

Co-op Community News

March 2010



From the Parent Advisory Council of the
North Seattle Community College
Cooperative Preschool Program

Calendar

Mar 29 - Apr 2
Spring break (no school)

March 20
Open Registration
With Raffle & Bake Sale
Info Fair 10:00 - 10:50
in the NSCC Cafeteria
Registration 11:00 -
12:00 in the Baxter
Center

April 12
Free PAC Lecture:
Cynthia Lair
*Feeding the
Whole Family*
7pm at Faith Lutheran
Church (near Lake
City Way)

April 24
Story Time with
Teacher Karen
11am at Mockingbird
Books, 7220 Woodlawn
Ave NE, Seattle

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What is Positive Discipline?

By Andrea Baumgarten, NSCC Parent Educator

You may have heard the term “Positive Discipline.” It sounds nice (well, at least positive), but what is it, really? Positive Discipline is an approach to parenting (and teaching) that looks at children’s behavior from a fresh angle. Instead of beginning with the question, “How do we stop this behavior?,” we ask instead **what purpose** the behavior serves. Alfred Adler, Rudolf Dreikurs, Jane Nelsen, and Lynn Lott pioneered and built upon this approach, and suggested that human behavior has two goals, **belonging** (a sense of connection) and **significance** (a sense of meaning).



Positive Discipline theory holds that:

- People are continually making **decisions** based on how their world is perceived, *whether or not those decisions/conclusions are accurate (private logic)*.
- We make choices / behave with the underlying purpose of **feeling better**.
- Human beings seek innately to be members of a community: we feel better when we **belong**.
- Human beings seek innately to make a contribution / have meaning in their community: we feel better when we have **significance**.
- Belonging and Significance are the underlying **purposes** behind all behavior.

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Building Strong Sibling Relationships

Nearly 300 parents packed the Faith Lutheran Church for Vicki Smolke's free lecture "Mindful Parenting: Strategies for Building and Supporting Strong Sibling Relationships," sponsored by PAC. What an outstanding turnout for a winter night in Seattle!

Smolke talked about looking beyond sibling "rivalry," focusing instead on how to help our children develop unique relationships with each other. Here are some of the strategies she discussed.

Looking at Ourselves

Smolke encouraged parents to reflect on our own sibling relationships growing up. What did we learn from them? How would we have liked them to be different? Our background influences how we view our own children and how we react to them. It's important to be mindful of what we're bringing to the table.

Emotion Coaching

Smolke referenced John Gottman's "emotion coaching" and stressed the importance of simply being aware of our children's emotions – not just frustration or sadness, but the lower-intensity emotions as well. We can communicate the emotion, accept it, and give our children words to express it. We can distinguish between emotions and behaviors. For example: "It's okay to be angry; it's not okay to hit."



It's also okay if parents don't do emotion coaching 100% of the time, Smolke reassured her audience. Emotion coaching works best when it feels authentic and comes naturally. It doesn't have to be perfect. But when we do use it, it can make a big difference.

Handling Conflicts

Smolke acknowledged that it drives parents crazy when siblings fight, but siblings can learn cooperation through conflicts. The trick is to lay the foundation for a "problem solver" approach when they're *not* fighting. During the course of our everyday activities, parents can draw attention to problems and encourage children to help think of solutions.

When conflict erupts, Smolke said it's best for parents to avoid the "referee" role and, instead, describe what we see. "You are furious. You wish he'd ask before using your things." From there, we can offer to help them come up with solutions. But the boundaries need to be clear: "People are not for hurting. If you need help stopping, I'll help you." Smolke noted that forced apologies aren't very effective, but parents can offer it as an option: "You could say you're sorry."

Once everyone is calm again, maybe later in the day, parents and children can revisit the incident. The



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Building Strong Sibling Relationships *(Continued from page 2)*

parent can tell the story exactly as it happened, letting the children chime in, and then move on to the problem solving. "I wonder what we can do differently next time?" Smolke encouraged parents to acknowledge when things are going well, too.

Team Spirit

Smolke urged parents to avoid comparisons and competition. Our children all have their differences: temperament, gender, age, birth order, etc. As parents, we must recognize, accept, and enjoy their differences. That's what makes them unique. At the same time, Smolke reminded her audience not to assign each child a space. We can let them play different roles. "Recognize each child as the original and not a dimmer copy of the other," she said.

"Fair" Doesn't Always Mean "Equal"

Rather than making sure each sibling gets the same amount (whether it's scrambled eggs or new shoes), Smolke encouraged parents to respond to each child's individual need. Not everybody needs to buy shoes on the same day. Not everyone can eat the same amount of scrambled eggs. And there are lots of things, like story time, that can't really be quantified.

Smolke discouraged parents from responding to "It's not fair!" with "Life isn't fair." She said that concept is too abstract for a small child, and it negates their feelings. Instead, parents can say something like "It *feels* unfair. You wish mommy could play with you right now. It's hard to wait." Or . . . "Do you want more eggs?" Keep the focus on the matter at hand.

Quality Time

Smolke reminded her audience that family togetherness doesn't always have to mean "the whole pack." It's important to give each child some special time with each parent. It's also good for siblings to have unstructured time together to play and interact at home. Smolke also emphasized the importance of down time – for parents *and* for siblings. Everyone needs time to feel tired and to engage in self care.



Resources:

Becoming The Parent You Want To Be, by Laura Davis & Janis Keyser

Loving Each One Best, by Nancy Samalin

Raising An Emotionally Intelligent Child, by John Gottman

Siblings Without Rivalry, by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Help! The Kids Are At It Again: Using Kids' Quarrels to Teach "People" Skills, by Elizabeth Crary

Additional Resources on Sibling Relationships:

Is This A Phase?, Helen F. Neville, Parenting Press

Just Tell Me What to Say, Betsy Brown Braun

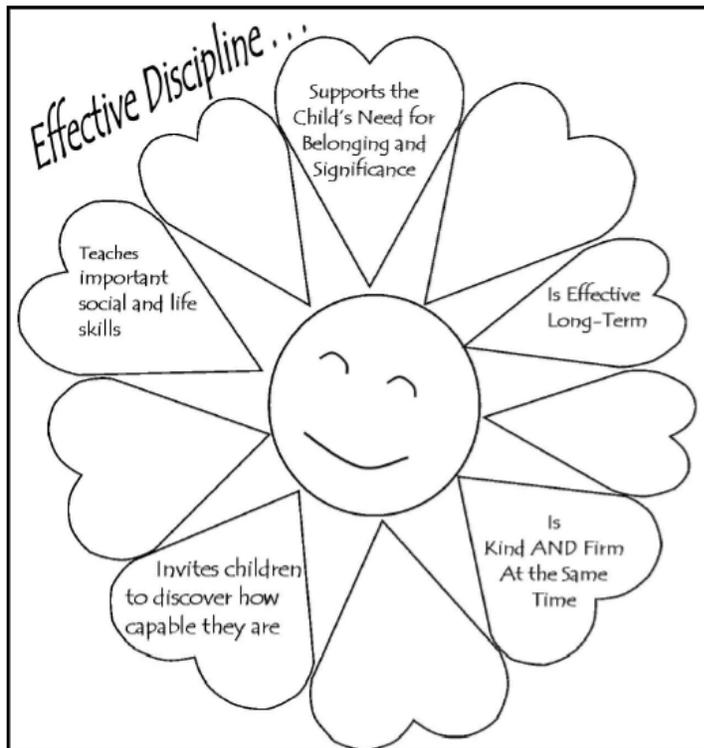
"Mom, Jason's Breathing On Me!" : The Solution to Sibling Bickering, Anthony E. Wolf

Positive Discipline, The First Three Years and The Preschool Years, Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin & Roslyn Ann Duffy

Handouts are available on our Web site: <http://coops.northseattle.edu/>

What is Positive Discipline *(Continued from page 1)*

- Misbehavior arises from the child's **mistaken belief** about how to find **belonging** and **significance**. Many might wonder how misbehavior could possibly be about connection or importance. Remember:
 - *A child's perception and interpretation of a situation is often different from an adult's.*
 - *A child may have a mistaken belief about what "belonging" or "importance" is.*
- When a child makes a decision about how she belongs (or doesn't) in a family or classroom, it changes how the child sees the world around her or him.
- For children (and adults) who are not feeling a sense of belonging or significance, behavior that they think will make them feel better often looks like mischief, trouble, or misbehavior.
- **Mistakes** are not just hurdles, but crucial opportunities to learn **repair**, or how we "make it better" with others.
- Kids do better when they feel better. They feel better when they are encouraged and empowered (but not pampered or enabled).
- Effective discipline is **kind and firm at the same time**. As parents, teachers, and caregivers, we will be most successful when we "connect before we correct."



Some Useful Positive Discipline One-Liners:

- "What do you think about ..."
- "What's your plan for ..."
- "I'm not sure what I think about that. I'll have to think about it and get back to you."
- "I have faith in you to do the job and I'm comfortable with you learning the lesson."
- "I can tell your body needs a break. Want to (read with me)? Or (listen to music)?"
- "I notice ..." "I appreciate ..." "I apologize ..."
- A simple, blame-free word: "Whoops."
- AND instead of BUT: "I am glad you're safe AND we keep all four chair legs on the floor."
- Make expectations clear: "As soon as you finish cleaning up, you may ..." (This is also affectionately known as Grandma's Rule.)
- Respond with a question: "Would you like to do this yourself, or do you want/need my help?"
- State your rules up front: "Plates go in the dishwasher after you finish snack." "Our house rule is that when kids come over to play, we include everyone who wants to join in." "We touch gently."
- Check the child's knowledge or understanding (this also builds literacy/math skills because it enhances sequencing): "What needs to happen before you can ..."
- Invite cooperation: "I need your help . . . Can you figure out the most helpful thing you could do right now?"
- For whining: "What words can you use so I can hear you?"

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Story Time

With Teacher Karen

Saturday, April 24th , 11:00 - 11:30 AM

Mockingbird Books
7220 Woodlawn Ave NE, Seattle

*10% of book sales will be donated to the
PAC Scholarship Fund.*



What is Positive Discipline *(Continued from page 4)*

- Explore consequences of choices:
 - “What happened? (Tell me more about _____)” “How do you feel about it?” “What did you learn?” “What are some ideas for next time?” “What ideas do you have to solve the problem now?”
 - Limited choices: “Would you rather brush your teeth before or after bath time?”
- Say what you want and mean: “I want you to put the scotch tape back when you are done using it.” “The answer is no. (brief pause) It is okay to be upset or feel disappointed.”
- Make an agreement: “Let’s see how we can make this work for both of us.” (Don’t use this when there is an established rule or understanding that you are intending on continuing.)
- Use non-verbal language: a gentle touch on the shoulder to redirect, a look with a smile, a pre-agreed upon secret signal, etc.
- Use few words: “Socks,” instead of, “Please don’t leave your socks by the front door.”
- Use “No” sparingly: Try to phrase things positively—“We keep food on the plate” instead of “No throwing food” (However, used sparingly, “no” can have an impact— “My answer is no.”) Give children appropriate ways to learn and exercise powerful “no’s” and “yeses” by offering options: “Do you want cheese on your burger?”
- Follow through: “Time to ... now.” Don’t argue, promise, negotiate. Just repeat the main word— “Now.” (A word of caution— if you get so busy you run the risk of forgetting to follow through, don’t choose this option.)
- Be Goofy, Have Fun!

Sources: materials by Jody McVittie and Barbara Kinney; materials/ articles/ books by Jane Nelson, Lynn Lott, Cheryl Erwin, Suzanne Smitha, Roslyn Duffy, Mary Hughes, Kate Ortolano, Lisa Larson, Jim Linder. Want to learn more about Positive Discipline? Check the Parenting Calendar at www.pasadler.org for upcoming **Parenting from the Heart** classes, or see www.positivediscipline.com.

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. For more information: www.paxusa.org.

Preschool Teacher Openings

Meadowbrook 3-5's
Contact Parent Ed Instructor
Cesily Crowser
ccrowser@sccd.ctc.edu

Meadowbrook 5's
Contact Amy Hobson
amyhobson@comcast.net

Northgate Multi-Age Evening Class
Contact Parent Ed Instructor
Chris David
david_teach@msn.com

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wedgwoodcoop@hotmail.com

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