Who doesn’t dread the morning rush? With busy schedules and school in full swing, getting out the door on time can be the most stressful time of day for parents. Even when we follow all of the helpful suggestions about preparing lunch the night before and making sure the backpack has a change of clothes and diapers, we cannot anticipate the many unexpected challenges that may arise in the half hour before we leave the house: a favorite toy is lost, the precious green socks she wore yesterday are wet and in the wash. When we feel stressed we lose access to our thinking brain and start reacting, sometimes with irritation or anger.

When my daughter was in preschool, I admit to mornings of frustration and impatience as we struggled to get socks on. I sweated it because being the "late parent" to school made me anxious. How I wish Reflective Parenting was around years ago... I could have learned how to calm myself, take a breath and step back. What was my little girl's view of this morning madness? What was my anxiety about?

Developed through the Yale Child Study Center over the past 10 years, Reflective Parenting is a unique approach to parent education that utilizes child development theory and the latest brain research related to parent child attachment bonds. It focuses on our capacity as adults and children to reflect on our own thoughts, behaviors and feelings. This ability to reflect helps us as parents to understand the meaning underlying our child’s behaviors. It helps us to make sense of them in such a way as to deepen our understanding of ourselves and our children and modify our responses so that we are more confident and successful in our interactions.

What was my daughter thinking, feeling and doing in our moments of struggle? What was going on in my head as I darted around the house keeping us "on track"? How could I take in her three year-old view of the morning preparations as I ushered us out the door and understand the impact of my stress on her responses? I would have used my thinking brain to consider my responses, rather than reacting out of stress. Maybe I would have even asked for help!

Taking time to discover the inner life of our child takes patience and a particular kind of awareness.

Continued on Page 3...
**Calendar**

**December**
- 6 Scholarship deadline
- 9 PAC Meeting
- 9-15 U Bookstore Sale
- 23-Jan 3 Seattle Public Schools winter break

**January**
- 11 Moms Club Seattle NW Fair
- 13 PAC Meeting
- 15 ParentMap Preschool Fair
- 20 Martin Luther King Day

**2014-15 Registration Deadlines**
- Feb. 17 Priority Registration
- March 13 Crossover Registration
- March 29 Open Registration

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**Indoor Play Ideas**

**Jamtown, Lake City**: Multicultural instruments and hands-on events for community, youth and business. Toddler music (ages 6 mo to 4 yrs) ongoing on Thursdays at 10 a.m. and Saturdays at 11 a.m. 8-visit card for $99, drop-in $15/session.

**Indoor Playgrounds**: visit [http://www.seattle.gov/parks/children/play.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/parks/children/play.htm) for a schedule of your local community center’s play times.

**Seattle Gymnastics Academy**: Drop-in open indoor playground for kids 5 & under. Locations in Lake City, Ballard, and Columbia City. $6 per visit, punch cards available. Visit: [http://www.seattlegymnastics.com](http://www.seattlegymnastics.com) for schedules.

**Story Time at Seattle Public Libraries**: Times and locations vary. [http://www.spl.org/audiences/children](http://www.spl.org/audiences/children)

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**IT’S MY WORKDAY AT CO-OP, WHY IS MY CHILD ACTING LIKE THIS?**

By Kris Dickenson, Wallingford Co-op Teacher

Every year at about this time, it is inevitable that several parents ask me this question—“Why does my child behave like this on my work day?” The behavior that “this” refers to is the clinging, whining, crying, and emotional behavior that might see in your children on your workday. You might even be worrying that this is how they are on the other days, too. Heaven forbid! No, in most cases, they are wonderful kids who exhibit the normal behaviors that are developmentally appropriate for their age. So, what’s going on and what can you do about it?

Let’s look at child development for some clues. A three to five year-old’s main developmental task is separation and individuation—separating from you and learning what it is to become their own person. This involves learning to do things on their own and pushing back against you to understand where you end and they begin. At preschool young children have a “job” to do after they say goodbye. They are on their own, finding their way, following rules and directions from another adult, going to the potty, putting on their own coats and, in general, being independent.

And then, it’s your workday and you are now in the space where your child was just practicing his/her independent skills the day before. For some children, this can be confusing. This confusion may stem in part from a bit of inner turmoil—what to do and who to go to if there is conflict or they’re frustrated or upset about something. It’s pretty normal to find some children falling apart in mommy or daddy’s arms. You are their “go-to” person—the one who always makes it better. Thus, the dance between work day and non-work days for your child each week can be more emotional.

So, what can you do? First of all, remember that each child is an individual with their own developmental time frame and temperament. Children’s behavior in preschool can be a result of so many things, from a glorious morning to nothing going right, to family crises or a new sibling to not finding a perfect rock on the way to school. What you can do on your work day is know that it is normal, that it is simply a process that every child goes through in their own way and that you are not alone in this experience.

Prepare your child for your workday. I call this “front-loading” because you establish expectations for behavior before the event. Just like the ritual you might have created for separation, try creating one for after your workday. For example, talk with your child about your work day and make a plan to have some cozy time after class. You might say, “It’s my work day today at preschool. How about you pick a book for us to read after preschool and put it right on the counter. While we’re at preschool today, I’m going to helping Teacher Kris and all the kids, but after school, you and I are going to have some cozy time together.” Ask your child for their ideas.

If something happens during the school day, empathize with your child and give them some words to describe how they might be feeling—“You are really mad that I can’t play in the block area with you now. I wish I could, but my job today is in the art area. You can stay by my side or make another choice.” By remaining calm, you are allowing your child to have feelings, but also giving them the sense that they’re a big kid. If you’ve created an after workday plan, remind them of this or use positive reinforcement by surprising them with a whisper, “can’t wait for our date.”

Try not to pick up your child in your arms during the school day. This is one of my rules for parents because when children are picked up by mom or dad in preschool, they lose that mature self they have when you’re not at school. Other children may also notice you picking up your child for a cuddle and begin to waiver about their new-found independence. It’s helpful to remember that on your workday, you’re an assistant in the classroom for all the children.

Helping our child to separate from us does not mean he or she is going to love us less. Rather, it will help him or her feel good and trustful about their task of becoming their own person. Best of luck!
Reflecting on what is behind our child’s behavior empowers us as parents and helps us to communicate more effectively. What can we realistically expect from a two year-old? More importantly, our two year-old. Is our child's temperament impacting morning rush hour? Is he a slow-starter in the morning or does he find transitions more difficult than other children? When we are able to think calmly we are less reactive and able to make more effective choices as to how to respond or intervene with difficult behaviors. This builds the bonds of trust and the feeling of being understood, which often calms difficult interactions and lets our child use the thinking part of his brain, rather than being flooded with emotion.

Nurturing our relationship with our child by thinking reflectively is an important parenting "technique" to have in our toolbox, as it is through our connectedness and understanding of our child that our bond is strengthened and trust is built. This is a parenting tool that lasts beyond the child rearing years: it lasts a lifetime.

Resources:
http://reflectiveparenting.org/;
http://www.parentmap.com/article/reflective-parenting;
http://www.communityofmindfulparenting.com/;
http://drdansiegel.com/books/the_whole_brain_child/

New Fundraising For The Holidays!

Holiday cards and gifts abound with our new fundraising partner, tinyprints. 13% of sales from tinyprints, Shutterfly, treat, and Wedding Paper Divas goes to our PAC Scholarship Fund. Please bookmark these links, and share them with your friends, family and Facebook community. Be sure to use the links provided below as they have a direct connection to our account.

tinyprints: Premium cards and stationary for all of life’s events.
Shutterfly: Make your pictures come to life with prints, photo books, cards, and more.
treat: Specializing in personalized greeting cards.
Wedding Paper Divas: Wedding invitations and stationary for every step of the process.

This newsletter is for you! Please submit your words, photos, and ideas to Madeline Marrs at mad.klein@gmail.com

Donating to PAC

The need for scholarships continues to be high, and the end of the year is a good time to make a tax-deductible donation to the PAC Scholarship Fund. The more funds we raise the more we can support our co-op families. Checks can be mailed to PAC before the end of the year. In the memo line, write “for Scholarship Fund”.

NSCC Parent Education Program PAC Treasurer
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