

# Parenting Connection

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## Prison Ministries Offers Parenting Program

Lutheran Social Services' Prison Ministries offers a six-week parenting program to inmates at the Eau Claire County Jail (Wisconsin). The program consists of one three-hour session every other week for six weeks. The first half of the session is spent on the men's side and the second half is spent on the women's side teaching the topic of the week. At times, there are up to eight inmates in the group. The program is not just for parents, but for any inmate in the jail interested in learning about parenting and children.

The jail program is facilitated by LSS staff who provide a wide range of parenting topics that are specific to incarcerated individuals and are helpful when inmates return home to their families. Topics include positive discipline, setting appropriate rules and routines at home, alternatives to spanking, love and logic, the effects of incarceration on a child, the effects of domestic abuse on children and their families, and others. Inmates have 24 topics to choose from and choose the topics to cover over the course of the program. Rules are also established to ensure that everyone is courteous and respectful of one another during the sessions, and so that participants learn appropriate boundaries. During the final week of the session, clients participate in the "Building Bridges" portion of the program.

"Building Bridges" is a literacy program to help provide a positive relationship between a parent and child or children while the inmate is incarcerated. "Building Bridges" gives an inmate the opportunity to stay connected to their child by sending them a video of themselves reading a book to their child or children.

The Kohl's Department Store in Eau Claire has provided brand new books from "Kohl's Cares for Kids" to LSS to be used for "Building Bridges." The staff provides the inmate a sweatshirt to wear during the videotaping so that the orange jumpsuit is not visible and the inmate is not devalued to the child. Other inmates, who do not have children of their own, send the video and book to their nieces, nephews, or  
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grandchildren. The video recordings allow the children to see and hear the voice of their loved one whenever they need to.

“Building Bridges” recognizes that reading is a very important part of a child’s development and is a way the inmate can help the child even without being physically there with them. The “Building Bridges” program lets these children know that their parent is thinking about them and has made an effort to do something special for them.

The program started in 2004. The inmates who have taken the program attest that they have gained a lot, identifying this program as being helpful and useful to them. The parenting program and “Building Bridges” are made possible with LSS Foundation dollars and our generous donors. The program promotes both parenting and literacy.

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## National Institute for Literacy

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) is very generous with materials that can be used in the Father/Mother Read Programs and parenting classes. These materials may be ordered from EDPubs at 1-800-228-8813 free of charge with free shipping.

The National Institute for Literacy also has a website, <http://www.nifl.gov/>, where the material can be downloaded. The site listed by this organization supports teaching of adult learners. Lesson plans, supplemental material, and research based assessment materials may be accessed on line.

The National Institute for Literacy also publishes a very nice booklet of fathers discussing reading with their children.



# Letters from Dad

Writing your kids letters is a great way to communicate an important message that you're not sure how to verbalize. Plus, it's a great memento for your kids to keep!

Greg Austen's (National Fatherhood Initiative's Senior Director of Corrections Programming) has some ideas for writing your kids a letter they'll cherish:

**The Beginning of the Year.** This is a great time to give your children important messages for the upcoming year, make plans and promises, and assure them of the good things you know they will accomplish. You can also do this for the beginning of the school year (it's not too late for this school year!)

**Important Milestones.** Graduation (middle school, high school, college), sweet 16, marriage, first child. Relive important memories and talk about the fun moments to come. You can also offer advice for the upcoming years.

**Your Goals and Dreams for Them.** Use this type of letter to inspire confidence in your child, not burden him/her with lofty expectations. Communicate your assurance of your child's talents and capabilities and inspire her to achieve whatever she sets her mind to.

**For the Future.** When your child is born, write her a letter you'll give to her when she's 18 or when she gets married. Or, write your child a letter on his first day of school that you can give to him when he graduates. This is a great way for you and your child to look back at how you were feeling. Even if your kids are a little older, you can still write a letter you'll share with them in the future - it's never too late to start writing!

More ideas from the National Fatherhood Initiative can be found at [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org).

## Save this Date

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families has scheduled an event this spring that will be of interest to child advocates:

**WCCF's Annual Advocacy "Camp"**  
**Become an (Even More) Effective Advocate for Kids and Families!**  
**April 14 & 15, 2010**  
**Bethel Lutheran Church, Madison**

Spend a couple days in downtown Madison with the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families!

- Build your advocacy skills in a fun and relaxed atmosphere
- Dynamic guest speakers
- Great networking with other advocates
- Capitol visit

More information on Advocacy Camp 2010 will be available soon!

Watch for updates or visit WCCF at [www.wccf.org](http://www.wccf.org)

And, don't forget to bookmark the WCCF blog at <http://www.wiskids.blogspot.com/>.

Bookmark it and check it regularly for updates on issues critical to Wisconsin's Children and Families.



# How to Raise a Happy Child

Stephen Covey, best-selling advice guru, applies his famed *7 Habits* to kids!!!

Ever thought about applying work place principles to your precious little kindergartner's life?

Best selling author and Contributing Editor, Stephen Covey has. In his latest book, *The Leader in Me: How Schools and Parents Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time*.

The father of nine demonstrates how some schools are applying his "seven "habits" to foster personal leadership and character development in kids. USA Weekend talked to Covey about inspiring children, and grandchildren--he has 50 and he came up with these ideas:

## **What can parents do to help their children be successful?**

Affirm their children's worth and potential in a way that inspires them to feel that way too.

Show them that they don't derive their sense of self from being compared to other people. The message to children should be that success comes from character and not just from being rich and famous.

## **Can you give us some specifics?**

Develop a mission statement for your family that deals with the four parts of life: mind, body, heart and spirit. Let this statement focus on ways you can serve others, whether it's working at a food bank or helping friends who come from dysfunctional families.

## **What are the roadblocks to success?**

One of the biggest roadblocks is parents who compare their children with other children. Too many parents don't love their children unconditionally. In many homes, parents focus on the success of money, recognition and achievement rather than on character and contribution.

## **What should be the message parents send about grades?**

Good grades are the byproduct of living by correct principles and becoming our own personal leaders.

## **Should parents help with homework?**

Have your kid teach you what they're learning in school. Get excited and enthusiastic so kids start to feel, "wow, my parents are really learning, I'm their teacher, I'm a good student." Teens tend to be resistant at first, but if you start slowly with their favorite subject, they will become top students. But it takes time, which a lot of parents don't give.

## **Kids are under enormous stress these days. How can parents help them cope?**

They can learn to say no to things that aren't urgent. Listen to your children with true intimacy and let them express themselves fully, without judgment, advice or prying. That removes a lot of stress from their lives.

## **How do you feel about TV?**

In my family, we discuss it. We've always had an arrangement where every child can watch for one hour a day, or seven hours a week. It usually ends in the family watching a football game and movie over the weekend, and hardly any TV on school nights.



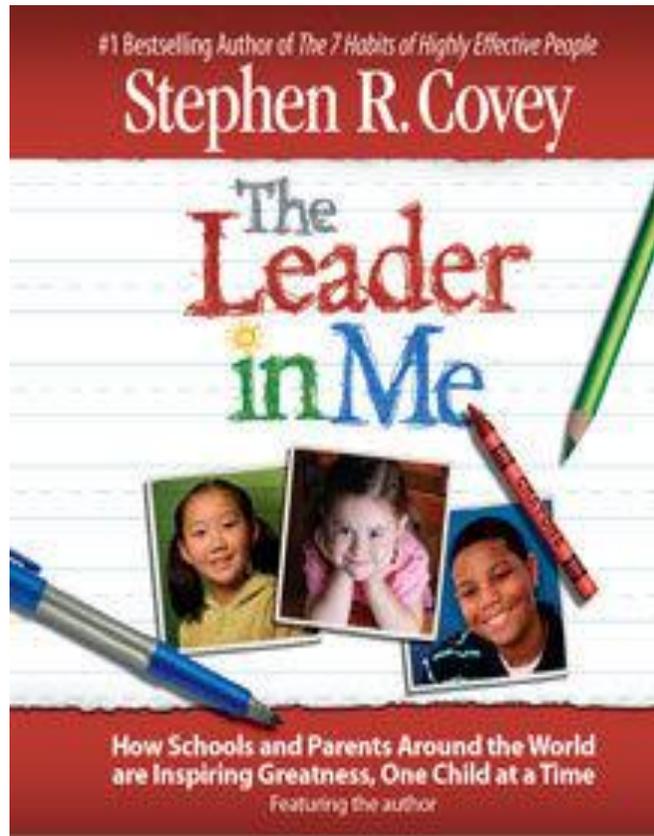
### **What about computers?**

In my family, children use computers for their homework, but not for games and things like that. I don't mind a little entertainment, but it should be kept at a minor level.

### **What gifts do you give your 50 grandchildren?**

I usually buy books. Sometimes I buy developmental toys, or scriptures. It is almost always educational.

Submitted by Cheri Wontor, Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility  
with permission from Stephen Covey



For old issues of the *Parenting Connection* newsletter, go to [www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org)

Check out the Parenting Special Interest Group Discussion Forum at [www.ceanational.org](http://www.ceanational.org)



# Ten Things to Do Instead of Spanking

Most research and parenting experts agree about the destructive influence that corporal punishment has on kids. But what can parents do to discipline their children instead of spanking?

Parents Anonymous of Washington State has come up with a list of *Ten Things to Do Instead of Spanking*. The list was developed by MaryLouise Alving.

In the November/December issue of this newsletter, we published a list of *Ten Reasons Not to Spank*. Here is the list of *Ten Things to Do Instead of Spanking*.

1. **Ignore:** Ignore behavior that will not harm them: bad habits, whining, bad language, tantrums. It is hard to do nothing. However, this lack of attention takes away the very audience they are seeking.
2. **Suspend Privileges:** Match the suspension to the action as closely as possible – e.g., fighting over the TV brings a loss of TV time. Suspend privilege for short periods – long suspensions only build resentment, and the child forgets the original wrongdoing, reducing the effectiveness of the lesson to be learned.
3. **Logical Consequences:** Let the action do the “talking”: e.g., abusing the use of a toy means the toy is taken away for a period of time, crayons on the wall are washed off by the “artist”, or the amount of time by which a curfew is missed is subtracted from the next outing.
4. **Re-Arrange Space and Place:** Be creative in the elimination of problems: have baskets and low hooks to make room clean-up easier, avoid misplacement of school notes or homework by having a special table or counter for materials, make chores easier to remember by having a chart for who does what and when.
5. **Re-Direct Behavior:** If one behavior is a problem, channel the energy into another, positive action. Have paper available to avoid crayoning on the wall; give them a ball instead of throwing sand. If they are having trouble taking turns, have them use another toy, or let them help an adult to use up some need for power.
6. **Grandma’s Rule:** When . . . Then option – when you pick up the toys, then you can have the TV on; when you come home from school on time, then you can have a friend over. Caution: you need to tie what you want with what they want to make this work
7. **Fines:** In some families, imposing fines (5 cents or 25 cents) for bad habits, rules violated, or forgotten responsibilities, does work. Ideally, the “kitty” of money goes for a family outing – a reward to all in the end.
8. **Work Detail:** Creative use of energy to “make up” for rule violations is especially effective for children 8 years or older. A list of jobs that need to be done is posted, and the child chooses one or more jobs to “work off” the problem that was created.
9. **Model:** If need be, show the child how to do the job, chore, or behavior the “right way.” Patience and practice can often turn a wrongdoer into a new helper.
10. **Time Out:** Use timeout for dangerous and harmful behaviors – biting, aggressive hitting, or purposeful destruction. Follow these guidelines:
  - Keep time out to 1 or 2 minutes.
  - Have them sit in a boring place.
  - Tell them what they did wrong and what they are supposed to do instead.
  - Use an egg timer – saves sanity!
  - When timeout is over, notice something they are doing right as soon as possible and comment on it.



# Health Literacy

Wisconsin Literacy Council members, Layla Coleman, Marsha Connet, and Margarete Cook presented a session at the Wisconsin GED/HSED & Adult Literacy Conference in Appleton on using Health Literacy in the Tutoring Program. The session dealt with issues we need to address with our parents.

Parents with low level reading skills find it difficult to fill out forms and questionnaires at the doctor's office. Parents of small children are given questionnaires to assist health care professionals track developmental progress of the children. These same parents are responsible for filling out health history, insurance/payment information, and privacy act material. All of this cumbersome paperwork is in addition to caring for and monitoring behavior of the child during an office visit.

No wonder parents of small children are cranky at the pediatrician's office.

These same parents agonize over labels on over-the-counter and prescription drugs for themselves and their children. A video presentation showed one mother who found her child's age on the Motrin bottle and the dosage of 1½ teaspoons. The mother read what she thought was on the label to the interviewer. The mother had given her daughter 1½ TABLESPOONS of medication.

Another adult held up a prescription medication bottle. This person stated that he knew the medication should be taken twice a day but....that he did not know what twice a day meant. The individual took his medication for the whole day in the morning because then he knew he had medicated himself.

Prescription medication also comes with colorful warning labels "take with food, take on an empty stomach, etc.," which are difficult for our low level readers to comprehend.

Pharmacy name and address

Number used by the drugstore to identify this drug for your refills

Person who gets this drug

Instructions about how often and when to take this drug

Name of drug and strength of drug

Number of refills before certain date

Doctor's name

Drugstore phone number

Prescription fill date

Local Pharmacy  
123 MAIN STREET  
ANYTOWN, USA 11111 (800) 555-5555

DR C. JONES

NO 0060023-08291 DATE 06/23/09

JANE SMITH  
456 MAIN STREET ANYTOWN, US 11111

TAKE ONE CAPSULE BY MOUTH THREE TIMES DAILY FOR 10 DAYS UNTIL ALL TAKEN

AMOXICILLIN 500MG CAPSULES

QTY MRG  
NO REFILLS - DR. AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED

USE BEFORE 06/23/12  
SLF/SLF

Don't use this drug past this date



# Editorial:

On a rainy day in the fall I brought **Diary of a Worm** by Doreen Cronin to share with the FatherRead Program. As I walked from the gate to the school, I contemplated the different ways to teach enrichment through this book. Fortunately there were earthworms covering the surface of the road.

As I walked I chose the longest, fattest, most slimy worms to harvest. I dumped my bag, grabbed a cup and headed back to the prolific road full of enrichment activities. Some of the worms had already escaped, others were run over by vans, but there were enough to capture and turn my plodding students into excited workers.

While small groups measured, wrote about, and drew pictures of their worms; the buzz of engaged students filled the air in my classroom.

This experience will help this group of students to be better equipped to enrich the books and printed material they share with their children. The students also learned how to make reading and learning fun for their children.

The earthworms were returned unharmed to the grassy area surrounding the school. They probably all returned to their wormy families to tell about the strange day they just experienced.

**THINK SPRING!!!!!!!**

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