

# Parenting Connection

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## Happy New Year Everyone!

It's hard to believe, but 2006 is here! I hope everyone had a happy and safe holiday and the coming year goes well.

Regions III and IV of the Correctional Education Association are holding a combined conference in May at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells. This should be a great time for us to network and share program ideas. I hope to see all of my fellow parenting instructors at this conference. If you want more information, contact me.

My two-year term as chairman of the Parenting SIG will end in June. Mary Dahl from GBCI will become chairman and a new co-chair will be appointed. Please contact me if you are interested.

I appreciate the articles for the newsletter from you, it makes the job easy for me. Keep them coming and if you haven't sent one in yet, consider it. Have a great year!

Diane



## Bringing to Light the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Family

Each year an estimated 3.3 million children are exposed to violence by family members against their mothers or female caregivers and are 1,500 times more likely to be abused themselves. In recognition that October was "Domestic Violence Awareness Month," a community speaker from Bolton Refuge House was invited to speak at CVCTF regarding the "Effects of Domestic Violence on the Family."

Over 50 inmates ... fathers, uncles, grandfathers, brothers, sons ... listened, asked questions and learned how children are affected by the violence around them. Strategies for how to advocate and provide support to children that have been affected were discussed. The tactics that children use to cope with violence were explained: acting out, role reversing, controlling, underachieving, withdrawing, regressing, escaping and overachieving. Early identification can lead to more effective support and intervention for the potential emotional and behavioral problems that may ensue.

CVCTF continues to expand its parenting program options by bringing in community speakers on various topics of interest and need.

[Statistics cited from Children Exposed to Domestic Violence, A Teacher's Handbook to Increase Understanding and Improve Community Responses; and Domestic Violence – A Guide For Health Care Professionals.]

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# Get Ready to Read!

## Home Literacy Environment Checklist-Is your home literacy-friendly?

You are your child's first teacher. Your home is where your child will get his or her first experiences with books and reading. Check with your family to find out what types of books and activities to encourage literacy are presently being used. If the statement is false, place a check in the "false" column. If the statement is true, check true. When you are finished, count up the number of checks in the true column and find that number on the chart at the end of the checklist. Use the results as a guideline to see what you can do for your child.

What my child has . . .	True	False
My child has at least one alphabet book (e.g., Dr. Seuss's ABC book)	_____	_____
My child has magnetized alphabet letters to play with	_____	_____
My child has crayons and pencils available for writing and drawing	_____	_____
My child has paper readily available for writing and drawing	_____	_____
My child has a table or surface readily available for writing & drawing	_____	_____
My child has at least one rhyme book	_____	_____
My child has 10 picture books	_____	_____
My child has at least 20 picture books	_____	_____
My child has 50 or more picture books	_____	_____
My child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer	_____	_____
My child has materials and games to help learn the ABC's	_____	_____

<i>What I or another adult do . . .</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>
I or another adult in the house read a picture book with my child at least once a week	_____	_____
I or another adult in the house read a picture book with my child at least 4 times per week	_____	_____
I or another adult in the house teach new words to my child at least once a week	_____	_____
I or another adult in the house teach new words to my child nearly everyday	_____	_____
I or another adult in the house have a detailed and informative conversation with my child at least once a week. (e.g., How do you think ice cream is made?)	_____	_____
I or another adult in the house have a detailed and informative conversation with my child nearly every day	_____	_____
I or another adult in the house help my child learn nursery rhymes.	_____	_____
I or another adult in the house encourage my child to tell me what they want using complete sentences.	_____	_____



I or another adult in the house take my child to the library or a bookstore at least once or twice a month.

\_\_\_\_\_

*What my child sees me or another adult doing. . .*

*True False*

My child sees me or another adult in the house reading a book, magazine, or the newspaper at least once a week.

\_\_\_\_\_

My child sees me or another adult in the house reading a book, magazine, or the newspaper every day.

\_\_\_\_\_

*What I am . . .*

*True False*

I am a good reader

\_\_\_\_\_

I have a large vocabulary

\_\_\_\_\_

I began to read picture books with my child before he or she was a year old

\_\_\_\_\_

I enjoy reading picture books with my child.

\_\_\_\_\_

I expect that my child will work to his or her potential in school.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Now or in the past. . .*

*True False*

I or another adult in the house encourage my child to watch beginning reading shows on TV or tapes.

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house encourage my child to play with computer games that introduce the alphabet and beginning reading.

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house help my child learn to sing or say the ABC's

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house help my child learn to name letters of the alphabet.

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write letters of the alphabet.

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write his or her name.

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write other people's names.

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house help my child learn how to rhyme.

\_\_\_\_\_

I or another adult in the house help my child learn the sounds of the alphabet.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Count up the number of statements marked TRUE and put that number on the line to the right.*

\_\_\_\_\_

*See the chart below to find out how literacy-friendly your family child care program is.*

30-37 Home literacy environment has most of the necessary supportive elements.

20-29 Home literacy environment has may supportive elements.

11-19 Home literacy environment has some supportive elements.

0-10 Home literacy environment needs improvement.

This article is copied from 2004 National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc. by Mary Dahl-Green Bay Correctional Institution Parenting Instructor



## How as a parent can we be good role models, so our children grow up to be good citizens?

There are so many things one can do to make this question a reality; however, I will indulge on only a few major ones. First we must accept, as well as learn responsibility. It is through our actions as role models and parents that our children view the world and exert in themselves the behavior they do, whether it be good or bad.

Our children depend on us so very much as the adults they look up to --- to show them how to show respect, to get respect (properly), to act properly in stores, restaurants and at home. The foundation to these, and many more, is responsibility starting with us, beginning in our children's infant years. By nurturing them, caring, teaching, encouraging --- above all loving them and being there for them --- not only in these early and impressionable stages of life, but also into childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Our boys especially need to know how we should act and grow into a respectable man. By our negligent and criminal behavior we are condoning the very same behavior in them: to hit people when we are mad; to throw tantrums when we don't get our way; to not respect women or other people of age, ethnicity, religion, or choice preference, even themselves. This is how most young men are now a days. There are so many fatherless children out in the world, its ridiculous. Responsibility is the beginning.

A famous saying for problem children is "He has no home training." Sadly this is true for most of our children. We need to take time to teach and interact with our children. Even take time to learn from them. The most precious gift we can give our children is our undivided attention, even for an hour a day as a minimum. Just to let them know you care. The book "Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen" was very insightful. To implement the ideas offered in the book, we must first understand its direct conflict with consumerism now days. Most of today's society is controlled by these drone forms of thinking. Money is not the cure all to life's problems, especially with our children. TV is now a babysitter along with video games and peers and siblings. We are showing little or no interest in properly interacting with our children to promote a positive development in them when we pawn them off in these ways.

So how can we be a positive role model to our children so that they grow up to become responsible citizens? ...By beginning to be a parent in the proper sense, period. To show concern, be involved with your children's development. If they are failing in school, tutor them. If you can't, find means for them to be tutored. Show concern for their problems no matter what age they are so they know they have someone to depend on in dark times. Encourage them no matter what their interests are. Should your child show an interest in art or music or any other hobby of sorts, encourage them, whether it

is a fad or a possible life long interest. Teach your children assertiveness, so they can stand up to peer pressures and not meekly follow like so many children do today.

I know I have said my children's lives will be so much better and different than the way I grew up, yet how am I making theirs any better by not being there for them? Our past is something we should let go of, for it will never come again. But our past does influence the choices we make and the person we choose to become. Yet we still know right from wrong. So we should be able to take the negative of our past to create a positive future, and not hold on to the negatives that destroy our future.

So many men are full of pride and don't wish to be told how to conduct their lives, let alone how they conduct their children's lives. But as the saying goes, "the proof is in the pudding." We as men aren't doing everything we should to be fathers and above all, men, and to show our young ones we care and are concerned about how they will grow up. A lot of men will say this is not so, that I am not describing them. If you're in prison, like me, if you made a stupid mistake, like me, you are that person. Change starts with you making the choice to change. No amount of rehabilitation can do that for you. But you're not the only one needing to make that personal change. Your children need you to change no matter what age your children are, or whether they are your children. They could be stepchildren, foster children, or relatives. Teaching them to be responsible citizens means learning to become one first, then passing on the knowledge.

~Anonymous Father Inmate

## Parenting 9-1-1

The Dispatcher has a question that has come up repeatedly and would like your input. Incarcerated males often have difficulty keeping contact with their children for a variety of reasons, but a common one seems to be lack of cooperation on the part of the mother of the children. Perhaps the relationship has dissolved (sometimes with some very bitter feelings), someone new has entered the life of the mother, or the mother has her own issues to deal with.

At any rate, many men would like to have visits, or even just know where their children are, and for whatever reason, they do not have much success, at least while they are incarcerated.

Does anyone have any suggestions in dealing with this issue? I would be happy to share your suggestions, or questions or comments regarding any other issues as well, in the next newsletter. Just send an e-mail to [Barbara.Rasmussen@doc.state.wi.us](mailto:Barbara.Rasmussen@doc.state.wi.us) and we'll begin a dialogue on whatever you're interested in!



## Revised Edition of Parenting Guide Now Available

In November 2004, the first edition of *A Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections* was published. With the help of parenting instructors and Education Directors; Diane Birch, Mary Dahl, and Jerry Bednarowski gathered information on parenting classes, parent/child book projects, parent support groups, parent fairs, and other special projects relating to parenting that are being offered in Wisconsin correctional settings. The information was organized into a guide. Hardcopies of the Guide were distributed to all of the Parenting instructors and DOC Education Directors. Copies were also sent to certain DOC administrators. Electronic copies of the Guide were sent to all of the members of CEA's Parenting Special Interest Group.

Knowing that programming in corrections is in a constant state of evolution, plans were made to periodically update the Guide.

In September 2005, a request for updated information was sent to all Wisconsin Parenting instructors and DOC Education Directors. Revisions to the Guide were completed by the end of 2005.

At the January 2006 DOC Education Directors Meeting, hardcopies of the revised edition of *A Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections* will be distributed to all Wisconsin Parenting instructors, DOC Education Directors, and some DOC Administrators.

Electronic copies will be sent as attachments to the *Parenting Connections* newsletter that will be emailed to all Parenting SIG members in January.

The editors of the Guide would like to include information on Parenting programs that are being offered in states other than Wisconsin. Any instructor who conducts parenting classes, parent/child book projects, parent support groups, parent fairs, and other special projects relating to parenting in a correctional setting is encouraged to send us information on your program. You may use the summaries contained in the Guide as examples of the information that should be included and the summary length.

The editors would also like to hear from any Wisconsin instructor who is adding or revising a Parenting program.

You may email the information to [diane.birch@doc.state.wi.us](mailto:diane.birch@doc.state.wi.us) or mail it to:

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We will continually update *A Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections*. The most recent update will be attached to the *Parenting Connections* newsletter that is distributed every other month so that you may print your own copy whenever you wish. Hardcopies will continue to be distributed on an annual basis to Wisconsin Parenting instructors.

## PLAIN TALK for PARENTS

About your One- to- Two -Year-Old- Child

Every child and parent is unique. This information highlights patterns of growth and development that apply to most children. As you watch, listen to, and play with your child, you'll discover when she or he is ready for new activities and skills. You'll find your own ways to use old and new ideas to fit your personality, your family, and your child's needs.

### GENERAL TRAITS

- Explores everything by touching, tasting, carrying.
- Can usually turn pages of a large picture book.
- Language varies a lot – words may include “Mama,” “Dada,” “Ball,” or “No.”
- Likes hugs, smiles, kisses.
- May nap less than as an infant.
- Imitates adult actions, words, noises.
- Helps feed him/herself.

### WHAT A PARENT CAN DO

- Allow your child freedom to move & explore.
- Keep your house safe for your child – it helps to go through the house on your hands & knees. Put breakable & dangerous things out of reach.
- Keep poisons, medications, cleaning solutions in a locked cupboard. Keep the Poison Center number on hand for emergencies.
- Talk with your child as if you were carrying on a conversation. This helps your child learn to talk and understand.
- Play the “name game” by pointing to things and saying the names aloud.
- Save “no” for important matters. When you say “no” explain why. As in “No – fire will burn you.”
- Accept normal childhood spills and bumps without fuss.
- Respect your child's eating habits. Tastes and appetites change from day to day. Use small portions. Don't force



your child to eat.

- Drop the idea of toilet training until your child is at least two years of age.
- Enjoy playing with your child – doing peekaboo, singing, dancing, or rolling a ball.

#### TOYS FOR THE 1 – to – 2 –YEAR- OLD

- Pull and push toys
- Balls
- Blocks
- Water Toys
- Pocketbook
- Pots and pans with covers
- Simple boxes to open and close
- Nest of circular plastic cups to fit and take apart, fill & dig with
- Woolly or soft cloth animals & dolls – eyes should be painted or embroidered, not buttons
- Books – cloth & heavy cardboard with familiar objects and bright colors

## PLAIN TALK for PARENTS

About Your Two – to Three – Year – Old – Child

Every child and parent is unique. This information highlights patterns of growth and development that apply to most children. As you watch, listen to, and play with your child, you'll discover when she or he is ready for new activities and skills. You'll find your own ways to use old and new ideas to fit your personality, your family, and your child's needs.

#### GENERAL TRAITS

- Behavior may change quickly from loving to independent and back again.
- Needs little help climbing up and down stairs.
- Demands a lot of parental attention.
- May hold a glass of milk in one hand.
- Knows several hundred words and may speak in two or three-word sentences.
- Loves to be read to but may not have the patience to go through a book cover to cover.
- Begins to help dress (undressing comes first).
- Uses a spoon in feeding.
- May achieve toilet training or show interest in using the toilet.
- Likes to imitate adult activities.
- Enjoys other children but may find sharing difficult.

#### WHAT A PARENT CAN DO

- Your child's rebelliousness may be hard to take, but accept it as a positive stage of development, as



an attempt to move away from babyhood. (“No” will often mean “yes,” so look for other cues as well.)

- Keep rules to a minimum. Ask yourself: How many “no’s” are needed for this age?
- Let your child express all feelings, negative as well as positive.
- Allow your child to “help” with simple tasks.
- If you begin toilet training and your efforts don't pay off in a week or two, your child isn't ready. Go back to diapers.
- Present nutritious meals but don't push your child to eat. Your child is too young to learn table manners.
- Develop routines to help ease bedtime and leave-taking. A nighttime routine might be a bath before bedtime, a book, a good-night kiss, a hug, and a tuck into bed.
- Pay as little attention as possible to temper tantrums.

#### TOYS FOR THE 2 – to – 3 YEAR- OLD

- Cars and trucks
- Pail and shovel
- Baskets
- Dolls – soft & washable
- Large crayons & finger paints
- Toys that teach shapes
- Play dough
- Balls
- Blocks
- Books
- Riding toys & wagons
- Old keys
- Hammer & pegboard
- Large brushes for “painting” with water
- Cloth squares of bright colors

Reprinted from Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

