

In the Loop

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Submissions for next newsletter are due by April 30, 2014

Please submit your articles or pictures on summer, family vacations, and outdoor activities.

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Making Healthy Changes

By Ruth L. Snyder

For several months last year I felt lethargic and unwell. At the end of 2013 I stepped on a scale and saw a number larger than I'd ever seen before—a number that made me determined to change. I read some resources, made myself accountable to others, and started on a journey. Although I have set a weight loss goal, the more important goal to me is getting my body fit. If you're interested in changes I've made and results I'm seeing, you can check out my Friday blog posts at www.ruthlsnyder.com.

As foster, adoptive and kinship parents, we often have to help our children deal with or change unwanted behaviours. Marc and Angel Chernoff share eight steps to successful change

1. I won't do it
 2. I can't do it
 3. I want to do it
 4. How do I do it?
 5. I'll try to do it
 6. I can do it
 7. I will do it
 8. I did it!
- Change is hard. It takes time, determination, support, and one small step at a time. Often we forget how long we've lived with our unhealthy choices and wonder why change is taking so long. Remember, it is a journey. Do some research, set some realistic goals with rewards for small successes, and pick one small action you can achieve each day. If you do, you can go from "I won't" to "I did"!

"Only the wisest and stupidest of men never change." -Confucius



Adoption Profile

“We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden.”

-J.W. Von Goethe



Jeremy

Young Jeremy, born in 2002, is a tall, slender, and attractive boy with short brown hair and hazel eyes. Preferring to be busy, active, and outdoors, he is typically on the go playing street hockey or soccer, cycling, snowboarding, or swimming. Having had an opportunity to do some traveling, he enjoys the adventure of new sights and locales. In quieter moments, Jeremy takes pleasure in the escape provided by a good book! Quiet and introspective, this youngster is always thinking, and is eager to please the adults in his life. A self-admitted worrier, the stability and acceptance of a committed adoptive family will provide Jeremy with the

sense of belonging he deserves to flourish.

Jeremy works hard at school, achieves on par academically, and is particularly fond of math and science. A social child who enjoys generally positive peer interactions, he continues to make gains in his social skill development with understanding support.

A two parent family with no other children in the home, or where Jeremy can be the youngest would be the most suitable to his needs. Skilled parents who can provide consistency, patience, abiding commitment and acceptance, in addition to a firm but gentle approach to parenting, will enhance his sense of security and adjustment within the family. The willingness to access therapeutic resources will be an important means of promoting a successful transition and the overall wellbeing of this wonderful child.

Prepared October 2012

If you would like more information about Jeremy, please contact your local worker.

Positive Behaviour Supports Website

Mount Royal University has created a public portal to a series of Positive Behavioural Supports for children. Please take a look at the resources for families and professionals. A good link for all of us!

<http://www.pbsc.info/>

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Weather often affects people's moods. Sunlight breaking through clouds can lift our spirits, while a dull, rainy day may make us feel a little gloomy. While noticeable, these shifts in mood generally do not affect our ability to cope with daily life. Some people, however, are vulnerable to a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern. For them, the shortening days of late autumn are the beginning of a type of clinical depression that can last until spring. This condition is called "Seasonal Affective Disorder," or SAD.

A mild form of SAD, often referred to as the "winter blues," causes discomfort, but is not incapacitating. However, the term "winter blues" can be misleading; some people have a rarer form of SAD which is summer depression. This condition usually begins in late spring or early summer.

Awareness of this mental condition has existed for more than 150 years, but it was only recognised as a disorder in the early 1980s. Many people with SAD may not be aware that it exists or that help is available.

SAD can be a debilitating condition, preventing sufferers from functioning normally. It may affect their personal and professional lives, and seriously limit their potential. It is important to learn about the symptoms, and to know that there is treatment to help people with SAD live a productive life year-round.

What Causes SAD?

Research into the causes of SAD is ongoing. As yet, there is no confirmed cause. However, SAD is thought to be related to seasonal variations in light. A "biological internal clock" in the brain regulates our circadian (daily) rhythms. This biological clock responds to changes in season, partly because of the differences in the length

of the day. For many thousands of years, the cycle of human life revolved around the daily cycle of light and dark. We were alert when the sun shone; we slept when our world was in darkness. The relatively recent introduction of electricity has relieved us of the need to be active mostly in the daylight hours. But our biological clocks may still be telling our bodies to sleep as the days shorten. This puts us out of step with our daily schedules, which no longer change according to the seasons. Other research shows that neurotransmitters, chemical messengers in the brain that help regulate sleep, mood, and appetite, may be disturbed in SAD.

What are the Symptoms?

SAD can be difficult to diagnose, since many of the symptoms are similar to those of other types of depression or bipolar disorder. Even physical conditions, such as thyroid problems, can look like depression. Generally, symptoms that recur for at least 2 consecutive winters, without any other explanation for the changes in mood and behavior, indicate the presence of SAD. They may include:

- change in appetite, in particular a craving for sweet or starchy foods
- weight gain
- decreased energy
- fatigue
- tendency to oversleep
- difficulty concentrating
- irritability
- avoidance of social situations
- feelings of anxiety and despair

The symptoms of SAD generally disappear when spring arrives. For



"The secret to living the life of your dreams is to start living the life of your dreams today, in every little way you possibly can."

-Mike Dooley

some it disappears with heightened activity. For others, the effects of SAD gradually dissipate.

Where to Go for More Information

For further information about Seasonal Affective Disorder, contact a community organization like the Canadian Mental Health Association to find out about support and resources in your community.

Canadian Mental Health Association - www.cmha.ca

“The resurrection gives my life meaning and direction and the opportunity to start over no matter what my circumstance”
-Robert Flatt



Teaching self-control: Guiding your child with discipline by Catherine Wilson

At some point in time — and hopefully sooner rather than later — all parents should ask themselves these important questions:

- Are the discipline strategies I’m using really the best ways to teach my child self control?
- Will they help my child to manage their emotions well when interacting with others?

One approach to discipline that comes highly recommended by Focus on the Family Canada’s counselling team was developed by child psychologist Dr. Karyn Purvis (<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/about-us/>) and her colleague, Dr. David Cross (<http://www.child.tcu.edu/facultystaff.asp>) from Texas Christian University’s Institute of Child Development.

For over a decade their Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) method has equipped adoptive and foster parents with new discipline strategies for troubled children. And the results have been life-changing. Children struggling in relationships due to difficult pasts have shown dramatic improvements in behaviour and in their ability to trust their adoptive parents.

A foundational strength of Purvis and Cross’ approach is that it preserves a warm, loving connection between parent and child throughout the discipline process. Rather than pitting parent against child in a “you-did-this-therefore-your-punishment-will-be” scenario, parent and child work

together as allies in the struggle to master self-control. The focus of discipline is *retraining* rather than punishment, with an emphasis on *modelling* preferred behaviour by the parent and opportunities for the child to *practice* the parent’s example.

In this article we’ll look at just a few of the discipline strategies Purvis and Cross recommend. You can gain a much more complete picture of their approach from their book *The Connected Child*.

Checking Our Perspective

First and foremost, Purvis and Cross urge parents to be *fully present* when discipline issues arise. Rather than treating discipline as an inconvenient interruption to your task at hand, see it instead as one of your *most important* tasks in the day. “Shift your mind-set” Purvis and Cross urge, “so that you see misbehaviours not as a headache, but as an opportunity to teach a child new skills.”

It’s important, too, that you embrace the role of a compassionate, patient, nurturing guide as you discipline your child. Purvis and Cross encourage parents to ask themselves, “Am I shaking my finger at her? Is my jaw set and my hands on my hips in an aggressive posture? What message is my child taking at the primitive level? Is it the child against me — or is it her and me together?”

(Continued on page 5)

Teaching self-control: Guiding your child with discipline (Continued from page 4)

If you're prone to losing your temper, shouting or threatening your child when they misbehave, your approach may well be working against all you are trying to achieve. As Purvis and Cross are careful to point out, a child who feels threatened or fearful has difficulty mastering a new skill. Human physiology, rather than a child's willfulness, is the issue here; stress and fear effectively sabotage learning by triggering a biochemical cascade in the body that reduces our ability to think clearly.

Interrupting misbehaviour

When a child's behaviour is out of line, Purvis and Cross recommend a strategy that, as a general rule looks like this:

1. Interrupt the behaviour immediately and come alongside your child.
2. Get your child's full attention by kneeling down and making direct eye contact.
3. Simply state what the child did wrong.
4. Help him/her say aloud what he/she needs.
5. Show your child a better way of getting those needs met.
6. Give your child a chance to practice.

For many important details, you view a video at empoweredtoconnect.org where Dr. Purvis discusses how to ensure your tone, body language and actions work together to deliver what she calls "the I.D.E.A.L. response."

(<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/the-ideal-response-for-parents/>.)

What should you say?

Writing in *The Connected Child*, Purvis and Cross suggest some simple scripts for parents to follow when they engage

with their child about misbehaviour. Here's one such script a mom might use:

"Jacob, it's not okay for you to hit Sam. I can see you are angry that he took those blocks, but we treat people with respect. Use your words and say what you need."

There's more strategy behind this script than you might imagine. Let's deconstruct it and see why a script like this one is so helpful.

Keep it short and simple

Did you notice that the mom used short sentences and simple language? This is related to the earlier point about stress. In the grip of strong emotions — such as anger at a sibling — you child will have trouble following what you are saying if you introduce complex thoughts (i.e. give a lecture). Short, simple phrases are much easier for your child to process and remember.

In the example above, the mom begins with, "It's not okay to ____." Simply and succinctly, she ensures the child understands exactly what they did wrong. The problem identified is the *behaviour*, not the child.

Next, the mom helps the child make a connection that is important for building self-control: recognizing the feeling that preceded the wrong behaviour.

In her concluding statement, "Use your words . . ." the mom helps the child internalize another crucial concept for building self-control: *To get my needs met, I need to talk about them with others — not take inappropriate action.*

(Continued on page 6)



"I have always been delighted at the prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start, with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning."

-J.B. Priestly

Teaching self-control: Guiding your child with discipline (Continued from page 5)

Reinforce simple rules

We skipped over one phrase from the example script, but it's also important. The mom's statement, "we treat people with respect," reflects another key strategy presented in *The Connected Child*. Purvis and Cross encourage parents to establish some succinct "house rules," repeating them often in the home and unpacking them with more detailed explanations as different situations arise. Here are some rules that Purvis and Cross often use when interacting with children:

- We treat people, and their belongings, with respect.
- People are not for hurting.
- No hurts.
- We treat toys with respect.
- Focus and complete your task.
- Families stick together.

When you have to intervene to discuss misbehaviour, repeating the relevant rule to your child helps him or her recall what "right behaviour" looks like. As a strategy, this may sound simple, yet it is powerful.

Give opportunity for practice

In their book, Purvis and Cross stress the importance, as you discipline, of building in opportunities for your child to practice right behaviour. They write, "Research shows that motor memory can trump cognitive, thought-based memory for very young children. Tapping in to motor memory also enhances comprehension and recall for older children and adults . . . Speaking, hearing, touching and acting out a new skill are great ways for children to cement learning a new lesson."

Returning to our example script for a moment, a conversation that encourages the child to practice a better

way of interacting might unfold like this:

"Jacob, it's not okay for your to hit Sam. I can see you are angry that he took the toy car, but we treat people with respect. Use your words and say what you need."

Jacob: "I want my car back."

Mom: "How can you say that to Sam with respect?"

Jacob: "Sam, please may I have my car?"

Mom: "Good job, Jacob! That was very respectful."

Another powerful tool Purvis and Cross recommend to parents is the "re-do." When a child is "caught in the act," the parent engages the child in a fun, light-hearted manner with a statement like, "Whoa! Let's try that again with respect."

Re-dos allow you to "re-wind time" if necessary. For example, you might say, "Okay, I'm going to go back to where I was standing over here. And you were standing just there. Let's play that scene again." If the child complies, there's no drama, penalty or escalation of the situation — the parent simply guides the child to more appropriate behaviour, and helps them internalize it through practice.

Teaching negotiation

Although your child should always obey your direct request, there's huge value in teaching him or her that you are willing to negotiate if circumstances allow. Purvis and Cross call this a "compromise." For example (Continued on page 7)



*"Our Lord
has written
the promise
of the
resurrection,
not in books
alone, but in
every leaf in
spring-time."*

-Martin Luther

Teaching self-control: Guiding your child with discipline (Continued from page 5)

to a child who is disappointed that it's time for bed, you might say, "Would you like to compromise? You can stay up another ten minutes. But your part of the deal is that you will go to bed quickly later, with no stalling or complaining."

Once your child understands the concept, you can introduce compromising into his or her interactions with others. For example, "Sam wants the car, but Alex wants the car too. Can you both agree on a compromise?"

To learn more about re-dos and compromises, you can listen to Amy and Michael Monroe discussing these and other strategies at <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/connecting-while-correcting/>.

Putting first things first

Focusing on discipline and re-training only makes sense if your child is in a fit state to receive it. When a child misbehaves, before you do anything, always ask yourself, What does my child *need most* right now? Here's a

simple mental checklist worth running through:

- *Does my child need me?* Special one-on-one time with mom or dad might be a more urgent priority than discipline, since children will often act up if they've been feeling neglected.
- *Could intense "hidden" emotions like anxiety or sadness be prompting this behaviour?* If so, empathetic listening might be your best approach.
- *Is my child tired, hungry, thirsty, or sick?* Postponing discipline to first provide a snack or a rest break doesn't mean your child is "getting off lightly." You should always be sure to discuss the "incident" later. But a "pause to regroup" is, in and of itself, a great opportunity to teach your child the self-awareness component that precedes mature self-control. For example, consider the power of teaching a child to say to their sibling, "I'm sorry, Sam. I'm too tired to play nicely right now. Can we play again later, after I've had a rest?"

Reprinted with permission. Catherine Wilson is an associate editor at *Focus on the Family Canada*.

"The secret to a rich life is to have more beginnings than endings."

-Dave Weinbaum



Online Training: Child Safety Seats

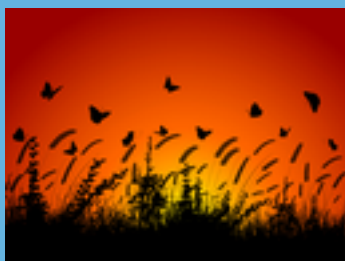
The Alberta Occupant Restraint Program (AORP) was approved for grant funding for the 2012-13 fiscal year to develop online training in the proper use of child safety seats for Human Services staff who transport children. This training will also be valuable for agency staff and placement providers.

The online training is on the albertaseatbelts.ca website, under Alberta Child Safety Seat Training Modules, and it is available to all Albertans. Having the training on the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program website will allow experts to update the training as needed based on ongoing evaluations and any changes to best practice or legislation. This website also includes notices of child restraint recalls and information on any updated child seat regulations.

The online training takes approximately 30 minutes and participants can print/email a certificate of completion. To access this training please go to <http://albertaseatbelts.ca/update-post/alberta-child-safety-seat-training-modules/>.

“Behold, my friends, the spring is come; the earth has gladly received the embraces of the sun, and we shall soon see the results of their love.”

-Sitting Bull



Safe Sleep Practices

Safe Sleep practices for infants are strategies which may contribute to the prevention of sudden, unexpected sleep-related infant deaths. Alberta Health Services has developed Safe Sleep Infant Resources for parents/caregivers which include guidelines for a baby’s first year, such as putting baby on back to sleep (every sleep) and using a crib that meets government safety standards. We all play a role in promoting infant safety by ensuring that parents and caregivers are aware of these simple tips for safe infant sleep. In order to ensure that the caregivers of infants in care are aware of the guidelines, the Environmental Safety Assessment for Caregivers form (FC3606) has been revised to include the statement that safe sleeping practices for infants are discussed with caregivers. This form is to be completed when a foster home or kinship home is approved and yearly thereafter. The electronic version of the Alberta Health Services resources can be found online at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7498.asp>.

Bunny Pear Salad

By Albertine Sperling on www.tasteofhome.com



INGREDIENTS (Makes 4 salads)

- ◆ Red lettuce leaves
- ◆ 1 can (15 ounces) pear halves
- ◆ 12 raisins
- ◆ 8 whole almonds
- ◆ 4 baby carrots
- ◆ 4 parsley sprigs
- ◆ Whipped cream in a can

DIRECTIONS:

1. Arrange lettuce on four salad plates; place a pear half, cut side down, on each plate. For eyes, insert two raisins at narrow end of pear; add another raisin for nose. For ears, insert almonds upright behind eyes.
2. With a sharp knife, cut a small hole at one end of each carrot; insert a parsley sprig for carrot top. Place under bunny’s nose. For tail, spray a small mound of whipped cream at the wide end of each pear.

All dressed up for the Easter parade, these darling bunny salads sent by Albertine Sperling of Abbotsford, British Columbia make a cute and festive side dish for your family feast. What kids wouldn’t have fun helping to assemble their own . . . and extras for guests?

Magazine Mini Basket

By Naomi Shulman on spoonful.com



Total Time: 1-2 hours

Ages: school age

What you'll need

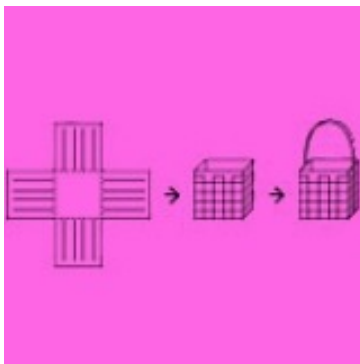
- Magazine covers
- Ruler
- Scissors and craft knife
- Clear tape

NOTE: Younger kids might find it

easier to make the base from card stock, which is a bit sturdier.

How to make it

1. To make the base, cut a 9-inch square from a magazine



cover. Use the ruler to draw a tic-tac-toe grid across the square, then cut it as shown, leaving four tabs (these will be the basket's sides).

2. With the craft knife, cut four slits in each tab (an adult's job). Fold the four tabs up.
3. Cut more magazine covers into 1/2" wide strips. Starting at the bottom, weave the strips in and out of the slits. When one strip ends, tape it in place, then begin weaving the next strip until all the sides are covered.
4. Tape on a strip to serve as a handle.

Courtesy of FamilyFun Magazine

"Easter spells out beauty, the rare beauty of new life."

-S.D. Gordon



20 Random Acts of Kindness for Kids www.eatsleepbe.com

*“In the spring,
at the end of the
day, you should
smell like dirt.”*

-Margaret Atwood



1. Hold the door open for those behind you.
2. Say good morning to your teacher, principal, school officials and classmates.
3. Offer to let your classmate go first.
4. Offer to take your neighbour's dog for a walk.
5. Invite someone new over for a play-date.
6. Collect foods and canned goods for a food bank.
7. Volunteer to be a tutor or mentor in a school, especially if there is an area in which you can help another student.
8. Give someone a compliment at least once every day.
9. Colour a picture, make a craft or send a treat to a senior center or nursing home.
10. Donate your unwanted toys to children in need.
11. Write a thank you note to your teacher, your coach, a firefighter, your mentor or someone who has influenced you in a positive way.
12. Clean up the area around your school or a local park, picking up trash and putting it in the garbage can. You can also help your teacher clean up the classroom.
13. Be extra kind to your bus driver. Say hello when you get on the bus and say thank you when you get off the bus.
14. Call your grandparent(s) or other special family members who you do not see often.
15. Donate your unwanted books to the children in need.
16. Write a note to your parent(s) or grandparent(s) and tell them why they are special to you.
17. Help around the house without being asked to do so, such as cleaning your room, taking out the garbage or helping with the laundry.
18. Going to a new school can be really scary so be friendly to the new students in your class or grade.
19. Organize the clothes you don't wear anymore and donate them to a clothing drive or shelter.
20. Smile. Smiling is easy and happiness is contagious!

Kids These Days: Thank you, CFSA Board Members

by Dr. David Rideout, CEO



At the end of 2013 we said goodbye to some important people who have dedicated many years to helping children and families. They are the team of devoted community members who made up the Board of Directors for North Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA). In their governance role, Board members were responsible for overseeing the CFSA's performance; supporting strategic planning; monitoring an annual budget of nearly sixty million dollars; reporting on results each year; and ensuring services were delivered effectively in accordance with legislation and community needs.

Those Board members were respected individuals within their communities. Some have also served as school trustees, members of the Chamber of Commerce, Aboriginal advocates, social workers, teachers, youth workers, volunteers, and a former mayor. Half of them were Aboriginal, bringing a valuable cultural perspective to various decisions, which is important since nearly two-thirds of the people we serve are Aboriginal. All of the Board members were parents, grandparents,

or foster parents who came from all walks of life, but shared one common goal—to make a positive difference in the lives of children, youth, and families.

These dedicated individuals have regularly traveled across North Central Alberta, which spans the 656 kilometres from Jasper to Cold Lake, to meet with community members and service providers. They have participated in countless community consultations to ensure that programs and services for children were tailored to meet the needs within their communities. They have supported and attended many, many celebration events for CFSA staff, foster and kinship parents; and joined in various forums to help build connections with the Aboriginal community. We are grateful for their important contributions over the past 14 years and have no doubt that they will continue to serve their communities in some capacity.

As a CEO, it has been my privilege to work directly with those people. So I can speak to their contributions with confidence, because I have seen it firsthand. The nature of their governance role meant much of their influence was not always readily seen in the public arena. However, they helped shape the culture and



From left to right: David Rideout, CEO; Gayle McKenzie-Findlay; Robert Lyons; Wendy Huggan; Caren Mueller; Claudette Sheremata; Patricia Palenchuk; Penny Vasseur; Florence Gladue; (front) Audrey Franklin, Aboriginal Co-Chair; Trevor Thain, Co-Chair.

The New Year brought legislative changes that build upon their foundation and introduces new Family and Community Engagement Councils to ensure the continuation of vital community collaboration. These new councils will continue the important dialogue with community partners in the search for local solutions to social issues. I trust some Board members will consider applying to serve in this new role.

As we turn the page to 2014, we look forward to the exciting potential within the many changes before us, realizing that those previous Board members have done so much in paving the way for a new and vibrant process of community support. It is only appropriate that we give thanks to those individuals who have helped build the foundation for that bright future.

Note: More information on the new Family and Community Engagement Councils, and the recruitment for members, can be found at <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/department/family-and-community-engagement-councils.html>



Take a step today . . .

- ◆ Have breakfast every day. It may help control your hunger later in the day.
- ◆ Walk wherever you can — get off the bus early, use the stairs
- ◆ Benefit from eating vegetables and fruit at all meals and as snacks
- ◆ Spend less time being inactive watching TV or playing computer games
- ◆ Request nutrition information about menu items when eating out to help you make healthier choices
- ◆ Enjoy eating with family and friends.
- ◆ Take time to eat and savour every bite!
- ◆ Check out www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

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APRIL 25-27, 2014

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