

Co-op Community News

From the North Seattle Cooperative Preschool Parent Advisory Council

February 2001

Helping Our Children Feel Secure During A Crisis

By Nat Houtz, Parent Educator

All of us, who have or are parenting young children experience stress. Some days there are minor waves of change that we take in stride using problem-solving skills to smooth the ride. But sometimes a day or a moment in time can change our lives drastically or forever. A family crisis whether it occurs from a loss, trauma, illness or even a new job with a long commute can tax our coping abilities and strain family unity. Even very young children are sensitive to the emotions and tensions of the adults in the family. Often when a family crisis occurs the adults are so involved in the problem and the possible solutions that they have limited time for the children. Routines may be temporarily altered and children may begin to respond in ways that seem to make the problem worse! How can we "insulate" our children so they can weather a crisis without feeling abandoned or ignored?

The events precipitating a family crisis vary so much that a look at the general categories may help to determine how we might respond. Some crises are developmental, caused usually by someone entering or leaving the family: the birth of a child, a child entering school, a new marriage or relationship. Each of these events carries stresses of its own and a crisis may occur if the family is unable to change to accommodate the new situation. Most families find ways to grow through the crises of this sort.

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Event Calendar



- Feb 11 - PAC meeting (raffle tickets due)
- Feb 18 - President's Day
- Feb 18-22 - Mid-winter break
- Feb TBA - In-house registration
- Feb TBA - Treasurers' workshop
- March 2 - Open registration
- March 8 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation
- March 11 - PAC meeting (raffle drawing)
- March 15 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation
- April TBA - Parent Education seminar
- April 8-12 - Spring break
- April 15 - PAC meeting
- May 17 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation
- May 20 - PAC meeting
- May 27 - Memorial Day
- June 19 - Last day for students unless inclement weather makeup needed

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A second category of crisis is brought on by situations in life that may come suddenly without warning and are often characterized by loss, from loss of a loved one to loss of control of one's life. Some examples of these might be: extramarital affairs, unemployment, geographic moves, medical problems, financial problems, a family member's death, separation or divorce. Family crises that occur from these kinds of events may be well resolved with the help of a therapist.

Traumatic events that change the life of an individual or family forever have the potential to throw even strong, healthy families into chaos. Violence or disease that is life threatening, including death of a family member, abuse of a child, natural disasters and violent or random criminal acts can cause the worst kinds of crises.

Each of the situations listed in these three categories disrupts the normal flow of the family experiencing the crisis and can produce a wide range of problems for both adults and children. Many times the family will never be quite the same, but in spite of experiencing phenomenal stresses, can continue to grow and often come out stronger for the experience.

Children have a strong need and desire to feel safe in their environments, at home and at school. Many of the crises listed above have the potential to disrupt that sense of safety and comfort. When children feel frightened, vulnerable or abandoned they may temporarily regress to behaviors of an even younger child, such as excessive crying, clinging, loss of bladder or bowel control, fears, temper tantrums or aggressiveness to hide their sense of vulnerability. These are the signs of the stress that preschoolers may exhibit during a family crisis. Children should not be punished when these behaviors appear due to internal pressures caused by unusual happenings. Patience and kindness are the tools that support children in crisis.

If children ask questions, answer them simply and honestly in age-appropriate terms. They need a picture of what this crisis is all about, without details that may confuse and frighten them. Give them as much time and reassurance that you are able offer and allow them to heal at their own

pace, just as adults heal at different rates. Exercise, good nutrition and as much cuddling and nurture as they will allow, will support both you and your children. Ask for help — use the support networks you have built or professional help to get the support you need through the crisis so you can care for you child. Find moments for fun, even if it looks impossible. Reassure your child that you love him and will keep him safe.

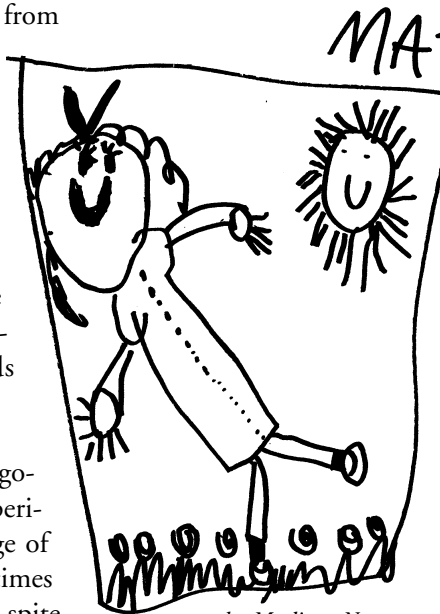
Laurie Kanyer, author of *Journey of Becoming a Mother and Connection: Building Attachment Between Parent and Child*, wrote, "When crises hit, it is the

depth of our daily relationships that help us to combat them, to learn and move on." It is during the smooth times that we practice building relationships. The ways you care for your children and care for yourself can build resilience that allows us to cope when times are tough.

Here are some ideas:

Get in the habit of using words to compliment and build one another up - to enjoy and express the love you feel for each other and build strength to open doors when faced with the shock and disbelief that can occur during crisis.

Try to be truthful in love to your children - so when difficult times come you are the best source of information.



by Madison Navarro, Age 5

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Calling All Gardeners

By Karen Truelove,
Toddler and Pre-Three Teacher

Express and communicate feelings - to become more sensitive and emotionally available and a model for your children.

Discover parenting as an opportunity to understand whom you really are - for diminishing guilt that often accompanies times of crisis.

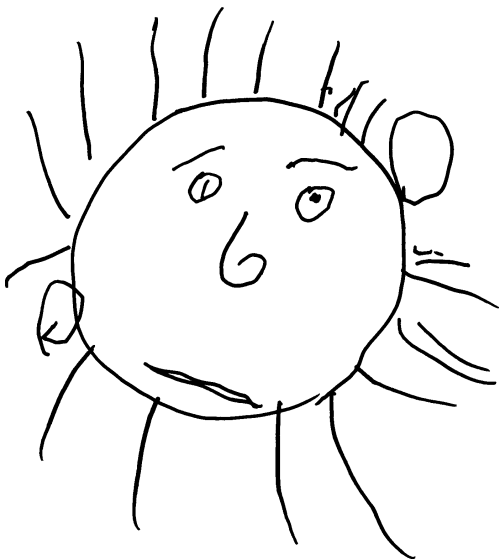
Treat one another with a tender heart - to decrease insecurity and fear that may leak in.

Don't let the sun go down on anger between you and your children - This will help combat the cumulative affect of past/future traumas.

Use positive self-talk - let the voice in your head build up your confidence and courage, not drag you down.

Learn problem solving skills and teach them to your children -to better cope with potential crises before they develop.

These suggestions are just a short list that may help when your family faces a new path. Hard times come to all, but optimism and love can present each crisis as an opportunity to grow.



"Sun Papa"
by Frances Tapping, Age 3

Whenver I see primroses for sale at the neighborhood grocery store, I know spring can't be too far from arriving. Time to start thinking about planting and digging! Most preschoolers love digging in the dirt and can get very excited about helping to plan and plant the garden. Even better, if there is room, let them have their very own garden area. It doesn't need to be very large. If space is a concern, a small container for them will work just fine.

Shopping for seeds and/or plants can be a "decision making experience" for the entire family. Then it's time to put on the old clothes, old shoes, etc. and get busy outside. Child-sized gardening gloves, rakes, shovels, and hoes are available if you desire. Children really enjoy using "the real tool" the best and it's fun to work along side Mom and Dad in the out-of-doors.

Gardens might include:

- ◆ Vegetables, herbs, flowers
- ◆ Add small plastic farm or zoo animals (we planted a hardy "farm garden" at Cedar Park Toddlers Coop last spring using sturdy Chrysanthemums and Calendula plants. The kids loved moving the animals all around the garden and the plants thrived in spite of a weekly "trampling".
- ◆ Add small plastic dinosaurs
- ◆ Add a collection of shells or rocks or other special favorite items
- ◆ Paint a special rock or block of wood to proclaim "Anita's Garden"

In any event, have fun together. Developing a love of Nature and the out-of-doors; learning to take care of a garden; watching together for worms, butterflies, and lady bugs is a very special gift of time and love we can give our kids. Enjoy! Enjoy!

P.S. Be sure to take some photos of your gardeners and their gardens to enjoy together next winter when it's cold and dark.



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Call To Action



A new playground is being planned at Meadowbrook for neighborhood children.

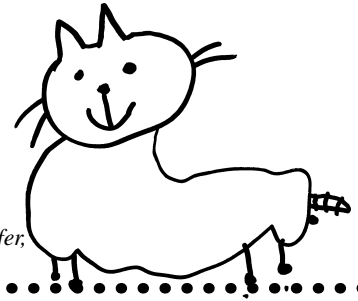
In memory of their daughter, the Yasuda family has helped establish a fund called Annie's Playground with the Meadowbrook Advisory Council and the city's program of Neighborhood Matching Funds. Any donation made is tax deductible and will be matched by the city.

If you have any questions or wish to support Annie's Playground, please contact:

Janet Wilson (206) 684-7522
Meadowbrook Center
10517 35th Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98125



"Dog, Sun & Flowers" by Alex Upenieks, Age 4



"Cat" by Vlasta Schutzenhofer, Age 3

Co-op Openings

These co-ops had openings as of January 5. There may be some changes. The PAC website has full listings: <http://nscuccx.sccd.ctc.edu/~parented/>

Toddlers

Northgate p.m.....3
524-6736 - Jill Colley

Pre-3's

Crown Hill.....3
783-3916 - Charlotte Hollebeke
Northgate (2-5's).....10
782-9591 - Joan Leppek
Wedgwood.....1
523-5261 - Cindy Winemiller
Woodland Park.....1
706-0769 - Vanessa Usen

3 to 5's

Broadview.....1
542-5726 - Erica Larimer
Ingraham.....6
363-6816 - Carolyn Foster
Wallingford p.m.....5
366-0806 - Ingrid Falip
Crown Hill p.m.....1
784-4501 - Amy Gannar
Meadowbrook 5s.....1
523-6064 - Dennis Bateman
Victory Heights a.m....1
525-5108 - Inga Manskopf

Scholarships are available through the Parent Advisory Council .