@theparentcentre.org.za or Jann Watlington at jann@theparentcentre.org.za

"Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you." -Robert Fulghum-

"Your children need your presence more than they need your presents." -Jesse Jackson-
