

Parenting Connection

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New Books for Parenting

PARENTING WITH DIGNITY by Mac Bledsoe

In his book, Mac Bledsoe describes how to get beyond crisis management with a five point plan for raising responsible, independent kids. This book empowers you to raise your children to make good decisions for themselves. It's a program that will free you from undignified anger, frustration, and punishment so your children can learn to handle responsibility and independence. There are 5 basic rules that he writes about that will help to aide parents of any race, color or size. There is also a web sight for more information: www.parentingwithdignity.com

SMART PARENTING FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS by Jeffrey Gardere, PH.D.

Dr. Gardere presents a savvy, realistic guide for today's black parents. He presents tools parents need to give their sons and daughters a head start towards strong parent-child communication for fostering self-esteem. He gives advise from the head start years all through the teen years. This book is a sensitive, no-nonsense approach to raising black children with positive suggestions of how to give support, love, and protection for their kids. This book even has a chapter on how to talk with kids about war and disasters. I have five copies of this book that I check out to the men who want to get more information. The comments I have gotten back have all been positive. One man said, "This was the easiest reading and most informative book he had ever read." He liked it because it dealt with specific concerns that he as an African American had about the future for his kids.

by: Mary Dahl, Green Bay Correctional Institution

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Summer Greetings from SCI

The past two years have gone by so quickly. When the idea of this Parenting Special Interest Group was first conceived, two years seemed like a long time to be chairman. Now that it's coming to an end, I realize two years in isn't that long.

Our group has accomplished some important goals. We have a "Guide" to all parenting related programs in our institutions. We print a bi-monthly newsletter. Recently our newsletter had been made available to other states and we are receiving articles from them as well. We developed and recommended a curriculum for Parenting that we believe should be used to meet Classification needs. (We're still waiting for approval from Madison.)

I would like to thank all of you for the information from your institution that we compiled in the "Guide". I hope the information in there has been and will continue to be useful.

Special thanks to Barb Rasmussen from RCI for agreeing to do the "Parenting 911" column. Jerry Bednarowski conceived this whole idea and has worked harder than anyone can imagine. Even though he's retired, he still continues to offer his services at the state and national level. Thank you, Jerry. It wouldn't have happened without you! I also need to thank my co-worker, Rob Ecker, for all the help with the newsletter layout. My co-chair, Mary Dahl, will step up and take over. Mary, thanks for your support and help.

I hope everyone that receives this newsletter reads, enjoys, and finds it informative. Many of you have submitted articles for the newsletter. I'd like to thank each of you for taking time out of your busy schedule to make your contribution. It made my job considerably easier. It needs your continued support to remain successful. My wish would be that every person involved in Parenting Programs in DOC would take the time to submit one article a year. Little things mean so much!

Take care and God Bless!
Diane Birch



Infant simulators teach important parenting skills, bring out the nurturing side of inmates

Parenting programs aren't new to prisons in the state of Wisconsin, but the use of infant simulators in parenting instruction is taking hold as educators in correctional facilities pick up on something middle and high school teachers have known for years— that hands-on experience has greater impact than any textbook lesson or lecture. Many schools use infant simulators, or simple eggs and sacks of flour, to teach good caregiving skills to young people. Simulators are preferred for the increased realism they offer and the reporting function that provides more meaningful measurement of performance.

"When does an egg or sack of flour demand attention or wake you up in the middle of the night? And when an egg or sack of flour are broken, it's basically a pass/fail situation with no opportunity to remedy the situation," said Timmothy Boettcher, president of Realityworks, Inc., creators of the first infant simulators in the world. "Simulators can be comforted after a mishandling event and the babies recover, allowing the role-play to continue."

In 1997, Diane Birch was the first correctional educator in the state to incorporate Realityworks' computerized babies into her parenting classes at Jackson Correctional Institution in Black River Falls. When she transferred to Stanley Correctional Institution in 2002, she did the same. Realityworks is located in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The company's simulators are known as Baby Think It Over®, RealCare® Baby and RealCare® Baby II. Realityworks infant simulators are currently used in corrections facilities in 36 states.

"I recommend that infant simulators be incorporated into every parenting program in the Department of Corrections (DOC) that meets our Classification needs," said Birch, who has a degree in education and taught parenting skills for the state's Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) prior to working in corrections.

"They are valuable tools that offer as close to the real thing as we can get."

The Parenting Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Correctional Education Association (CEA) has recommended that a statewide standard parenting program be implemented by the Wisconsin DOC. With Governor Doyle's interest in programs for children and the state's focus on teaching life skills and parenting, it has a good chance of being passed. The Parenting SIG is made up of facilitators who teach parenting in Wisconsin correctional facilities.

According to the CEA, building awareness of the importance of parenting can be pivotal for inmates, especially those who already have children. If they have something positive to go home to, there is increased likelihood that they won't be repeat offenders.

Parenting classes are sometimes a mandatory part of a prisoner's plan for release, particularly if there has been a history of child abuse or domestic problems, or if the inmate was abused as a child and the intake officer believes it to be the cause of dysfunction. However, many prison educators believe realistic lessons in caregiving can benefit all inmates. Many prisoners don't know what it's like to raise a child, or what a baby needs. Even if they are already parents they may be in and out of the picture due to their criminal history and have no parenting skills to draw upon when they go back to their families.

Birch uses the simulators in the birth portion of her 12-week parenting class to demonstrate proper handling, diapering, bathing, and general infant care. The simulators cry on a schedule set by the instructor, and require feeding, rocking, burping, diapering and proper head support. Students use bottles and diapers with electronic sensors detected by an onboard computer, and detailed data about the exact care, missed care and mishandling is captured for evaluation purposes. Birch's parenting simulations take place during the 1 ½ hours of class, five days a week for four weeks. The men sometimes joke with one another, but Birch says they always take the simulations seriously.

"It's strange to see these men that society sometimes views very negatively, holding and cooing to a baby," said Birch. "But they act like any other parent holding a child."

The men offer suggestions to one another about how to care for their babies, quickly reminding the errant caregiver to support the head if somebody allows the baby's head to drop back, or giving instructions about how to properly change the diaper.

While many factors constitute diversity among the inmates and staff in a prison, Birch feels a common bond emerge during the time they are using the babies.

"In this class we're all parents," she said. "A lot of people have the perception that guys in prison don't love their kids. But they want the same things for their kids as we do for ours. In here, we're all the same."



Social workers Cindy Puetz and Vicki Seidlitz used Birch's approach as a model for the parenting program they developed for Chippewa Valley Correctional Treatment Facility in Chippewa Falls, a minimum security prison with a focus on programming. They program the babies on the most difficult care schedule for high impact. Participants name their "babies" and wear bracelets like those worn in the hospital when a baby is born.

"It's nice for them to have ownership in it," said Puetz. "It's more than just a computer to them."

Simulations are conducted during group sessions lasting 1 ½ hours, two times a week. The group "daddies" have to care for their infants no matter what is going on. Many take the class voluntarily, although some are recommended to complete the program before they can obtain custody of their children or visitation privileges upon release. According to Puetz, very seldom are the men *not* holding the babies even though they have carriers to use.

"You'll see them wrapping their fingers around the baby's hand while we're watching a video. You can see how much they miss their own children. Their kids are so important to all of them. It's a very nurturing time for them."

Inmates receive a certificate of completion after 30 hours of parenting, which can be used as a court document for conditions of release. Puetz, who has started two family resource centers prior to working at the prison, said it's still very challenging to convince people of the importance of parenting, which is a similar challenge felt by teachers who are committed to their middle and high school parenting programs.

"It's not a 'fluff' class," said Puetz, adding that the program has been well-received overall. "We affect the lives of the people we go home to."

She tells inmates that they do not have to take the class because they are bad parents, but "you are a bad parent if you don't want to do this job better!"

Many dads will ask Puetz if the simulators are being used in their hometown school because they think it's such a good program and want their kids to have the same eye-opening experience before they become parents.

Trina Randall, of the Indiana Department of Corrections, believes parenting programs using infant simulators help break the cycle of children having children. Prior to moving to Castle Rock, she taught parenting at Pendleton Juvenile Correctional Facility in Pendleton, Indiana, a maximum security prison for males.

"We've seen the consequences of parents having children before they were ready. We used the simulators in an attempt to help break the cycle," said Randall.

She wanted her students to know that having a child is the most important thing they will ever do and they need to be prepared. "We felt that the infant simulators were an effective teaching tool in giving these boys a firsthand look at how serious being a parent really is. We want them to know how having a child will change their life forever.

"It's the most wonderful thing in the world, when you are ready."

One of Randall's students commented that he wanted to be a father, but he learned that he should wait until he found the right woman to marry and had a good job to support his family. Another said handling babies were a lot harder than he thought it would be. A large percentage of the young men were already fathers and Randall felt the lessons about child abuse, Shaken Baby Syndrome, and SIDS—which could be taught using the infant simulators—were very important for the fathers to know.

"Dads 101" is a six-week course at North Coast Correctional Treatment Facility in Grafton, Ohio, where Diana Dunaway serves as re-entry coordinator. Parenting is a voluntary course but Dunaway said similar programs are being picked up in other prisons around Ohio because educators intuitively see the benefits of this "basics" training. She started using infant simulators three years ago with great results.

"It's so interesting to see these big, bad men take these little babies and melt," said Dunaway. "They learn to appreciate their own children more."

Inmates have to take the simulators to class and to work with them. They pair up, so that one is the caregiver and one can be the babysitter. (The only place simulators cannot go to work with them is in the kitchen.) Inmates aren't allowed to smoke around the baby, and according to Dunaway, they learn quickly not to leave their babies unattended. Other inmates have grabbed the baby, mishandling it to purposely earn the "dad" bad marks.

"This provides a good lesson in knowing who is taking care of your baby at all times," said Dunaway, who also teaches "Dads 101/Shaken Baby" using simulators.

In Irma, Wisconsin, young men ages 14-17 are getting a dose of parenting reality in their cadet achievement program at Lincoln Hills School, a modified boot camp. A 90-day parenting unit is required, focusing on birth to age 3, infant development and proper infant care. A simulation lasting two nights and three days gives participants an extended role-play. This is the typical simulation used in high schools that send infant simulators home with students for an entire weekend.

"After that they are very appreciative of what it's going to take eventually when they have kids," said Jim Severt, social worker. "It's going to be work. It's going to alter their life."

Severt acknowledges that using simulators is an "inconvenience" in any program, because there is a routine, and the babies interrupt routine, just as real babies do. During calisthenics the cadets have to



step aside to attend to their baby when it cries. They have to take the babies everywhere they go. They make noise. It takes buy-in from others in the facility to make it successful and the adult staff members at Lincoln Hills see the importance of it as many are parents themselves.

Severt says the simulations go smoothly and rarely does a participant mishandle their baby. In fact, mishandling an infant simulator is treated the same as if they assaulted another cadet. There is discipline. They are taken to security and could even be removed from the program.

"This is a real infant now," said Severt.

"Hopefully we're getting them to make good decisions in their lives. These are people who haven't to this point made very good decisions.

"It's something just about every kid is going to do in their life and probably do for a lot longer than any job they might have."

Other parenting education products have been incorporated into classes in many prison programs. Birch uses Realityworks' drug-affected demonstrator baby to compare with the infant simulators which reflect a healthy baby's physical appearance. The "crack" baby has a distressed expression, a piercing cry and simulates real withdrawal tremors, showing the stark reality of what a baby experiences while suffering the effects of what a drug-affected mother used during pregnancy. The visual impact is breathtaking.

She also incorporates the babies into lessons about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Shaken Baby Syndrome. The simulators have an internal motion detector and a neck sensor preset to detect Shaken Baby Syndrome, so it's a good tool for addressing physical abuse. Dunaway agrees that lessons about Shaken Baby Syndrome are critical.

"Some of our men are in here for domestic violence, and they don't grasp the concept of what will happen if they shake a baby. Then when you explain it, they are incensed about it. They think anybody who does that to a baby should be locked up!"

Infant simulators may also be effective in working with individuals who have impulse control (anger) issues. The crying simulators may provide the realistic yet safe stressful stimulus in order for individuals to practice techniques to manage their violent impulses.

Correctional educators seem to agree that infant simulators bring out the nurturing side of inmates, offering a means to teach valuable parenting skills while providing life-changing experiences that will stick with them long after the simulation has ended. They believe such positive reinforcement can only improve an inmate's chances of being a good caregiver and a good citizen on the "outside."

You see a totally different person when they're sitting there holding these babies," said Birch. "I see dads. The babies create a very positive experience for everyone. It's the best part of this whole program."

"Puetz echoes Birch's sentiments. "I can't imagine not having them. I think everybody should have them!"

by: Becky Dienger, Realityworks

Broccoli

Recently I wanted to spice up my nutrition section about the usual food pyramid. Though I have a wonderful guest speaker, Luann Meyer from Black River Falls County Extension, come in and talk about the important issues surrounding healthy snacks, food jags, food safety, serving sizes, recipes, and much more, we needed more hands on.

I usually have my students create a week's menu consisting of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They must use the food pyramid and concentrate on the correct number of portions and serving sizes from each of the five food groups using fats, oils, and sweets sparingly. My students did not like this assignment. Actually, my students hated this assignment. They did poorly on this assignment, and the assessment part took me a great deal of time. In other words, I did not like it.

So, I asked my students what they had for breakfast. Some ate, most slept. I asked them what they had for lunch. One had vegetables, some ate, a few slept. Then I learned what a hook-up is.

Hook-Up

Noodles

Beans

Chili

Cheese

Chips

Add whatever ingredients friends can get together. Melt in the microwave and serve on chips.

After I was so delightfully educated, I gave each student a piece of paper. A paper plate will work well, too. Each student was required to draw an ideal meal. Choices had to be made from each food group. I used a picture my son made at school as an example. On his plate were two eggs sunny side up, two cherries, three pieces of broccoli, and a cup of milk.

The assessment process was much more pleasurable after this. I looked at plates of chicken and rice with carrots and a cup of milk. I ended up hungry and needing a snack, but my students enjoyed the learning process. I enjoyed the learning process, too.

My son has never had broccoli for breakfast!

by: Jana Beres, Jackson Correctional Institution Teacher



Families in Focus Curriculum

Over the past 15 years, Michael Bischoff, Manager of Projects, and his associates at the Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice have developed a very comprehensive parenting curriculum. Michael has generously agreed to share the Families in Focus curriculum with correctional instructors who are teaching or developing parenting programs in their facility.

The Families in Focus curriculum is currently being used in four Minnesota correctional facilities. The curriculum is delivered over a period of 12 weeks with 2 hour class sessions. The topics and objectives for each of the 12 sessions appear below.

Michael states, "People in other facilities are free to use parts or the entire curriculum. All we ask is that they let us know what they are using and give us feedback about what was useful and what wasn't. . . Part of our intention is to have things we do here be useful to other facilities and programs."

Michael can be contacted at 612-596-7622 or bischoffm@crimeandjustice.org.

An article summarizing the research on the impact of the Families in Focus project was published in the November/December 2005 issue of this newsletter. It can be accessed on the www.ceawisconsin.org website.

In future issues of this newsletter, we will feature individual lessons from the Families in Focus curriculum and responses from teachers who have tried them in other settings. The curriculum will also be included in the next revision of the CEA Parenting Special Interest Group's *Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections*.

Here are the curriculum and objectives:

Families in Focus: Developed by the Council on Crime and Justice

Session 1: Introduction/Parenting -To recognize parenting styles in families of origin; recognize differences or similarities between their own and their parents' styles; and to learn different parenting styles.

Session 2: Breaking the Chain - To recognize abuse and dysfunction and effects on the abused the family, and community; provide methods for breaking the intergenerational chain of abuse and dysfunction.

Session 3: Handling Anger - To understand what anger is and is not; analyze their own anger; recognize anger's positive and negative effects; learn ways to manage anger.

Session 4: Self-Esteem - To understand what self-esteem is and is not; learn about levels of self-esteem; analyze one's own level of self-esteem; learn methods to build self-esteem.

Session 5: Parenting From the Inside - To look at nurturing styles so skills can be transferred to telephone conversations, creative letter writing, & communicating during visitation times.

Session 6: Children - To establish reasonable expectations for children based on developmental stages.

Session 7: Children's Self-Esteem - To model nurturing behaviors, learn ways to build children's self-concept and self-worth.

Session 8: Discipline/Punishment -To define and recognize differences between discipline and punishment.

Session 9: Positive Consequences -To learn positive methods to teach children responsibility for their actions.

Session 10: Talking With Children - To learn positive listening skills.

Session 11: Getting Cooperation - To learn and practice communication skills that foster cooperation and self-worth

Session 12: Fitting Back Together -To establish reasonable expectations for family reunification



News from GBCI Parenting

We are coming to the end of our 60 hour parenting class. The men had many new opportunities in this session.

Not only do they get to do a video to send to their kids, but now the videos are being done in a more professional manner. GBCI has purchased new camera equipment that allows for music to go with the books, as well as, many more pictures. With each group of men that do a book, our producer is learning more about the equipment and adds new touches.

We have come a long ways in two years.

This class was made up of 6 men who are leaving soon, so I added a component on reintegration with the families that I have not been able to use before. It is a series of 6 videos that talks about planning, expectations, how to return to the home and be successful. The men found the videos to be very informative.

I have recently discovered a web sight that I was unaware of and have found to be very informative because it deals with parenting for incarcerated men. The sight is called. It has provided me with many articles that deal with the units I cover such as communication, discipline, self-esteem and reentry information.

I am always looking for new ideas so please share your ideas so that I can get even more. This paper provides a lot of new information. Thanks for being the dedicated parenting instructors that you are.

by: Mary Dahl, Green Bay Correctional Institution

10 Things to Talk About While You Change My Diaper

1. The weather today
2. What Dad or Mom is doing at work
3. The sounds animals make
4. The latest book you've read
5. The parts of my body
6. The colors we can see around us
7. What you're making to eat
8. How you're feeling at this moment
9. The movie or TV show you watched last night
10. The next birthday or holiday that's coming up

