

Parenting Connection

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Childhood : Concerns for Children

This article comes from the Cooperative Extension Service, Ohio State University, "Concerns for Children." At the Green Bay Correctional Institution, I found this poem to be a good way of summarizing the important points I wanted the men to get out of my parenting class. I give it to them to help themselves remember what their roles should be with their children. . .

Childhood

When you make a promise to me, whether it be for a reward or as discipline, please keep it. I need to believe the things you say to me.

Remember that I am not too sure with words as yet, I can't explain things as clearly as I should, be patient with my inadequacies.

Watch the habits I am forming. Bad habits begun now will be difficult for me to break later.

Be patient with my mistakes, guide me in seeing where I went wrong, and lead me to see what I should have done.

Please answer my questions. You may be tired, and I may ask many more than you think I should, but remember that is the way I learn things.

Show me that you love me. I do not need gifts, just a hug or a kiss.

I know that you are not perfect and that you sometimes need help.

Understand my fears. They are very real. The unknown sometimes frightens me.

I know it's hard to be patient with me, but remember I am growing up fast. I have an increasing need and desire to explore and discover the world around me.

Don't be afraid to apologize to me when necessary. I will respect you all the more for it.

Be consistent with your dealing with me. Inconsistency completely confuses and troubles me.

When I need discipline, try to do it when others are not present. Use a quiet, firm tone of voice.

By: Mary Dahl, Green Bay Correctional Institution

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A Dad's Journal – Think Twice Before Waking That Sleeping Child

By Brian Blum

In the recent Pixar movie *Over the Hedge*, R.J., a wily raccoon, accidentally awakens Vince a hibernating and very grumpy Grizzly bear while trying to steal from the Grizzly's store of winter food. Vince immediately springs into classic Grizzly position, ready to impale and impair the unwelcome intruder. Bears, it seems, can go from 0-60 -- from deep sleep to full alertness -- nearly instantaneously.

Not so with eight-year-old boys, we recently discovered.

A few weeks ago, we were at a dinner party with friends who lived down the street from us. As the evening stretched on later than we expected, eight-year-old Aviv fell asleep on the couch. When it was time to go, we needed to wake him up, at least enough to walk the short distance home. He has long since grown too heavy to carry him over our shoulder like a baby.

Getting Aviv going proved harder than expected. Usually, we can rouse him to a groggy walking state fairly easily, but he must have been in a deeper state of REM sleep this time. We were unable to get any response from him at all. We raised an arm, it flopped to his side. We sat him up and he fell over like a lifeless rag doll.

And then all of a sudden, he started to scream at the top of his lungs. Was he in pain? Was he angry? We couldn't tell.

"Does something hurt you, Aviv?" my wife Jody asked. Aviv just wailed.

Our concerned hosts had come over to see what was going on. "Does he need a doctor?" they asked. "Should we call someone in the neighborhood?"

I frankly didn't know what to do. This had never happened before. We asked Aviv again what was bothering him.

"It's my tummy," he finally said. "It's burning."

My mind began to race. Maybe he had appendicitis, a sudden ulcer...or something. Why would a stomach burn?

As the crying continued for five minutes, then ten minutes without a break, Jody and I tried different approaches. Jody doled out compassion while I went more towards tough love.

"Come on, you can do this, you can get up, it's just a short walk," I cajoled. "You'll feel better when you get into your own bed, you're just tired."

Just tired...that was it! I remembered learning something once that might apply to Aviv in this case. When a sleeper enters the deepest phase of REM sleep, he literally becomes paralyzed.



Apparently, the brain doesn't shut off during sleep, but is just as active during dreaming as it is during waking. So the body actually goes into a state of "sleep paralysis" to keep the slumbering person from acting out his dreams and hurting himself by running down the stairs or trying to fly.

Getting woken up in the middle of sleep paralysis is "alarming," according to the London Sleep Centre, and "children may have difficulty explaining these events (which) adds to the parents' concern."

It would probably also be unpleasant ... the body might feel like it's asleep and the burning sensation Aviv was experiencing might occur while the paralysis wore off, not unlike the tingling sensation when your foot falls asleep. A half-asleep, confused eight-year-old might interpret it all as pain.

There was no way to test the theory and we still needed to get our screaming child home.

Our hosts found an old still somewhat useable stroller. The seat was ripped and one of the handles was bent half way back. It was a tight fit but we managed to cram Aviv into it and cart him down the street back to our house.

He cried all the way home, alerting the neighbors to what I'm sure seemed like a clear case of child abuse. Then when we finally got to our doorstep, something shifted. Aviv sat up in the stroller and his usual, cheerful voice magically returned.

"You know, I think I almost fell asleep on the couch," he announced as if none of the past 20 minutes of parental hell had ever occurred. Now fully awake, the pain seemed to have passed completely, confirming my diagnosis of probable sleep paralysis, but leaving us with few lessons to share.

Which begs the question many a worried parent is undoubtedly asking at this point: that is, do I have any advice on what to do if this happens to you and your child? Unfortunately the answer is "no."

There wasn't really anything we could have done differently. In Aviv's half-asleep/half-awake sleep paralyzed state, neither Jody's compassionate touch nor my sterner approach would have calmed him down. Sitting and waiting it out wouldn't have worked either - he'd no doubt have just fallen asleep again. About the only thing we could have done is let him cry it out, which is exactly what we did.

The best course of action: let your drowsy bear hibernate an extra week...or if that's too long, at least let him sleep where he is...and pick him up in the morning.

This article comes from Parents' Action for Children, a new source that puts out many interesting articles that could be useful to anyone who teaches parenting. It was suggested by DeNeal Erickson from Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Institution (Wisconsin). The email address for Parents' Action for Children is: info@parentsaction.org.

Reminder for CEA Members

Be sure to check the box to join the Parenting Special Interest Group when you renew your CEA membership. This will insure that you are listed on the national roll for the Parenting SIG. Membership in one SIG is free with your CEA membership. Additional SIGs may be joined at a cost of \$5 each.



Just PLAY- Unstructured Time Is Crucial for Kids

Here's some soothing medicine for stressed-out parents and overscheduled kids: The American Academy of Pediatrics says what children really need for healthy development is more good-old-fashioned playtime.

Many parents load their children's schedules with get-smart videos, enrichment activities and lots of classes in a drive to help them excel. The efforts often begin as early as infancy.

Spontaneous, free play – whether it's chasing butterflies, playing with “true toys” like blocks and dolls, or just romping on the floor with Mom and Dad – often is sacrificed in the shuffle, says a new report prepared by two academy committees for release today at the group's annual meeting in Atlanta.

Jennifer Gervasio has a 5-year old son and a 3-year old daughter involved in preschool three mornings weekly, plus T-ball and ballet for each one day a week. That's a light schedule compared to her kids' friends and Gervasio said her son in particular has trouble finding buddies who are free to come over and just play.

“There's just such a huge variety of things you can do for your kids if you have the resources, you almost feel why not,” said Gervasio, of Wilmette, Ill. “There is a part of me that would worry if I don't sign my son up for some of these things, will he not be on par with the other kids.”

For now, she said, she resists the pressure, instead allowing her kids plenty of time for looking for bugs, romping at the beach, and other play activities they love to do. “I truly believe that they're better off when they can just do their own thing.” Gervasio said.

Numerous studies have shown that unstructured play has many benefits. It can help children become creative, discover their own passions, develop problem-solving skills, relate to others and adjust to school settings, the academy report says.

“Perhaps above all, play is a simple joy that is a cherished part of childhood,” it says.

A lack of spontaneous playtime can create stress for children and parents alike. If it occurs because young children are plopped in front of get-smart videos or older children lose school recess time, it can increase risks for obesity. It may even contribute to depression for many children, the report says.

Social pressures and marketing pitches about creating “super children” contribute to a lack of playtime for many families. But so does living in low-income, violence-prone neighborhoods where safe places to play are scarce, the report says.

It says enrichment tools and organized activities can be beneficial but should not be viewed as a requirement for creating successful children.

Above all, they must be balanced with plenty of free time. “In the current environment where so many parents feel pressure to be super parents, I believe this message is an important one,” said Kenneth Ginsburg, the report's lead author and a pediatrician at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Noted pediatrician and author T. Berry Brazelton praised the academy's report saying: “I hope it will have some effect.”

Submitted by: Cherlyn Wontor, Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility
Article originated from American Academy of Pediatrics



Rights of Children of Incarcerated Parents

Those of you who are concerned about the rights of children of incarcerated parents and establishing family-friendly visiting rooms may be interested in an initiative which has started in Minnesota, and 13 other states.

Minnesota has been selected as one of 14 areas in the country where the Family and Corrections Network and Soros Foundation are partnering with local groups to work on the Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights Project.

A fellow from the Soros Foundation, Dee Ann Newell, will be coordinating the national project. In Minnesota, the Council on Crime and Justice has convened a group of partners to work on this issue.

This project is based on the document, *the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents*, authored by Nell Bernstein, author of *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated* and coordinator of the San Francisco Partnership for Children of Incarcerated Parents and Gretchen Newby, Director of the national organization, Friends Outside, in California. This fellowship-initiative offers intense, research-based technical assistance to the fourteen selected collaborators for a fourteen-month period. Together, they are pursuing effective strategies and developing a variety of tools to implement the changes supported in the Bill of Rights document.

[The Bill of Rights](http://www.fcnetwork.org/Bill_of_Rights/billofrights.pdf) ([http://www.fcnetwork.org/Bill of Rights/billofrights.pdf](http://www.fcnetwork.org/Bill_of_Rights/billofrights.pdf)) states that every child of an incarcerated parent is to have the following rights:

1. To be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest;
2. To be heard when decisions are made about me;
3. To be considered when decisions are made about my parent;
4. To be well-cared for in my parent's absence;
5. To speak with, see, and touch my parent;
6. To support as I struggle with my parent's incarceration;
7. To not be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated;
8. To have a lifelong relationship with my parent.

The Bill of Rights Project is based on the success of projects already underway in San Francisco and Arkansas. This project will work with interested groups around the country who wish to work in the policy reform effort built around the Children's Bill of Rights.

Groups already involved with the partnership on this project in Minnesota:

- Council on Crime and Justice (lead agency)
- African American Family Services
- Women Planting Seeds
- Minnesota Department of Corrections



- Twin Cities Big Brothers/ Big Sisters
- Ramsey County Child Protection
- Hennepin County Child Protection
- Minnesota Mentoring Project
- Salvation Army-Project Breakthrough
- Bridge Builders
- Family and Children Services
- Girl Scout Council of Greater Minneapolis
- Minnesota Family Formation Project
- Parenting with Purpose
- AL Furqan Educational Institute
- Minneapolis NAACP
- Alternatives: A Program for Youth
- Minneapolis Public Schools
- Hennepin County School Success Initiative
- African American Child Wellness Institute
- Children's Defense Fund Minnesota
- People Serving People
- City of Minneapolis- Civil Rights

Additional partners are being sought for the Minnesota collaboration. If you are interested in finding out more about the project in Minnesota, contact Ebony Ruhland at the Council on Crime and Justice at ruhlande@crimeandjustice.org or 612-348-7874.

Plans for action in Minnesota:

A group of project partners are meeting monthly to assess how well these rights are currently being met in Minnesota, and developing an advocacy agenda to act on together. The current areas of action include:

- Working with law enforcement to implement model arrest protocols that ensure that children are safe and well cared for during and after the arrest.
- Implementing training for school staff about the specific dynamics that children with a parent in prison face. Facilitating partnerships between schools and school-based services to increase support opportunities for children with an incarcerated parent
- Advocating for visitation rooms and procedures at correctional facilities that are children-friendly. Increasing options for corrections-based family reunification services.

Other Locations:

Similar collaborations are also active in Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Washington, Montana, North Carolina, Illinois, Connecticut, Michigan, South Carolina, Indiana, California, Arkansas, Texas, and Massachusetts. To find out more about the national project, contact Dee Ann Newell at lujo@aristotle.net or 501-366-3647.



Training on Children's Bill of Rights

Jim Mustin of the Family and Corrections Network has announced that the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (NRCCFI) will host an FCN series of telephone trainings focused on the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents.

Beginning January 24, 2007 each right from the Children's Bill of Rights will be explored in a bi-monthly series of 90-minute training-by-telephone sessions. Sessions will be moderated by Ann Adalist-Estrin, Director of the NRCCFI at FCN. Each session will include a facilitator and guests who come from the discipline or system most involved in the specific right. Most trainings will also include children of incarcerated parents, their parents and caregivers.

DATE OF FIRST TRAINING: January 24, 2007, 2PM Eastern Standard Time

TOPIC: Right #1 - I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.

FACILITATOR: Nell Bernstein, co-creator of the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents and author of *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated*.

GUESTS: Captain Marsha Ashe, Juvenile & Family Services Division of the San Francisco Police Dept. and Dr. James Lewis (Invited), National Center on Children Exposed to Violence, Yale Child Study Center

THIS SESSION WILL ADDRESS:

- The trauma a child can experience when a parent is arrested
- The role of police and child welfare departments
- Models of community collaboration in developing best practices aimed at mitigating trauma and ensuring child safety at the time of arrest.

WHY THE CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS?

The last 3 years has brought a surge of interest in the children of incarcerated parents. Programs focused on the needs of this group of children are rapidly increasing in number as is interest in the policy implications of parental incarceration. The Bill of Rights "speaks" the needs of children of incarcerated parents, in the children's voices and from their perspectives. It gives programs and policy makers a tool for better understanding the experience of having an incarcerated parent as well as for advocating for practice and systems change. This training will help you and your agency work more effectively with children of prisoners and their families.

REGISTER at www.fcnetwork.org/training/audio1.html or by phone by calling 1-434/589-3036.

LOCATION: Your office, conference room or whenever you have access to a touch-tone phone.

COST: \$109 per caller (\$99 for FCN members) plus any long distance charges from your provider. Your registration includes access to the 90-minute call, downloadable presentation handouts made available 48-hours in advance and live discussion during the presentation.

CAN'T MAKE THE DATE, BUT WISH YOU COULD ATTEND? CDs of the audio conference will be available for \$99 (or \$109) each. See www.fcnetwork.org/training/audio1.html or call 1-434/589-3036.

SCHOLARSHIPS are available for low-income family-of-prisoner members and former prisoners. To apply, see <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?A=135566577E95722>.



Message from Editor Mary Dahl

Since obtaining the state of Minnesota's curriculum this summer, called Families in Focus, I have been using it in its entirety. It is made up of 13 units. The curriculum covers all the areas that our original group put together as suggested topics for Wisconsin's Parenting Curriculum.

The units consist of all the readings, charts and activities that you need to cover each area. The creators who put this document together did an excellent job of including the materials. I have been able to add to the units other articles and readings that I have gathered over the years. Their curriculum has been spelled out so that the topics can be covered in less time.

I found this poem called "Twenty Years from Now". The author is unknown but the words speak miles for themselves. I used it during my last session with the men because it summarizes all that we have talked about in class, plus it leaves them thinking on their futures. I thought the readers might enjoy using it.

Twenty Years from Now

*If I am fortunate enough to see the day
I'd like to look back and see the world as a better place for all its people,
No matter their social status, sexual gender or religious preference!*

I'd look back at my life and see the diamond that was at hand then and now while being a respector of the rough life it has gone through.

*Twenty years from now:
At the young age of 43, I pray I have half the answers to the many questions I have today.*

*Twenty years from now:
I'd like to feel that the portion of my life spent confined, incarcerated, segregated and in some ways dejected was indeed worthwhile. This will and only can be shown through relations to be a better man, a better father, a respectable son; and a loyal friend. Most of all I hope to be a person of love and understanding.*

*One day, twenty years from now:
I'd like to wake to the light of the day's dawn; stretch my arms wide and be eased in my mind and spirit by the thought that we as a people, we as a nation, or we as one have indeed dealt with the deadly issues of low self-esteem, inner city poverty, as well as the giant corporations, which use their money as power and thus making them an influential force.*

*Twenty years from now:
To some it's too far away, to others too close for comfort, but for all it'll be another giant leap for man kind. The work, tears and bloodshed we put into will play a major part in our tomorrows. One at a time starting with home, first we can make the future into a major motion picture in which everyone has a starting role.*

The following article was given to me by one of the men in my parenting class. I am always looking for articles that deal with improving self-esteem. I hope you enjoy and can use it in your classes.

\$20.00

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up.

He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you but first, let me do this." He proceeded to crumple up the bill.

He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air.



Well he replied, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty.

"Now, who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, we have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20."

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value.

Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who DO LOVE you. The worth of our lives comes not in what we do or who we know, but by WHO WE ARE. You are special - Don't EVER forget it.

* * * * *

I wish you all the best for the year 2007! Please continue to send articles that will help to make our Parenting Connection newsletter even better.

Networking Opportunities

In the next few months, three opportunities for networking with other parenting educators will be held. At each of these conferences, parenting instructors will be able to meet and share ideas. Please consider attending these conferences, participating in workshops and meetings relating to parenting, and presenting a workshop on your program. The three conferences coming up are:

Region III & IV CEA Conference
April 18-20, 2007
Best Western Kelly Inn, Yankton, South Dakota

Keep an eye on the Region III and Region IV websites for a Call for Presentations and registration information. Parenting educators are encouraged to submit proposals to present workshops at the conference.

CEA-Wisconsin State Conference
May 7, 2007
Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin

The Conference Planning Committee has begun constructing the program for the conference. It will include several workshops focusing on parenting classes, parent/child reading projects, parent support groups, and parent fairs. Anyone who would like to present a workshop on their program may contact CEAW President and Conference Chair DeNeal Ericksen at deneal.ericksen@wisconsin.gov. Details on the conference program and registration materials will be included in the March/April issue of the CEA-Wisconsin newsletter

62nd International Correctional Education Association Conference
Excellence in Education
July 8-11, 2007
Atlanta Marriot Hotel

The "Call for Presentations-Workshop Proposals" form is now available on the www.ceanational.org website. Proposals must be completed and emailed to Conference Co-Chair Lisa Williams Gallacher by March 1, 2007. For more information contact: lwilliams.dysd@gaggle.net.



Fox Lake Accommodates Visits by Children

Under the supervision of Chaplain Deborah Mejchar, Fox Lake Correctional Institution in Wisconsin has made several changes in visiting procedures to make the visits between children and their fathers in prison more pleasant and warm.

Inmates at the Fox Lake minimum facility which is attached to the main medium institution may sign up for special activities with their children. If they sign up, their children may come for the regular visits on Sunday and stay for an extra hour after the other visitors leave. During that hour, oriental rugs are put down. Available for use are boxes designed for special age groups, containing activities appropriate for each age group. The men do the special activities with their children and later write journals about the activities.

During regular visiting hours, books and learning tools are supplied for the parents to use to keep their kids entertained. FLCI staff feel these accommodations make the visiting experience more pleasant for the children and parents and for the staff supervising the visits. The gently used books have been acquired through donations. The learning tools are replaced periodically.

During the summer at FLCI, picnic visits allow children to use swings, rides and a sand box outside during visits. FLCI will also be providing crayons and coloring books for Father's Day.

Policies limit physical contact between fathers and their children. Fathers may not hold children on their laps, but they are allowed to hug their children at the beginning and end of the visit.

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