



PARENT / COMMUNITY Network

Volume 16, Issue 2

Winter 2009/ 2010

Mark your Calendars

13th Annual
Parent University
Saturday, February 6

Lyons Township
High School
South Campus

8:15 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Keynote Speaker
Bill Johnson
"Love Your Kids No
Matter What"

Bill is a youth consultant
and frequent energetic
guest speaker.

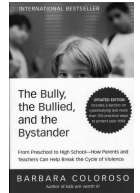
Sampling of Breakout Session Topics:

- Cyberspace Teen
- Preparing your Child for School
- Bully Proof Your Kids
- Parenting from Mars & Venus
- Keeping Your Family Grounded & Connected
- Social Skills in Middle School.
- Understanding Sibling Behavior
- And many more!

Parent University brochure and registration forms will be available in late December. They will be distributed via the schools and/or can be downloaded from www.lths.net/InfoFor/Parents/PCN

The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander: From Preschool to High School ~ How Parents & Teachers Can Help Break the Cycle of Violence

By Barbara Coloroso



It is easy to point fingers; place blame; fortify our schools; push zero-tolerance plans; mandate a bully awareness week; stiffen penalties for bullying; or simply ignore the problem and hope it will go away. **It is more difficult—and necessary**—that we as individuals, families, and entire communities create safe harbor for all of our children. We must do what is necessary to take the weapons out of the hearts, minds, and hands of our kids. We need to give kids the tools to be able to stand up for their own rights while respecting the rights and legitimate needs of others; to handle conflicts nonviolently; to act with integrity when confronted with difficult situations such as peer pressure to cause harm; and to develop a personal code (inner moral code) that gives them the wherewithal to do what is right in spite of external consequences and never merely because of them. No easy task; no simple answers.

Barbara Coloroso is a bestselling author and, for the past 30 years, an internationally recognized speaker and consultant on parenting, teaching, positive school climate, nonviolent conflict resolution, and grieving. She has appeared on *Oprah*, CBS's *The Early Show*, and more, and she has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Newsweek*, and elsewhere.

Her uniquely effective parenting strategies were developed through her years of training in sociology, special education, philosophy, and theology (she is a former Franciscan nun), as well as field-tested through her experiences as a classroom teacher, university instructor, seminar leader, and mother of three grown children. Her other classic books include *Parent's Guide Award winners Kids are Worth it!* and *Parenting Through Crisis*.

Author, Speaker
Barbara Coloroso
Tuesday,
January 19, 2010
7:00 p.m.
LTHS
North Campus -
Reber Center
All are invited to
this free event

Pillars and Parent Community Network Event

Pillars and Parent Community Network co-sponsored an event on September 24 titled, "We Can Talk About It - Supporting our Grieving Children and Youth." Over two dozen parents, community members and LT staff discussed and addressed the issue of grief and loss, with special emphasis on how grief looks in children and adolescents. There was some attention given to 'complicated' grief, when there is a tragedy such as a suicide. We were pleased to have Linda Moran, LCPC, as the leader for this interactive discussion. The goal was for attendees to understand and learn how to be the safe adult that children and youth can lean on during their grieving process.

Parent Community Network relies on donations to fund its mission. We greatly appreciate all of our individual and business sponsors as well as funding from various schools.

Top PCN/ PU Donors 2009

- Township of Lyons
- Lyons Township High School (LTHS) PTC
- LTHS Boosters
- McClure Junior High PTC
- The Kiwanis of Western Springs

Special Mention:

- *Western Springs National Bank and Trust*
- *First National Bank of La Grange*

THANK YOU!

Signs of Trouble or Passing Storm?

By Beth Venzke, Ph.D.

There's a saying in the Chicago area- "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes, it will change". This saying can also be applied to children. They are constantly changing. This is the nature of children from the moment they are conceived. Through this constant change, their brains are developing allowing them to learn new things, make new friends, and grow into independent adults.



How do parents know, however, when these changes are normal signs of development or signs of distress that need to be addressed? There is no one answer to this question. The answer depends on several factors such as the age of the child, the nature of the new behavior, and the parents' intuition. However, there are warning signs that need to be heeded and responded to immediately to prevent a child from developing a problem.

Some of the warning signs include: increased aggression, increased isolation, change in appetite or sleep patterns, change in school behavior, and changes in interests or hobbies. While all children and teens periodically show such changes, when the changes are long lasting (more than a few days), it may indicate a problem.

Parents are the best solution. You need to find out what is happening in your child's life that is causing him or her stress. However, children and teens often lack the cognitive capabilities to know what is bothering them. Parents need to be patient in helping their child figure out what is bothering them. Asking direct questions is typically not successful. You know your child best and know the best way to help him or her. The key is to follow your intuition. If you feel something is bothering your child, there probably is. Your child, no matter how old, depends on you to help them navigate the many changes they face everyday.

How Would You Feel?

by Liz Skrodzki, M.A.T.

If we want the benefits of a safe and caring community, we bear the responsibility for creating and sustaining that culture. This year, as in the past several years, our libraries and lecture halls (*such as Parent University*) provide many books and speakers. There is plenty of information on mean girls, cyber bullying, and other kinds of abuse. Noted author Barbara Coloroso, who will speak at LT in January, explores the seven steps to take if your child is the bully. These opportunities provide us the "head" knowledge of this difficult problem.

But that knowledge needs to take root in our hearts and actions as well. Bullying takes many guises and sometimes is very apparent, more often it is easy to miss. We can be tricked into thinking it's kid stuff. It's also adult stuff. How about road rage and sporting events for starters? Our own habits of name-calling, gossip, one-upmanship and other forms of social humiliation serve as models for children.

Bullying, in all its forms, draws its lifeblood from bystanders. How can people witness bullying and not respond? There are many reasons, but one skill we can practice is empathy. Researcher A. Goldstein gives

us a reason: **"The more we tune into others, experience their emotional and cognitive worlds, and take their perspectives, the less likely or able we are to inflict harm or injury."**

Empathy is related to many positive traits. In school, it contributes to a caring culture, improves academic success and impacts social relationships. In the adult world, it is key to a successful marriage.

David Levine, author and founder of In Care of Students, a training and research group, was featured in the *New York Times* (April 2009). He teaches empathy as a primary social skill. His empathy training can be used in any interaction, positive or negative.

Ask three questions:

1. What happened?
2. How is the person(s) feeling?
3. What can I do?

Sound familiar? It is basically the question "How would you feel if that was you?" Some children, and adults, do not pay attention to how others are feeling. Perhaps this ancient rule is called the Golden Rule because, like gold, it is the most valuable and precious. More use of it could make our communities rich beyond measure.

Prevention System Reduces Risky Behavior in 10-14 Year Olds

Excerpts from the National Institute of Health Newsletter article - September 21, 2009

Prevention research has led to the creation of programs that reduce the risk of substance abuse among youth. However, getting these programs into communities has been a challenge. Communities That Care (CTC) is an evidence-based substance-use prevention system. It helps community leaders identify the risk factors for future substance use among their youth and choose evidence-based programs to address those risk factors. CTC was evaluated by researchers at the University of Washington and the results appeared in the September 2009 issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*. By the eighth grade, students in CTC communities were 32% less likely to begin using alcohol, 33% less likely to begin smoking and 33% less likely to begin using smokeless tobacco than those in control communities. They were also 25% less likely to initiate delinquent behavior, a marker for future substance use and an important target for prevention.

"This shows that a coalition of community stakeholders armed with tools solidly grounded in prevention science can prevent middle schoolers from starting to use tobacco, starting to drink and starting to engage in delinquent behavior," Dr. J. Hawkins (lead researcher) says. He also said, "What's really remarkable is that the effects are community-wide."

Studies find that each dollar invested in research-based prevention programs can bring a savings of up to \$10 in treatment for alcohol or other substance abuse.

One of the breakout sessions at the upcoming Parent University will be: "Kids, Drugs & Alcohol Abuse-- How to prevent it".

Why Family Night? Many reasons for Why Not?

A University of Michigan study found that children, on average, spend about 43 minutes per week in "household conversations" and about 12 hours per week watching TV. The study is a few years old so one can only imagine that number of hours per week spent online by some! That sounds like a major imbalance, but look at your own family situation. Maybe it's not television or computer; it might be soccer or gymnastics or music lessons, but there are just a lot of distractions for families today. Are we investing the time where it best serves our needs or are we letting sports, school, TV, community, and other demands pull our time and attention away from family time?

How Does Family Night Work? The general concept of a weekly family night is to spend an evening once a week where the family is together having a meaningful experience together. The basic principles include: The time is set. Having a standard time each week allows better family planning. It is best if you can pick a given night each week (every Monday or every Sunday) and keep it there. At the outset, this might not be possible but should be a goal.

Time is spent together. Ever been in a situation described by Stephen Covey (highly-rated author) as a "collective monologue?" This is where everyone speaks or does their activity but in the same room with others. Collective monologues are not acceptable for family night. Television, listening to music or everyone reading something different doesn't count. Family activities on family night involve everyone together. Activities such as walking or hiking, playing board games, working together in the yard, being involved in community service projects, visiting relatives together and the like are the model. No heavy stuff. Family nights are not the time for discipline, for arguing, for forcing compliance. If you make it onerous, you will have a mutiny on your hands. Make them light, fun and engaging. And a little variety helps a lot.

Possible Holiday Gift Ideas for Family Nights
Museum Pass, Board Games, Puzzles, Cooking Class, Gym Membership

Web Sites - For Interested Parents

www.dancingmeatballs.com – fun things to do with kids in the Chicago area

www.chicagoparent.com – educational and entertainment ideas and resources for parents

www.creativebreaksworkshop.com - ideas for creative activities/resources for kids

www.chicagokids.com – activities for kids in the Chicago area

www.cep4youth.org – information on volunteer and leadership opportunities for local youth (located in La Grange)

www.timetotalk.org - ideas on how to talk with your kids about drugs and alcohol

www.theantidrug.com - similar to above – also information on drugs/alcohol

www.drugfree.org – Partnership for a Drug-Free America

www.communitynurse.org – volunteer opportunities and health care info for low income families





P.O. Box 129
Western Springs, IL 60558

Contact Jeanne Widing

Phone: 708.579.6507
E-mail: jwiding@lths.net
Email: pcn4lt@yahoo.com



Parent and Community Network (PCN)

is a volunteer group made up of District 204 area parents, educators and community members who share the goal of ongoing parental education and support for each other to raise healthy, well adjusted, substance and violence-free children. Through continuing programs including Parent University (PU), newsletters and other events, PCN's mission is to enhance communication, sharing of information and support among parents, schools, and other community groups in promoting and creating a healthy and safe environment for our youth.

Parent Community Network is now on Facebook!!



Stay connected, Become a Friend!

Parent Community Network

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The Parenting Mirror: A Focus on Emotional Boundaries between Child and Parent

By Jon Caes, LCSW, Social Worker, Forest Road Elementary School

Gaining a healthy perspective on what you do that helps and harms your child is an exercise that most parents would rather not accomplish. Taking stock of those interactions and expectations with your child isn't easy because it involves self critique. What is most difficult however, is the gained awareness that we wish to be close to our children in a way that squelches or meets our vision of who we wish our child to become. Are our children's' dreams ours or theirs? Do their activities mirror their own passions or our as their parents? Are their concerns born from an anxious adult?

While high and positive expectations by parents of their child are great, there has to be an accounting of what your child is communicating about who they are. Discipline should not be a tool to conform the child to the image of the parent. The job of a parent is to ultimately prepare them to leave the family and to individuate. Children who have a clear sense of who they are, what

their competencies are and have goals; experience increased confidence and manage independence better. Maintaining emotional boundaries that respect your child as an individual will assist this process.

Below are a few websites with additional insights on this subject which I think you will find helpful.

How to Stretch Children's Potential Without Zapping Their Self-Worth

<http://micheleborba.ivillage.com/parenting/archives/2009/07/how-to-stretch-childrens-poten.html>

Great Expectations: May be too Great for Only Children

<http://www.susannewmanphd.com/wordpress/?p=46>

What Price, Privilege?

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/06/25/CMG5EJ6PF71.DTL>