

THE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT CONNECTION

Home & School

Together We Can Make a Difference



February 2014

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT NEWSLETTER

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By Skip Forsyth

In recent years a lot has been said and written about random acts of kindness. The movie, "Pay It Forward," and other movies have trumpeted the importance of performing deeds of compassion. High school students, especially those planning to pursue post-secondary education, are strongly urged to participate in community service. Search engines can instantly direct a person to hundreds of links about charitable service, benevolent organizations, and ways to help others.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning asked, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." What does the face of caring look like?

- Wash the family car or a friend's car without being asked.
- Give your seat on the bus or at a doctor's office to an elderly person or an expectant mother.
- Stay after school for 30 minutes and help a teacher clean the classroom.
- Babysit for free.
- Tutor a child for free.
- Volunteer at a food bank or a homeless shelter.
- Read to your child or to a person who is visually impaired.
- When you find a lost item, especially one of value, return it to its owner.
- Surprise a co-worker or a friend with a special homemade treat just because.
- Try a monthly challenge. In March it is 3-3-3, on March 3 perform 3 acts of kindness. In April it is 4-4-4, on April 4 perform 4 acts of kindness. In May it is 5-5-5 and so forth up to December the twelfth month.
- Mow the lawn or rake the leaves for a neighbor.
- When at Wendy's buy a small (99 cent) Frosty for the person in line behind you.
- At the end of each day place your coins in a can. At the end of the month count the coins and give the change to a local charity.
- Write positive and encouraging post-it notes, preferably anonymously, and place them in a student's locker or on a teacher's desk.
- Smile and thank the bus driver for keeping the bus clean and safe.
- Praise a parent in public. Sometimes kids are unruly in public places, but other times the children are well-mannered. Give that parent a well-deserved "attaboy."
- Eat lunch with a student who is new to the school or often sits alone because he/she is "different."

Shakespeare wrote, "Love sought is good, but given unsought is better." (Twelfth Night – Act 3, Scene 1) Or a modern translation of a familiar word, "Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them." (The Golden Rule) Yes, practice kindness daily.



To My Best Friend

I was sitting here thinking
Of the words I want to say,
But they just wouldn't
come out right
So I found a different way.

I got a piece of paper
And I wrote this poem for you,
But there's no way to thank you
For everything you do.

For always being nice to me
And staying by my side,
For helping fix my problems
And never leaving me behind.

For accepting my thoughts
and feelings,
Though you do not understand,
For never giving up on me
And being my best friend.

For making me laugh
And letting me cry
And saying you'd miss me
If I were to die.

Everything you mean to me
You could never know
In all the ways you've
changed my life
I could never show.

The way you take care of me,
You're my shining star
And though it's so incredible
That's just the way you are.

Before I get too mushy
It's time for me to go,
But before I leave this
ink-filled page
There's one thing you
should know.

As long as we are living,
No matter when or where,
If you ever need me
Just call and I'll be there.

I'll climb a thousand mountains
And swim a thousand seas
Anything to be there
'cause you've been there for me.

By Kiah K. Chonko



Let's Talk About Scholarships!

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE GIFTS. They don't need to be repaid. There are thousands of them, offered by schools, employers, individuals, private companies, nonprofits, communities, religious groups, and professional and social organizations.

IF YOU WANT FINANCIAL AID, YOU'LL NEED TO FILL OUT THE FAFSA.

Question: What is the FAFSA?

Answer: The FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Anyone who wants financial aid for college will need to fill out the FAFSA. The application is used to determine the dollar amount you or your family will be expected to contribute towards college. All federal grant and loan awards are determined by the FAFSA, and nearly all colleges use the FAFSA as the basis for their own financial aid awards.

The FAFSA application should take about one hour to fill out, but this is only if you have [all the necessary documents](#) at hand before you begin. Some applicants get frustrated with the application process because they do not have ready access to all necessary tax forms and bank statements, so be sure to plan ahead before you sit down to complete your FAFSA.

The FAFSA requires information in five categories:

- Information about the student
- Information about the student's dependency status
- Information about the student's parents
- Information about the student's finances
- A list of the schools that should receive the results of the FAFSA

Students can fill out the FAFSA online at the [FAFSA website](#), or they can apply through the mail with a paper form. The Office of Federal Student Aid strongly recommends the online application because it conducts immediate error checking, and it tends to speed up the application process by a few weeks. Students applying online can save their work and return to an application at a later date.

http://collegeapps.about.com/od/payingforcollege/f/fafsa_info.htm

TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE FAFSA

A lot of the financial aid you'll receive from your intended college and the federal government will be the result of your [FAFSA](#). That's why it's especially important that you make no excuses for filling out that application so that you can see exactly how much funding you'll be receiving and which federal funding programs you qualify for. If you need some help, call the [Federal Student Aid Information Center](#) (FSAIC) at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243), visit the federal student aid website, or contact the financial aid administrator at your intended college.

After your [FAFSA](#) is processed, you'll receive a [Student Aid Report](#) (SAR) that will summarize the information you've received, and see your [Expected Family Contribution](#) (EFC), the amount that a family in your situation should be able to contribute towards a college education. It's not as complicated as it sounds, but that doesn't mean you should take filing your FAFSA lightly.

HAVE AVAILABLE THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION WHEN COMPLETING THE [FAFSA](#):

- ⇒ Most recent year's tax forms, or end of year pay stubs.
- ⇒ W-2 forms - Records of the most recent year's untaxed income, such as child support and untaxed income from agencies such as Social Services, Social Security, and the Veteran Administration. (You do not need to send copies of these documents with your [FAFSA](#), however you will need to refer to them when you file.)
- ⇒ The student's correct social security number.
- ⇒ Do not leave blanks for any questions requiring a numeric figure, such as a dollar amount or a test score. If your answer to a question is zero, be sure to write "0".
- ⇒ Read instructions and follow them carefully. Even if you have completed this form previously, it is not safe to assume revisions have not been made to previous versions.

If you are a parent completing the form for your children, be sure to complete a separate [FAFSA](#) application for each student. Check that the social security number reported is the correct one for the student filing the form, incorrect social security numbers delay processing.

If you are a dependent student, it is important that you enlist the assistance of your parents and that you actively participate in completing the [FAFSA](#). If the financial aid office has questions they will contact the student first, and it is imperative that both you and your parent(s) are aware of the information provided.

- ⇒ Obtain the federal school code from the school or schools you may be interested in attending.
- ⇒ Check figures and calculations. Mistakes delay the processing of up to 40% of all forms processed.
- ⇒ The asset questions pertaining to net value are for secondary and investment real estate only. You are not required to report the net value of your primary residence.

Sign the [FAFSA](#), both the student and parent (if applicable) must sign and date.

<https://www.scholarships.com/financial-aid/financial-aid-tips/tips-for-completing-the-fafsa/>

STUDENTS' TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES



TEST ANXIETY

Students may experience anxiety about tests and may experience heightened anxiety before a testing situation. A certain degree of test anxiety is normal and may help students prepare more effectively, work more efficiently, and remain focused during testing. Too much anxiety, however, can negatively affect performance. The following strategies may assist students, parents, and teachers in reducing test anxiety.

Student Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- Share your feelings of anxiety with parents and teachers.
- Think of the test as an opportunity to show what you know.
- Review homework and materials which pertain to the test topics.
- Relax, breathe deeply and stay focused on the test.
- Remember the test is only one way your academic performance is measured.

Preparing for Tests

- Maintain good study habits: Do your class work.
 - Have a clear understanding of homework assignments before leaving class.
 - Make a study schedule and follow it.
 - Turn in homework on time.
 - Get make-up assignments when returning from an absence.
- Seek and use past homework assignments, class notes, and available review materials.
- Get a good night's rest and eat a normal breakfast before testing.



During Tests

- Read and pay careful attention to all directions.
- Read each passage and accompanying questions.
- Read every possible answer--the best one could be last.
- Read and respond to items one at a time rather than thinking about the whole test.
- Reread, when necessary, the parts of a passage needed for selecting the correct answer.
- Decide exactly what the question is asking; one response is clearly best.
- Don't spend too much time on any one question.
- Skip difficult questions until all other questions have been answered.
- Work as rapidly as possible with accuracy.
- After completion of the test, use any remaining time to check your answers.
- Emphasize that the test is only one measure of academic performance.
- Emphasize that test scores do not determine a person's worth.

<http://www.tn.gov/education/assessment/doc/tsteststrategies.pdf>

Title I Statewide School Support & Family & Community Engagement Initiative



Have you discovered our website?

Go to www.esc16.net and click on the Parents tab

A few of the topics available are listed below.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Student Achievement | • Requested Materials | • Discipline | • Resources |
| • SB 738 (Trigger Law) | * Foster Care | • Parental Involvement Rights | * Parental Involvement |
| • Book Reviews | * Families & Schools | • Newsletters | * School Support |
| • Brochures | * Bullying | | • Compliance |
| | * College & Career Readiness | | * Compact |
| | | | * Policy |

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How to Instill Compassion in Children

Taken in part from an article
by Marilyn Price-Mitchell PhD

*It's not just about changing children.
It's about changing the mindset of a culture.*

Developing compassion in elementary and middle school-aged children is akin to developing muscle strength. The more you use your muscles, the stronger they get. Children learn compassion through many experiences, including caring for the family pet. But children who participate in programs that teach kindness, respect, empathy, and compassion and who have families that reinforce those strengths at home develop the muscles they need to become civically-engaged adolescents and adults.

Compassion is an emotional response and attitude toward others that is deeply empathetic. It enables us to connect to human suffering with care and understanding, acting in ways that brings comfort to those around us. Compassion causes us to remain charitable, even if others behave negatively. Research shows that compassion plays a key role in helping children develop into engaged, caring, and optimistic adults.



CHILDREN PRACTICE COMPASSION THROUGH INVOLVEMENT

1. Provide Opportunities to Practice Compassion

Compassion cannot be learned by talking about it. Children must practice compassion in their daily lives. Difficult encounters with family members, classmates, and friends present opportunities for kids to put themselves in another's shoes – to practice empathy. They also learn compassion when they practice giving without the need to gain anything in return, when they are with people or animals who are suffering, and when they experience the internal reward of feeling appreciated.

2. Help Children Understand and Cope with Anger

Anger is one of the greatest hindrances to compassion because it can overwhelm children's minds and spirit. Yet there are times when anger yields energy and determination. The Dalai Lama, in his article [Compassion and the Individual](#), suggests we investigate the value of our anger. We can help children by asking how their anger will help solve a problem or make their lives happier. We can help them see both the positive and negative sides of anger, and how holding onto anger leads to unreliable and destructive outcomes.

3. Teach Children to Self-Regulate

Antidotes to anger come through compassion and self-regulation, the ability to stop or delay an action rather than behaving impulsively. Children should understand that regulating their anger is not a sign of weakness. Instead, a compassionate attitude is an internal strength. Praise children when they regulate themselves, making sure they understand the power of their calmness and patience. Always encourage elementary and middle school children to talk about their anger with a supportive adult. Teaching compassion doesn't mean turning a blind eye to aggression in others. We all know that children get bullied and are often not treated fairly by peers. If remaining calm only encourages more aggression, then we must also help children take a strong stand without retaliatory anger.

Inspiring a spirit of volunteering in elementary and middle school helps kids develop their compassionate muscles – muscles they will use over and over again as they reach adolescence and adulthood. Once you help your children begin this process, make sure they get lots of practice month after month. The world can never get too much compassion!

<http://www.rootsofaction.com/how-to-instill-compassion-in-children/>

The Art of Kindness: Teaching Children to Care

TEACHING KIDS THE ART OF KINDNESS

✓ **Understand the Importance of Kindness**

Learn about the benefits of giving for children and adults. [The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation](#) website is a terrific place to start. They have classroom and home activities for all children of all ages.

✓ **Create a Kindness Project**

Devise an activity where your family or classroom records ONE act of kindness or ONE pleasant activity per day. You might call it your "Kindness Project" or "Happiness Diary." These activities could include helping with dishes, letting someone else go first, taking care of an animal, going out of the way for a friend, hugging someone to make them feel better, etc. Or they might include visits to places and experiences that make us feel good, like visiting a favorite park or a grandparent's house.

✓ **Take Time to Share**

On a regular weekly basis, take time to share as a family or classroom. Rather than sharing everything in your dairy, share the highlights of your week. Share enough so that everyone learns from each other's acts of kindness and begins to understand the types of experiences that bring gratitude to life. Sharing encourages self-reflection and helps bring meaning to our actions.

<http://www.rootsofaction.com/art-kindness-teaching-children-care/>

5 Signs You Could Be Feeding Your Kids Too Much

1. They push the food around on their plates and don't finish what you give them. Telling kids to "finish everything on your plate" does little to help them learn to read their body's fullness cues. If their eating is slowing down or stopped, give them a few minutes to let their stomach feel full, and don't pressure them to eat every last bite.

2. They're not very hungry for the next meal or snack--which they normally would have eaten. A lot of parents who think they have picky eaters just have kids who snack too much. While we ate an average of one daily snack in the '70s, today's kids eat three. And it's not just the quantity, it's the quality. A study from the University of North Carolina found that high-sugar and high-fat processed snacks (like cookies, chips, and crackers) account for 28 percent of 2 to 6 year-olds' diets and 35 percent of 7 to 12 year-olds'. "Forty or 50 years ago, kids snacked on strawberries," says David Ludwig, M.D., director of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center at Children's Hospital Boston and a professor at the Harvard Medical School. "Now they eat fruit candy."



3. The amount on their plates is close to the amount you have on yours. Kids don't need adult-sized portions. A good serving size is about the size of the palm of your hand, and that applies to kids too. For snacks, a good, easy-to-remember gauge of a serving is what you can grab with your hand.

4. The first thing you do when your kids are upset, stressed, fatigued, or cranky is hand over a snack. What they may really need is just a hug, some quiet time, or something to drink instead (thirst is often confused for hunger--ditto tiredness). They might also just be bored. Try to address the underlying problem before handing over a snack pack with distraction or just a little one-on-one time.

5. Their clothes are becoming tight in the chest, waist, or rear, even though the length is still fine. A lot of parents don't notice if their child gains a few pounds, it's the whole 'love is blind' thing. But they will pick up on pants or shirts that suddenly look snug. If your child's weight is increasing while his height stays the same, it's a sign he's consuming more than he needs to.

<http://www.parenting.com/article/5-signs-you-could-be-feeding-your-kids-too-much>

What Counts as Cardio?

When play is the primary mode of exercise, how do you know if it's really exercise? Here's a list of fun home cardio activities that qualify--ranging from most heart-pumping to least.



Skipping rope. It burns more calories per minute than just about any other type of aerobic exercise.

Running around the yard playing with the dog. All that chasing really gets little heart rates up.

Splashing and kicking in the kiddie pool. Swimming helps build flexibility, endurance, and muscle strength (water adds 12 times more resistance than air).

Jumping in a bouncy house. It's super fun and it's also a good aerobic and resistance exercise that improves balance.

Dancing in the living room. Not as high-energy or high-impact as running, but it does get a kid's whole body moving.

Riding a bicycle/tricycle. It gives legs a good strength and endurance building workout.

Digging for worms. It really is exercise, thanks to all the squatting, standing, and arm work involved.

<http://www.parenting.com/gallery/what-counts-cardio?pnid=325042>



RULES FOR MOMS WITH SONS

Listen patiently. Boys usually take more time to express their thoughts than girls do. When he pauses, don't jump in and finish his sentences.

Cheer him on. Go to as many of his games, meets, or matches as you can. Be long on support and short on advice.

Tell him he's strong. Praise him for his inner and outer strength.

Play with him. Boys bond over activity and action. Throw the ball with him. Shoot hoops with him. Fish with him.

Be there for him. Wait up late. Get up early. Whatever it takes to be there when he needs you, and even when he doesn't realize he needs you.

Laugh with him. Train him well, but do it with joy and laughter. He will remember his childhood as joyful if you take time to play with him and keep things light.

Build his character. Envision the traits you want him to possess, and work little by little, day by day, to instill those.

<http://www.imom.com/mom-life/encouragement/10-rules-for-moms-of-sons/>



WAYS FOR DIVORCED DADS TO STAY CONNECTED TO THEIR KIDS

Honor and respect their mother:

Kids know what's going on. They can read between the lines. They observe and they tend not to forget. Be kind to their mother, be cooperative, be positive, and never talk bad about her in their presence.

Step up and parent:

Base the relationship on the fact of parenthood and reinforce the built-in expectation that comes with the role. Don't act like you're trying to win your kids' friendship. You are the dad, end of story.

Refrain from competition with their mother:

Our children don't need you to be their friend, the "fun" parent, or the amusement park away from home. Your children need and want a home-away-from-home that feels like home.

Maintain a lifestyle the kids can easily interface with:

Part of being a parent is having a life the children can enter comfortably. Is your house or apartment child friendly? Do you maintain a clean and hospitable environment? Is your place a safe place for the kids? Being a divorced dad cannot be a return to your "bachelor pad" days.

Kids are creatures of routine. Routine is how they learn security and where they belong. Make sure you are part of that definition of security. Make sure you are where they belong. You can't do this any other way than one step at a time, predictably, and over the long haul!



<http://www.fathers.com>

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<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>



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