

Dear Parents/guardians,

Over the past year I have been developing a parent pamphlet that will provide you with a snapshot of helpful tips and suggestions for dealing with common childhood issues. I have also included books to read to your child and websites to check out to gather further information. This pamphlet is intended to be a quick reference tool and is a result of a compilation of tips I have used with parents for years, articles I have read, websites that I have gone on and things I have learned from others over the years. I hope that you find the information useful and it provides you with a starting point if these problems occur for your child and your family. On the last page of the document is a reference section of books that are written for parents that I have acquired. Parents are more than welcome to sign these books out of my office to read. As your child and family encounter any difficulties please feel free to use me as a resource as well. It is helpful to inform the school if problems arise so that we are able to support your child and help them through any difficult times. The following paragraph will give you a clearer picture of how I am available to help students and families.

Many times I am asked what the purpose of an elementary school counselor is. I believe my main goal is to help all children feel better about themselves so that they are then better able to, and more eager to, learn in the classroom and beyond. The following information will give you a snapshot of what I do on a day-to-day basis:

- *Present 2nd step lessons – a violence prevention curriculum that focuses on learning skills in empathy, impulse control & problem solving, and anger management.

- *I also co-teach a health, safety and wellness program to all the students with the school nurse.

- *One of the biggest parts of my job is talking with students on a day-to-day basis about any issues that may arise.

- *I also talk with parents and teachers and help students individually and in groups. I allow visits to the guidance office whenever they are needed.

- * All students are given the chance to have lunch with their peers on occasion in the guidance office. This allows everyone to have a chance to come to my room and become comfortable – which will make them feel better if they do need to come and visit with me in the future.

When I work with students we talk about things that are important to them, read books, play games, draw pictures, provide a neutral place to think and relax, and provide a place for and mediate discussion between individuals and groups.

Students come and see me in many ways; the student may ask to visit, a parent may request it, school personnel may ask, or the counselor may ask to see students.

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL - the following are tips on how to make the 1st day of school as smooth and tear free as possible.



- When talking about the first day of school focus on the positive things that will be occurring such as seeing their friends, having fun, and learning new things.
- Read a story to your child dealing with first day of school anxiety (see list below) and discuss what the story was about and if they have similar feelings about going to school.
- Visit the school during the summer so they are acquainted with where everything is when it's quiet (arrange this with the school first).
- Visit the school playground.
- For a week or two practice your new school routine with your child so they are more acquainted with their routine. This could include getting up at school time, having breakfast, the walk to the bus stop etc.
- Have clothes, lunches, and backpack ready the night before school to make all mornings go more smoothly and it will diminish the morning rush hour. You may want to set aside a special place for your child to keep everything that they take to school.
- If possible, have a play date with a classmate prior to the start of school so that your child has a face to look for on the first day of school.
- Let your child know how fun school is, children pick up on our unspoken signals. Make sure you're sending positive messages.
- A daily routine will help your child on the 1st day of school and every day after. You might want to try a checklist of things to do in the morning and allow your child to do as much as they can on their own – the checklist might include eating breakfast, brushing teeth, getting dressed etc.
- Before bed or before you leave the house check to make sure your child has everything they need for the day – snack, homework, notes for school, etc.
- Keep a calendar where events are written down to help your child and your family with scheduling and organization.
- If your child is and continues to be anxious about being away from you here are some ideas to help them get through the day – teach them deep breathing exercises to calm down, play relaxing music before school, give them a transitional object to keep in their backpack such as a small stuffed animal, worry stone, bracelet, picture of the family etc. Help your child learn and understand that separations are a reality, they can be fun, they are temporary, and the reunion with their family is something to look forward to.



Book Suggestions:

[The Kissing Hand](#) by Audrey Penn

[Franklin Goes to School](#) by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark

[I Don't Want To Go Back To School](#) by Marisbina Russo

[Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready For Kindergarten](#) by Joseph Slate

[First Day Jitters](#) by Julie Danneberg

[Molly Rides The School Bus](#) by Julie Brillhart

[I Am Absolutely Too Small For School](#) by Lauren Child



Website Suggestions:

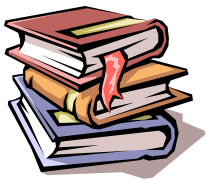
Uacap.org/publications/factsfam/noschool.htm – is a website to check out when your kids won't go to school

Childanxiety.net and healthyplace.com/communities/anxiety/children_5.asp – both of these websites deal with childhood anxiety related issues

DISCIPLINE – The word discipline really means teaching and it should be done in a firm, fair, and consistent manner.



- Your child should be given kind, respectful limits that are clearly understood.
- When limits are given you should remain calm and your child should know what you expect of them. If you sound unsure of yourself your child will pick up on that and try to negotiate with you.
- When setting family rules they need to be fair, specific, and reasonable. You should consider your child's opinions when writing out the rules – this will make your child more invested in the process.
- Rules should be consistent. Once rules are bent your child will expect that other times as well. Natural and logical consequences work the best.
- When giving choices consider using either/or choices i.e. orange or apple juice? Or when/then choices i.e. when you have cleaned your room then you may play. This allows your child to feel like they are part of the decision making process.
- Avoid anger, humiliation, and sarcasm when disciplining your child.
- Compliment good behavior, accomplishments, and progress. Remember to use praise 3 times more than criticism.
- If we repeat an action every day for 21 days, it is likely to become automatic. So don't give up – keep working at it and things will improve over time and life will go more smoothly.



Book Suggestions:

The Berenstain Bears Trouble With Grown-ups by Stan and Jan Berenstain

COMMUNICATION – good communication is essential in building a parent/child relationship.



- When talking to your child look for the root causes of their behavior. Your child's behavior has a reason.
- Be empathic, a child's worries/stressors may seem trivial to you but to your child they can be very traumatic. Support them by asking questions and solving problems together.
- Use I statements, I feel sad when you don't help me pick up your toys. This helps teach your child empathy.
- Respond to your child's feelings when talking to them i.e. I can see how hurt you were, you sound like you're really angry. Statements such as these will likely encourage your child to continue talking to you.
- Invite your child to talk about their problems with you – remember you don't have to solve them but listening and coming up with solutions together can be very helpful.
- When talking to your child stop what you are doing and make eye contact with them this will encourage them to talk to you.
- If your child is hesitant to talk to you about a problem they are having try having them draw or write the problem down.
- In response to the question "what did you do in school today?" parents often get little to no response. Try asking specific questions that are open ended. This will allow your child to respond in a manner other than yes or no. Limit interruptions from others, the media and the telephone. Timing is also important try later in the day or evening when your child has had time to unwind and relax. Lastly, try asking your child what they want to talk about.



Website Suggestions:

Talkwithkids.org

Elainegibson.net/parenting/communication.html

PEER ISSUES/CONFLICT – difficulties with friends is one of the biggest areas that I work on with students. It can impact their school day greatly if not worked out.



- Encourage your child, when they are having a conflict, to practice active listening skills. These include taking turns speaking, focusing on the speaker and what they are saying, summarizing what the speaker says, and maintaining eye contact.
- Help your child develop empathy – talk to them about how others feel when they are teased or yelled at.
- Let your child help you with a problem that you are having, this will prepare them to deal with their own issues when they arise.
- Next time siblings are fighting with one another have them switch roles for 5 minutes and role play the others point of view. Chances are the situation will end in a compromise. In the role-play help your children negotiate with each other and avoid assessing blame.
- Parents can help children learn to resolve conflicts – but it is important to be a helper and not a fixer. When children are allowed to solve their own conflicts – with help – they learn to manage their feelings, think about others and discover that cooperation really works.
- Help your child work through difficulties by using the problem solving steps that they are taught at school – ask What is the problem? What are some solutions? For each solution ask: Is it safe? How might people feel? Is it fair? Will it work? Then choose a solution and use it.
- Resolve conflicts quickly instead of letting problems grow. Listen carefully and focus on solutions not on blaming.
- If your child continues to have difficulties with peers at school encourage them to seek help from adults.
- Practice cooperation and conflict resolution in your home on a regular basis. One easy way to do this is to have weekly family meetings – these can bring everyone together as a family. When meeting everyone gets a chance to talk, no one's ideas are shot down, everyone suggests topics to discuss, and the rules and decisions apply to all.

- If anger gets in the way - help your child control their anger and find a safe outlet to release these strong emotions. Have them find an anger management strategy that works for them such as; taking deep breaths, walking away, counting to ten, writing in a journal, drawing, playing a sport, going to their room for a break, listening to music or going for a walk.



Book Suggestions:

The Big Bad Rumor by Jonathon Meres

Lets Be Enemies by Maurice Sendak

You're Not My Best Friend Anymore by Charlotte Pomerantz

Horace and Morris But Mostly Dolores by James Howe

SIBLING RIVALRY - is the jealousy, competition, and fighting that is commonly found between brothers and sisters. Sibling rivalry has many causes – the simplest one being that there are now two or more children competing for your attention.



- Never compare your children to one another or play favorites.
- Let your child be who they are – without labeling or typecasting them.
- Set aside special time for each child to be with you alone.
- Make sure your child has enough time and space of their own. Kids need a chance to have their own time to play with their friends.
- Pay attention to your children's conflicts but try your best not to intervene. Often parents will protect one child over the other and that escalates the conflict. Parents have to judge when it is time to step in and mediate.
- Plan family activities that are fun for everyone. This will help your children develop a rapport with one another and build their relationship with one another.
- Don't dismiss or suppress your children's resentment or angry feelings towards their sibling. Instead sit down, talk it through, and acknowledge their anger.

Book Suggestions:



I Love You The Purplest by Barbara Joosse

Queen Of The World by Thomas Yezerski

Do Like Kyla by Angela Johnson

Sheila Rae's Peppermint Stick by Kevin Henkes

Berenstain Bears Get In A Fight by Stan and Jan Berenstain

BULLYING - can be defined as repeated and systematic harassment and attacks on others. We encourage children to attempt to resolve conflicts on their own, but sometimes conflicts are too large or have been occurring for too long to be resolved on their own and adult intervention is needed. When children bully others it is a way for them to gain attention, respect, or power. Bullying has four conditions: bullies have unequal power over their targets, bullies intend to harm, humiliate, or embarrass their targets, bullies repeat their bullying behavior, and bullies appear matter of fact about their attack while victims are upset.

- The most important thing for adults to do when dealing with bullying is to listen and empathize with their child. It helps to ask indirect questions, such as how was recess? What happened at lunch today? Do you know of any children at school who are bullies?
- Adults should not encourage their children to physically fight back as a solution to bullying behavior – this will only escalate the problem. It also teaches children that fighting is a solution to problems that may occur in their lives.
- Reinforce with your child the importance of reporting bullying behavior at their school. If your child shares with you that they are being bullied be sure to inform the school so that the problem can be addressed appropriately.
- Make it clear to your child that it isn't their fault that they are being bullied.
- Help your child practice what to say to the bully so they feel more confident when they face him or her.
- Practice being assertive as well as this will lead to a greater feeling of confidence.
- If bullying behavior occurs in the community encourage your child to be with other friends when the bully usually attacks – bullies are less likely to pick on a child in a group.
- If you believe your child is being bullied and they won't talk to you, perhaps due to feelings of shame and embarrassment, look for signs of bullying – such as fear of going to school, lack of friends, loss of interest in certain activities, missing belongings, and heightened anxiety.



Book Suggestions:

The Recess Queen by Alexis O'Neill

Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

The Rat And The Tiger by Keiko Kasza

Dealing With Bullying by Marianne Johnston
Bullies Are A Pain In The Brain by Trevor Romain



Website Suggestions:

Kidshealth.org

aacap.org – suggestions and recommendations to deal with bullying

healthpolitics.com – causes, effects and warning signs of bullying

talk-helps.com – is a great site to go on with your child. It provides different characters and situations dealing with bullying and kids get to see what it is like for each person involved in a bullying scenario.

DIVORCE - any major change is difficult and stressful for children and adults to cope with. Children may feel like their lives have been turned upside down – hopefully the following ideas will help you turn things right side up. 5-8 year old children are preoccupied with a sense of loss following a divorce. They may feel guilty, rejected, or angry and they may experience loyalty conflicts. Children may also feel responsible and they may try to fix the problem and fantasize about reuniting their parents.



9-12 year old children typically have more anger towards one or both of their parents and they may blame their parents. They have feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, they may act out for attention, and they may complain about psychosomatic symptoms (stomachaches, headaches, etc.)

- Separate your child from your divorce experience as much as possible.
- Children should not be put in the middle of their parent's divorce.
- When telling children about the separation/divorce don't weigh them down with details. If possible tell the whole family about the divorce at the same time.
- Parents should not badmouth each other in front of their child.
- Children should not be responsible for conveying information from parent to parent.
- Reassure your child of your love and how that has not and will not change.
- Try to keep the child's routine the same in both houses to help with consistency and reduce confusion.
- Life changes when a divorce occurs in a family. Listening and supporting your child through this difficult time is essential to their emotional well being.
- Reassure your child that the divorce is not their fault.
- Use consistent discipline at both houses.
- Children need quality time with both parents.
- Deal with your own, very normal, feelings about the divorce with someone other than your child.
- Don't make your child take sides in any dispute with your ex-spouse.
- During the divorce process, remember to keep arguments and fights with your spouse out of earshot of your children.



Book Suggestions:

Will Dad Ever Move Back Home by Paula Hogan

Two Places To Sleep by Joan Schuchman

Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore by Betty Boegehold

Dinosaurs Divorce by Laurene Brown

Divorce by Fred Rogers

Let's Talk About Your Parent's Divorce by Elizabeth Weitzman

Don't Divorce Us: Kids Advice To Divorcing Parents by Rita and John Sommers-Flanagan

Mom's House, Dads House- Making Two Homes For Your Child by Isolina Ricci



Website Suggestions:

Divorceinfo.com

Kidsturncentral.com – a website for children to use with parents and there are many other related links as well.

Oregoncounseling.org/handouts/divorcechildren.htm

Divorceandchildren.com

Relationshipjourney.com

Helpguide.org

GRIEF/LOSS - when someone you love passes away you need a period of time to adjust to the loss. Allow yourself time to go through the grief process.

- Remember that each child will respond to loss in his or her own way.
- Children generally experience shock, sadness, longing, anger, and guilt.
- Emotions may shift from one to another quickly through the course of the day.
- By school age, children understand that death is an irreversible event.
- They have many questions and it is important to allow opportunities for them to ask these questions – communicate with them openly and honestly with age appropriate terms.
- You may need to discuss the same details again and again. Remember not to describe death as someone falling asleep – as children may then fear sleeping and/or have nightmares at night.
- Many adults question whether their school age child should attend services such as memorials, funerals, and wakes. In general children need the rituals to give them a chance to say good-bye. Attending these services may make the death seem more real – the child may feel left out or angry if they are not allowed to participate with the family. If however, your child does not want to participate they should not be forced to do so. Be supportive of your child and what they feel comfortable doing. If your child does attend services prepare them for what they may see, ensure that a trusted adult is with the child for support, comfort and to answer questions.
- Allow your child to talk, draw, and/or play to help them deal with the loss – as these are good outlets to deal with their emotions.



Book Suggestions:

The Fall Of Freddie The Leaf: A Story Of Life For All Ages by Leo Buscaglia
Helping Children Cope With The Loss Of A Loved One: A Guide For Grownups
by William Kroen
What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? By Trevor Romain
Lifetimes by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

Loss of a Pet Book Suggestions:

Jaspers Day by Marjorie Blain Parker
The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst
The Accident by Carol Carrick

Loss of a Grandparent Book Suggestions:

Christmas Moon by Denys Cazet

Grandpa's Slideshow by Deborah Gould

Saying Good-Bye To Grandma by Jane Resh Thomas

Nana Upstairs, Nana Downstairs by Tomie dePaola



Website Suggestions:

Ojp.usdoj.gov

Teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/childloss

Staffordsfunerals.com

SELF-ESTEEM - “Children need encouragement like plants need water”
Rudolph Dreikurs.



Self-esteem refers to how we feel about ourselves and it is a very important ingredient in school success. Self-esteem is developed by children feeling competent and capable. This occurs every time your child learns a new skill. Parent expectations also build self-esteem – if you believe your child will do well they will think so too, remembering not to hold your expectations too high and think your child must be perfect in everything that they attempt to do.

- Have your child learn from their mistakes.
- Sneak a compliment in about your child when talking to someone else.
- Set goals every week and work on attaining them.
- Show your child that you love and accept them for whom they are. Don't compare your children to one another – each child has their own strengths.
- Let your child try and fail and try again. When parents frequently intervene when their child is frustrated children don't learn to overcome challenges.
- Give your child positive messages – making sure that the praise you give is deserved. We need to be careful not to inflate their ideas of their own abilities, which could lead to arrogance.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say – saying no to a child won't damage her self-esteem.
- Allow your child to make choices. Help them learn from their mistakes, and don't forget to tell them you will always love them even when they don't succeed the first time.
- Give them responsibility appropriate to their age and level of ability.
- Ask for your child's opinions and advice.



Book Suggestions:

I'm Gonna Like Me, Letting Off A Little Self-Esteem by Jamie Lee Curtis
The Lovables In The Kingdom Of Self-Esteem by Diane Loomans

DEALING WITH TRAGIC EVENTS - When a tragic event, disaster or trauma occurs, children feel like their view of the world, as a safe and predictable place is temporarily lost. Children become fearful that the event will happen again and that their own family will be directly affected by the event.

- Children may begin to act younger than they are and they may exhibit behaviors that are uncommon in them such as – bed wetting, thumbsucking, clinging behaviors, stranger anxiety, nightmares, not wanting to sleep alone, fear of the dark, stomachaches and other physical symptoms may also develop.
- Parts of the traumatic event may be recreated in their play – which is a normal reaction.
- Abandonment issues may come into play- reassure your child that they will be cared for and not left behind.
- Stories, play-acting, puppets, and art activities are all ways to help your child express what they are feeling.
- It helps to allow children to have a routine, to give them time to talk about what happened and explain things to them in a honest, simple, brief way.
- Children are also aided by having extra time and attention during these difficult times. They need to be allowed time to cry and express their feelings as a way to help them heal.
- Children should not be allowed to watch news coverage of the disaster – the coverage is often too overwhelming and frightening to a child and they often misunderstand what they are hearing and seeing.



Website Suggestions:

Nasponline.org

Familyeducation.com

Aol.drspock.com

LYING- In preschool, children most frequently lie because they can't yet distinguish fantasy from reality. By the age of six or seven your child will have a good understanding of right and wrong. Children at this age may lie to avoid getting punished – remind your child that the punishment is lessened when they tell the truth.

- Be sure to give praise to your child for telling the truth and avoid any significant punishment as it may deter your child from telling the truth next time.
- Talk to your child about the importance of truthfulness, honesty and trust.
- Give them alternative methods to lying and share with them the consequences of lying at school and at home.
- Talk with your child about reality and truth and how they are different from make-believe.
- Let your child know that telling the truth lets others know that they can be trusted.
- Make sure that lying is not rewarded – if a child lies to get something they want you should not then give the child that item.
- If you see a pattern to your child's lying behavior make sure you record them and target the core issue behind the lies – for example if they are lying about friends then the core issue may be that there is a friendship issue that needs to be dealt with.
- Discuss examples of truthfulness and lying as you read or watch television. These are spontaneous times to discuss the importance of telling the truth.
- Communicate openly and effectively with your child –children who have open, honest relationships with their parents are much less likely to lie to them.
- Let your children know that you are disappointed in them for lying but avoid sending the message that they are bad people for lying.
- If you are sure that your child has done something inappropriate don't trap them in a lie by asking them whether or not they did it. Instead treat the situation matter of factly – explain what they did that was wrong and why.
- Praise truthfulness – it will be repeated in the future.



Book Suggestions:

Berenstain Bears and the Truth by Stan and Jan Berenstain

MAKING FRIENDS - we assume that everyone innately knows how to make friends – but this is not true for everyone. As children begin their school career they are learning many skills, one of which is friendship skills.



- One important step for children is to think of who they want to be friends with – this person may be someone who shares a common interest or someone who plays a game that they enjoy at recess.
- The next step is to smile at the person and begin to initiate a conversation by asking questions or saying something nice about them (I like your sweater, you did a nice job playing that game, etc).
- Then encourage your child to listen to and contribute to the conversation.
- Continuing the play outside of school for a play date encourages friendships to form as well.
- Involving your child in an out of school group that targets an interest area such as soccer, art, etc. will help them find friends with a common interest.
- Helping your child realize their own strengths will empower them to pursue friendships.
- When asked, children often state that they make friends with people who are nice, kind, share, listen to them and aren't bossy when they play. Instilling these characteristics in your child will pave the way for an easier time forming friendships.



Book Suggestions:

No Friends by James Stevenson

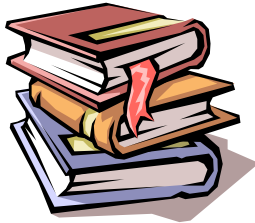
How To Be A Friend by Laurene Brown

That's What Friends Are For by Florence Heide

Lottie's New Friend by Petra Mathers

PARENT RESOURCES

The following are books that I have acquired over the years that parents are welcome to borrow from me at any point during the school year.



The Parenting Survival Kit by Aleta Koman, M.Ed., with Edward Myers

Solve Your Child's School-Related Problems by the National Association of School Psychologists

Normal Children Have Problems, Too by Stanley Turecki, M.D. with Sarah Wernick, Ph.D.

What To Say Or Do...From Diapers To Diploma by Kay Provine

Problem Child Or Quirky Kid? By Rita Sommers-Flannagan, Ph.D. and John Sommers-Flannagan, Ph.D.

DocPop's 52 Weeks Of Active Parenting by Michael H. Popkin, Ph.D.

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Keys To Parenting An Adopted Child by Kathy Lancaster

Keys To Parenting Multiples by Karen KerkHoff Gromada and Mary C. Hurlburt

Keys To Parenting Your Anxious Child by Katharina Manassis, M.D.,F.R.C.P.

Positive Discipline A-Z by Jane Nelson, Ed.D., Lynn Lott, M.A., M.F.C.C., and H. Stephen Glenn, Ph.D.

SOS Help For Parents by Lynn Clark, Ph.D.

Caring For Your School-Age Child Ages 5-12 by The American Academy of Pediatrics

