



The Parental Involvement Connection

Home & School: Together We Can Make a Difference

November, 2009

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Issue XX

Getting Your Family Involved

By Terri Stafford



As a parent, you want to guide your child to become a healthy adult. What kind of activities can you do together as a family that will steer your child toward becoming a compassionate adult? Of course, modeling is very important, but getting your family involved in community service and volunteerism is another great way. Not only will you show your child that it is "cool" to care for others, but it is also a wonderful way to meet new people.

Reasons to Get Involved

It feels good. When you commit your time and effort to an organization or a cause you feel strongly about, the feeling of fulfillment can be endless.

It strengthens your community. When a community is doing well as a whole, its individuals are better off, too.

It can strengthen your family. Volunteerism is a great way for families to have fun and feel closer. You could select just one or two projects a year and make them a family tradition.

What Kids Can Learn From Volunteering

If volunteering begins at an early age, it can become part of kids' lives - something they might just expect and want to do. It can teach them:

A sense of responsibility. By volunteering, kids and teens learn what it means to make and keep a commitment. But they also learn that, ultimately, we're all responsible for the well-being of our communities.

That one person can make a difference. A wonderful, empowering message for kids is that they're important enough to have an impact on someone or something else.

The benefit of sacrifice. By giving up a toy to a less fortunate child, a child learns that sometimes it's good to sacrifice.

Tolerance. Kids and teens learn that even the most diverse individuals can be united by common values.

Good Volunteer Jobs for Families and Kids

Families can do many volunteer jobs. Even the smallest child (with adult supervision) can pick up garbage at the park, playground, or beach. You don't even have to be part of a big effort to do this. Get your family together, find some garbage bags, and head out. Work at a community food bank or soup kitchen as a family. Find an organization that serves the elderly. Take food to people who are homebound and visit with them. Your kids can brighten a lonely senior's day instantly. Offer your family's help at the local animal shelter. Help plant flowers or trees. **The possibilities are endless.** Whatever you choose to do, volunteering and community service can benefit both the community and your family. Get involved today! You will be giving your child a gift of a lifetime.



D Sharon Pruitt

EVERYTHING WE DO

We may not always realize that everything we do
Affects not only our lives but touches others too.
A single happy smile can always brighten up the day
For anyone who happens to be passing by your way.
And a little bit of thoughtfulness that shows someone you care
Creates a ray of sunshine for both of you to share.
Yes, every time you offer someone a helping hand,
Every time you show a friend you understand.
Every time you have a kind and gentle word to give,
You help someone to find beauty in this precious life we live.
For happiness brings happiness and loving ways bring love,
And giving is the treasure that contentment is made of.

~ Author Unknown

Live so that when
your children think of
fairness and integrity,
they think of you.



~ H. Jackson Brown

How to Squelch the Squabbles of Sibling Rivalry

Chances are your kids are going to grow up as each other's friends, playmates, confidants and protectors. They'll also be dreaded enemies, competitors, and adversaries when it comes to getting what they want from mom and dad. Oh, the ongoing battles and daily squabbles probably won't reach the fairy tale proportions of Cinderella and her dreaded stepsisters, but like it or not, children in the same family are going to fight. It's only natural. However, a little rivalry is not always a bad thing, provided parents keep on their toes and see it for what it is: a necessary part of growing up.

There's No Way Around It?

Brothers and sisters fight for all sorts of reasons, starting with the fact that they're going after the same thing: the love, time, attention, and approval of their parents. Competition is a completely natural instinct, as is the simple teasing which starts many children's arguments—it helps kids learn how other people operate emotionally. Also, there's no denying that we live in a competitive society where we're told to win and be the best. Of course your children are going to be jealous of each other from time to time. So when it all gets to be too much, it's important to remember that the bickering is not anyone's fault—not the oldest kid's or the youngest kid's or yours, as a parent. Conflict is simply going to happen; that's the way it works.

Why is it Worse With Some Kids?

A variety of factors decide which kids are going to have a harder time sharing in a family setting, and what might figure into tension around the house.

- **Temperament** - Some kids are naturally more easygoing and willing to play well with others, which tends to win them praise. Others may have a more difficult or forceful personality, and may find ways to get attention through “problem behavior.”
 - **Gender** - In general, rivalry is reduced when two children are of the opposite sex. With two boys or two girls, there's more pressure to be different, to be better than one another and find different ways to compete for a parent's affection.
 - **Age and age difference** - When a new baby is born, younger children often have the hardest time. It's extremely difficult for toddlers less than three or four years old to share anything, much less grasp that mom and dad have enough love to go around. Also, sibling rivalry sometimes becomes more obvious when kids are older and more directly in competition (playing the same games, going to the same school, etc.).
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- **Don't ignore good behavior.** It's easy to overlook the kid who's not causing a problem. Try shifting the focus and attention away from bad behavior; rewarding the good will act as a cue for both children.
 - **Avoid making comparisons between children.** Comparing kids—“Look at how neat your brother is!”—will only make them more competitive, and can backfire if you're trying to encourage good behavior.
 - **Plan activities where everyone can win.** If one kid's an athlete and the other's an artist, weekly games of catch might not be your best bet for family fun. Be creative and find things for everyone's talents.
 - **Spend time with each child, and give each his or her own space.** Be sure to regularly make time for each one of your children. It's also important that they have their own space in the house even if it's not a separate room, and are allowed their own privacy.
 - **Take turns with privileges, and tasks.** Set a clear schedule for alternating things like riding “shot gun” in the car, choosing a TV program or restaurant, and helping with the dishes or taking out the trash.
 - **Whenever possible, stay out of fights.** When left to themselves, kids will often settle their own problems. It might work to simply ignore the argument, to go into another room, or to send the kids outside. Without a referee, fighting isn't as much fun. Sometimes, however, you as parents do have to get involved. You must step in if the same argument keeps happening over and over again, or if the fight is serious and one or both children are in danger. If the situation is getting violent, make it clear to both children that letting things get to this point is never OK. Once the children have calmed down, ask them for their ideas on how to resolve it, once and for all.
- Sibling rivalry is never going to be a walk in the park, no matter who's involved or how you handle it. But it doesn't have to rule out a happily-everafter. And remember, there's a plus side to the struggle: your kids are learning how to deal with disagreements and how to stand up for themselves. So give yourself a break and keep your sense of humor. It will get easier.

Source: Accor Services North America, Inc. (2004). Sibling Rivalry. Retrieved October 25, 2005, from the Accor Services North America database.

Six Pillars of Character

A person of character is a good role model and citizen. The Six Pillars of Character provide an excellent framework for teaching the values that a person of strong character embodies. Here's a quick review and summary of how you and your children can live the Six Pillars in your everyday lives.



Trustworthiness:

- Be honest. Don't deceive, cheat, or steal.
- Be reliable. Do what you say you'll do.
- Be courageous. Do what's right, even when it's difficult.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal. Stand by your family, friends and country.

Fairness:

- Play by the rules. Take turns, and share.
- Be open-minded. Listen to others and their different opinions.
- Be judicious. Don't take advantage of others, and don't blame others recklessly.



Respect:

- Live the Golden Rule.
- Be tolerant of differences. Be considerate of others' feelings.
- Be peaceful. Don't threaten, hit, insult or hurt others.

Caring:

- Be kind.
- Be compassionate, and show you care.
- Be grateful, and express your gratitude.
- Be forgiving.
- Be helpful to those in need.



Responsibility:

- Be dependable. Do the best you can at whatever is asked of you, and persevere.
- Be self-disciplined. Control your emotions, and think before you act.
- Be accountable for your choices and actions.

Citizenship:

- Do your share to make your school and community better.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey the laws and rules. Respect authority.
- Protect the environment.



Source: parenting.org

MOMS

BUILDING CHARACTER

Do you know the building blocks of good character? Well thankfulness is one of them. It's great for children to learn to appreciate all of the blessings in their lives – especially the things they, and we, take for granted. Every now and then, ask your kids to tell you three things they're thankful for. You can get even more specific by asking them to name what they're thankful for at school, at home or in nature. Having that "attitude of gratitude" helps build character by teaching our children to focus on the positive. Then, when trying times come into their lives, their character will not crumble. Instead, they'll find hope because they've trained their mind and heart to be thankful.



DADS

SAVE, SHARE AND SPEND

By the time a child reaches the age of twenty, he's received an average of \$33,000 in allowance. That's a lot of money! So use it as a tool to teach your children about saving, sharing and spending. First, have chores your children can do to earn the money. Next, have your kids save half of their allowance. Then help them develop a giving heart by setting aside money for church or charity. Finally, let them spend a portion of their hard-earned money both on present wants and earmark for future wants. If you teach your children how to save-share-spend, you'll be making a profound investment in their future family.



These tips are found at www.FamilyFirst.net and/or AllProDad.com. Watch for "Mom" and "Dad" tips in each issue of the *Parental Involvement Connection*.



Plan ahead now for bad-weather days. When rain or snow puts a damper on playing outside and cabin fever is driving everyone bonkers, these quick play-and-pretend ideas will keep kids occupied and happy for hours.

Put on a Show With Homemade Puppets

We've all created puppets out of cotton socks, paper bags, markers, and a handful of buttons. But kids can get really creative with a cool grab-bag of puppetry accessories that you gather and store in a special Puppet Box. As you're cleaning the house or shopping at grocery, thrift, or dollar stores, keep an eye out for fun adornments for homemade puppets.



Collect and buy: glitter, dried beans, sequins, tinsel, pipe cleaners, string, ribbons, yarn, buttons and appliques, holiday decorations, stickers, seashells, etc. (beware of small objects, though, that could pose a choking hazard for small children).

Also keep your Puppet Box stocked with must-have items like glue, scissors, washable markers, Popsicle sticks, and a needle and thread. When sewing, supervise young kids or do sewing projects yourself. Also, keep a few small cardboard boxes — folded and flattened for easy storage — to cut out and color for nifty background scenes and props.

Build a Fort

Get out some old sheets, blankets, or comforters and drape them over the living or dining room furniture. (Be extra careful around breakable and valuable items.) Use ribbons from your sewing kit, or hair scrunchies and hair ties to secure the bottoms of the fabrics to chairs and tables.



Have kids create a secret password that allows outsiders (e.g., Mom and Dad, siblings) into the private hide-away. Give your kid a battery-operated camping lantern, sleeping bags, camping-themed books, and flashlights for that added outdoorsy appeal.

Create a Rainy-Day Dress-Up Chest

Keep an eye out for interesting old clothes items and accessories around the house, on discount racks, and at dollar stores or thrift shops. Stock up on scarves, funky hats (cowboy hats, sombreros, team baseball caps, construction hard hats, etc.), costume jewelry, shoes (adults' and kids'), shirts (oversized white shirts for doctors' lab coats, Hawaiian shirts for a luau, etc.), dresses, skirts, and jackets. Collect any piece of clothing or accessory that could lend itself to make-believe.



Put the items in a sturdy plastic storage bin or cardboard box. Then pull out the dress-up chest for plenty of imagination-powered entertainment during rainy or super-snowy days.

Make Thank-You Gifts

Kids often like to thank their caregivers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers, babysitters, neighbors, and childcare workers. Bake a few batches of cookies that your child can lovingly decorate and wrap with colored plastic wrap and ribbons; or create thank-you cards on regular old printer paper or construction paper. Add special glued-on adornments like family photos, ribbons, glitter, and buttons (again, beware of small objects that could pose choking hazards for babies and toddlers).



Help improve kids' spelling and letter identification skills by letting them type and print out their own messages in fancy fonts on the computer. Instead of doing crafts just to get through the day, this project will help kids feel like their time and efforts are being spent on a greater purpose — giving to someone they care about.

www.kidshealth.org



The best place to go with a child is in their imagination. ... from "Wit & Wisdom" by H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Upcoming Workshops

Learning for a Change Summit IV

February 8-10, 2010

Hilton Austin Airport Hotel, Austin, Texas

First Two Days: School Support

James Vollbract - "School Culture"

John Blaydes - "Survival Skills for Educational Leaders"

Third Day: Parental Involvement

Fran Hjalmarson - "Increasing Parental Involvement through Differentiated Parent Support"

For additional information and registration:

[Workshop Registration](#)

SCHOOL LUNCH

THE HEALTHY WAY FOR THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY

LUNCH

ALL WE NEED IS U.



Give your child credit for trying new foods at school. Keep an "I'll be having it" chart on the refrigerator and write the name of each new food your child tries. Your child can fill in a star to rate how often he or she will continue to eat that food.

Did You Know? Children who eat school lunches may get more milk, meats, grains, vegetables and fruits in their diets than children who bring lunch from home. Not only do they eat more nutritious lunches, but they also get a more complete range of nutrients over the whole day. What's more, the healthy eating experiences they receive in the school cafeteria – enjoying nutritious foods and learning to seek them out – will stay with them into weekends and summers, and even into adulthood.

Healthy by Design

School lunches meet state and federal regulations requiring they:

- Provide one-third of children's daily needs for calories, protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium.
- Average no more than 30 percent of calories from fat; no more than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat; and meet limits for the amount of fat in any single food item.
- Offer a variety of milk options, including fat-free, low-fat and reduced-fat milk.
- Are age-appropriate, providing the right levels of nutrients for a child's growing needs.

Encouraging Nutritious Choices

School lunches are moving toward supporting and reinforcing better nutrition choices based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which focus on whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and lower-fat dairy products as "Food Groups to Encourage." By offering more nutritious foods, children enjoy school meals and even substitute nutritious choices for less healthy options. As guidance from the experts emerges in the future, school menus will continue evolving to serve the best lunches in town! Stop by your child's cafeteria and you will probably see items like whole wheat breads, reduced-fat foods, and a variety of fruits and vegetables being offered as part of their school meals.

"I'll be having it!"

My New Food At School

Sometimes
Often
Every time

1. broccoli			x
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Try this:

Use new words as you explore new foods together.

Ask: How does this food:

Look? Green, orange, purple, round, skinny, oval, tiny, huge

Feel? Fuzzy, smooth, bumpy, prickly, soft, hard, hot, cold

Sound? Crunch, crackle, splash, pop, snap

Taste? Sweet, salty, spicy, sour



square meals

Nourishing children's bodies and minds.

Commissioner Todd Staples
Texas Department of Agriculture

If you have questions about your school's menu, talk to the school foodservice director. For a full copy of the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy or for more information, go to www.squaremeals.org. Square Meals is the Texas Department of Agriculture's school nutrition education and outreach program, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. In accordance with Federal law and United States Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication and Compliance, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 205-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Resolutions Can Give Your Child a Fresh Start in 2010

Making New Year's resolutions can put your child on track to doing better in the new year—both at home and in school.

Follow these steps to help your child make resolutions:

- Explain what New Year's resolutions are—promises you make to yourself.
- Ask your child what he'd like to accomplish in the new year. What areas would he like to improve? Your child should come up with ideas to feel ownership in the resolution.
- Avoid telling him what resolutions to make. You may want him to promise to keep his room clean. He may want to memorize statistics of his favorite sports players.
- Guide him with suggestions related to learning and doing better in school. Perhaps he's interested in learning a new skill—a musical instrument or a foreign language.
- Encourage him to be realistic. It's unlikely he'll be able to give up video games for a week, or get an "A" on every test and assignment. But he can give up video games one day a week. And he can raise his grades.
- Help him be specific. Doing better in school is too general. Paying attention in class, doing homework and reading every day are specific activities that lead to better grades.
- Set up a way for your child to measure his progress. A chart or calendar on the wall will work.



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2 FREE Tools for College-Bound Students and Their Parents

Financial Aid Monthly Action Plan – Knowing what to do and when to maximize financial aid is difficult. Many consultants charge thousands of dollars to help students/parents follow a plan. We think people can improve their success without spending that much. So, we created a newsletter that gives specific instructions each month on exactly what to do – what forms to fill out, what research to do, what actions to take, etc. The first issue went out this month – you can see it at <http://financialaidtips.com/FinancialAidTips.htm>. You can also see CBS News' coverage of the announcement at:

<http://finance.bnet.com/bnet/?GUID=9572457&Page=MEDIAVIEWER>
You can sign up to receive it free at: www.newsletter.financialaidtips.com.

Free "Scholarship of the Day" – Because scholarships are becoming more difficult to find, we are posting a 'scholarship of the day' that provides a quick overview to one specific scholarship each day. Students/parents can go to a website to find it or track each day via Facebook (become a fan of FinancialAidTips.com page), Twitter (ScholarshipFund) or view directly at www.scholarships.financialaidtips.com. While not all scholarships will apply to all students, this will give them a way to determine in about 20 seconds if the day's posting is one they should pursue. Many we post are little-known and, thus, less competitive. You can learn more about what we are doing with this effort from Entrepreneur Magazine's coverage of our new service at:

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/PRWeb/release/15412.html>.

www.rapidguide.net

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The Parental Involvement Connection

is posted on our web site four times a year for parents and educators of Texas.

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Title I Statewide School Support/Parental Involvement Initiative



<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

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