Margaret had two children – Neal, age 4, and Megan, age 2. Megan was having major meltdowns several times a day, so Margaret decided to teach both her kids to take a deep breath when they were upset. She chose to start with breathing because her son’s gymnastic teacher was talking to the class about the importance of breathing correctly when they did gymnastics. She sat her children on the sofa and explained that when they were upset they could take deep breaths to calm themselves.

Neal quickly picked up the concept and began to “blow out his frustration” when he was upset. However, Mom’s explanation had no impact on Megan. She wondered if learning was easier for Neal because he already knew about breathing and/or whether Megan was too young to learn.

Fortunately you can begin to teach self calming strategies somewhere between 12 and 18 months. However, teaching kids to deal with feelings is different from telling them what to do. Teaching involves introducing the skill, linking the skill to the feeling of calmness, practicing the skill in pretend, then reminding the child that he has a choice when he is upset.

The last step involves backing out and letting the child remember that he has choices himself. The younger the child, the slower the process is, in part, because they have fewer life experiences. Parents are often motivated to teach when kids are upset, however, kids are rarely receptive. We will look at each of these steps.

**Teaching Kids Self Calming Tools by Betsy Crary**

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**Introduce the tool.** Introducing the tool involves more than saying, “When you are upset take a deep breath.” The child needs to practice using the tool while he is calm. For example, if your son Adam loves to sit under a tree in the shade, you could teach him to save the calmness he feels in his mind and call on the calmness when he was upset. You could begin by sitting with Adam under a tree in the shade and talking about how the sunlight filters through the leaves, the sounds that he hears, and the way the breeze feels on his skin.

**Link the tool to feeling calm.** When a child is successful with the action of the tool, then you can begin to link the tool to the feeling of calmness. In this example, you can sit with your son and remark, “My, how pleasant it feels to sit here. I feel calm all over. I’m going to soak up this calmness so I can use it when I need it.” Or, sometime when things are going well, you could say, “Adam, let’s sit here and go to the calm place.” Your purpose is to associate the strategy (act of recalling) with a feeling of calmness and well-being.

**Practice using the strategy in pretend** is the next step. For example, you could say, “Adam, remember this morning when Brian was mean and you started crying? I’m going...”

*Continued on page 3*
DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM
By Lauren Tozzi, Crown Hill Co-op Teacher

When I think of diversity, I think of an umbrella. Under it I see: culture, race, class, income, languages, ideas, thoughts, color, music, food, and choices...to name a few! We live in a diverse world, in diverse communities. Through diversity, we can also be mindful of the common threads that are shared and that link us together.

There is a children's book "We Are Alike, We Are Different" written by a Kindergarten class in Oregon. I use it with our Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday celebration, and then throughout the year. It is a wonderful book with photographs of children and their drawings. I find it a wonderful and thoughtful way of celebrating the ways we are different, yet alike.

In our classroom, I want to honor the diversity of the children and parents, so we have “share and tell” and show photos of the families, and each child and parent talks about what they like to do together, etc. We have a bulletin board with all the photographs of the families in the classroom. Often, I will see the kids standing in front of it having conversations with each other about their families. It's quite sweet!

I believe that languages are important to learn and share with young children. With their growing brains, they truly and enthusiastically embrace them! I think it is also important to practice languages, especially if a language is being spoken at home.

Everyday at our co-op, the kids take turns and choose a way to say "hello" using a box full of languages: Spanish/hola, Swahili/jambo, French/bon jour, Italian/ciao, Chinook/ klahowya, even "pirate"/aaargh! (there are many!)

We've learned a Polish dance. We sing "Happy Birthday" in six different ways. Sign language is used often, as well. At our closing circle we all sing a song in Swahili called "kwaheri". It means "good bye friends, please be well until we see each other again". We have a father who was born in Tanzania...and to see his face when we sang our Swahili song the first time was truly priceless! He had no idea that we knew some Swahili. Now, we are learning more and more!

These are just some simple ways that we embrace diversity...and through that, we make connections and find our common threads. Like a quilt, it is colorful and gives us warmth.

Preschool Fairs

Know anyone interested in our preschools? Our co-op preschools will be hosting booths at two preschool fairs coming up in January!

On Saturday, January 11th, from 10 a.m.-noon, the Moms Club of Seattle NW will host a preschool Fair at St. Alphonsus Parish School (5816 15th Ave NW, Seattle, WA 98107). Preschools across North Seattle will be featured.

On Wednesday, January 15th, from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, parents can explore Seattle's North Sound preschools at ParentMap's North Seattle/Shoreline Preschool Preview. This event is held at Shoreline Community College (16101 Greenwood Avenue North, Shoreline, WA 98133). Parents can explore the area's best preschools, connect with enrichment and extra-curricular programs, and enter to win prizes!

ASKing Saves Kids

Did you know that 40 percent of U.S. homes with children contain a gun? And of those homes, 43 percent of owners leave the guns unlocked and loaded? Yet almost no one asks if there's a gun in the homes of friends or neighbors where their kids play.

Every year thousands of children are killed or injured in accidents involving adults' guns. Just talking to your kids about the dangers of firearms is not enough. Kids are naturally curious. They are also naturally fascinated with guns. That means, if there is a gun accessible, there is a good chance kids will find it and play with it. So before you send your child to someone's house (playmate, relative, neighbor), ASK if they have a gun in the home. If there is not a gun in the home...great! That's one less thing you have to worry about. If there is a gun, make sure that the gun is stored unloaded and locked, ideally in a gun safe, with ammunition locked separately. Hiding guns is not enough. There are countless tragic stories of kids finding guns that parents thought were well hidden. If you have any doubts about the safety of someone's home, you can invite the children to play at your house.

ASK stands for “Asking Saves Kids.” ASK is a national non-profit campaign designed to educate parents on the importance of asking if there are guns in the homes where their children play. The goal of the ASK Campaign is simple – to save children’s lives by preventing accidents with guns left accessible in the home. This is a very real threat to children and parents need to make informed decisions about where their kids play.

Calendar

January
11 Moms Club Seattle NW Fair
13 PAC Meeting
14 Puget Sound Independent School Common application due
15 ParentMap Preschool Fair
20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February
13 PAC Meeting
17 NSCC Priority Registration deadline
24 Seattle Public Schools open enrollment begins; School choice applications available
24 PAC Lecture “Media Literacy 101” by Linda Kennedy

March
7 Seattle Public Schools application deadline
13 NSCC Crossover Registration deadline
29 NSCC Open Registration
“TEACHING KIDS SELF CALMING TOOLS” continued from page 1

... to pretend Brian is being mean to me, and I’ll try to stay calm by going to the calm place in my mind.” After you model the tool, you can invite Adam to practice going to the calm place in his mind.

You can practice using the calming technique in three ways. One way is strictly pretend. Make up a story and act it out. Second, the parent can act out a situation the child faces using puppets or stuffed animals. This way the parent models for the child how the child could use the tool. Eventually, the parent can ask the child to help the characters. Third, the child can act out a situation that he or she has experienced, and use the calming tool. This approach may be difficult for some children unless they feel very comfortable with the calming tool.

Prompt the child to use the tool. Once the child can use a tool in pretend, you can prompt her when she is upset. It is often helpful to phrase the prompt as a choice. “Would you like to take deep breaths or go to a calm place in your mind?” Note: it is important to offer the choice before the child has totally lost control.

Back out and let the child cope. We can see how this process works by returning to the story of Margaret and her toddler.

Margaret decided to try teaching Megan to take deep breaths. So she invented a breathing game – “Tissue Hockey” – where they blew balls of tissue across the table. When Megan could blow the “ball” across the table, Margaret observed how calm she herself felt inside each time they played.

When Megan could take deep breaths, Margaret started another game. In this game Margaret was Mommy Bear, and when Mommy Bear was upset about something she would take “Big Bear Breath” to calm herself. Then Margaret asked Megan to pretend to be Bonnie Bear and take a “Bear Breath” when she dropped her fish dinner on the ground. Margaret changed the story several times to give Megan practice.

Once Megan associated taking a breath with getting calm, Margaret began to offer her the choice of crying or taking “Big Bear Breath.” Teaching Megan to take deep breaths was so successful that Margaret decided to teach Megan to “shake out” her feelings. Then Mom was able to offer Megan two choices, “Do you want to shake out the feelings or take a Bear Breath?”

Once Megan could calm herself when prompted, Margaret slowly began to reduce her prompting. Eventually Megan could calm herself without prompting.

Using the five step process Margaret successfully taught Megan to take deep breaths and calm herself. She let Megan become comfortable at each stage before moving on to the next. It took several months of intermittent work, but in the end Margaret had a toddler who could usually calm herself.

You can find out more about teaching self-calming skills and problem solving skills by registering for the 6-week Avoid Emotional Meltdowns class through NSCC, Tuesday evenings starting February 4 (see note below) or by reading Dealing with Disappointment: Helping Kids Cope When Things Don’t Go Their Way. There are also openings in the online class so visit Northseattlecoops.org for information.

This newsletter is for you! Please submit your words, photos, and ideas to Madeline Marrs at mad.klein@gmail.com
Monday, February 24, 2014, 7 – 9 pm
Faith Lutheran Church
8208 18th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA

Media Literacy 101
With Linda Kennedy, Founder of LK Media

Are you aware of what your children may see or come in contact with that is available in the media?

➢ Discover ways to help your children rate what they decide to watch: such as “How will my child interpret this?” “Does this fit my family values?”

➢ Understand “Media Literacy” and the impact of new technology

Linda Kennedy
Linda is an award winning, Emmy nominated broadcast journalist. She has worked in the media business for over 20 years. Ms. Kennedy founded LK Media, a company dedicated to studying media and teaching media literacy. Linda has run other successful workshops related to the media, such as “Deal with Drama!”, “U R What U 8” (nutrition), ethics and self-image.

Free and open to the public
Bake Sale, Used Books Sale support PAC Scholarships
ASL Interpreter available upon request. Please contact Betty Williams (206) 528-4571; betty.williams@seattlecolleges.edu before 02/14/14

Presented by the Parent Advisory Council of the North Seattle Community College Cooperative Preschools
http://coops.northseattle.edu/
Help Kids Deal With Disappointment

Erin is waiting at the top of her lungs – her red balloon popped and she wants another.

Paul lies on the floor sobbing – the pajamas he wants to wear to bed are in the washer, soaking wet.

Alana stomps around the house and pokes fun at her siblings – she didn’t get the part of princess in the school play.

Brian is so upset that he didn’t get to go out for recess today that he is throwing all his toys on the floor.

Avoid Emotional Meltdowns!

Children need concrete strategies to cope with their feelings. The easiest time for children to learn to calm themselves is between 6 and 36 months — however they can learn at any age.

- Discover two critical elements kids need to avoid emotional meltdowns.
- Understand why your child doesn’t “cool-it” when you acknowledge her feelings.
- Identify six strategies you can teach your child to calm himself.
- Learn ways to keep your cool when kids lose theirs.
- Find out four ways parents discount children’s feelings and what to do instead.

What: A class for parents designed to help 1-8 year-old children deal with their feelings constructively.

Who: Elizabeth Crary – author and parent educator for over 25 years.

When: Six Tuesday, 7:930 pm. starting Feb 4, ending March 25, 2014

Where: North Seattle Community College, IB Bldg, room 3316. (West-central section, 3rd floor)

You can check on the campus locator map at https://northseattle.edu/locator

Cost: $32.00, NSCC tuition for 2 credits

For information: Elizabeth Crary at (206) 367-6425

To register: Go to link below. Use your SID number and student PIN to enter.

https://secdweb.secd.ctc.edu/seanor/webreg/waci221.html

Enter Item 6469, Course FAM 197, and pay.