



CMH Toolbox

Resources for building better lives

FALL 2011

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Proactive Parenting...Avoid and Conquer

Wouldn't it be nice if all parenting decisions boiled down to common sense?

Ok, **some** parenting decisions are just that. For example you avoid bringing a young child to a loud and busy restaurant when she has missed her nap; most people understand that it is very hard for a sleep-deprived child to be able to manage her feelings and behaviors in a situation that might be over-stimulating.

Unfortunately, children with mental health needs often have challenges to contend with that range far beyond sleepiness or hun-

ger. These challenges can be the result of sensory issues, perceptual problems, heightened emotional states, thinking problems, etc.

Sometimes a little creativity and forethought can head off or reduce stressors that can make a child's mental health symptoms worse.

Remember, problem behavior can be a **symptom** of a child's disability. Recognizing

and changing what takes place **before** a problem occurs is often more effective, more logical and much less stressful for everyone than applying a consequence (or punishment) after an incident. This is especially true for a child who has less ability than other children to control his or her own feelings and behaviors, or less ability to anticipate or learn from consequences.

When trying to predict a child's problem behaviors, it is of course most important to

consider that child's unique (Continued on page 2)



Smile more and laugh more. It puts energy back in your batteries

Dr. Alan Zimmerman

Parenting...Taking Care of Yourself Through Parent Support

A child with emotional and/or behavioral issues can present a myriad of difficulties and stressors for parents to deal with. Add to that the everyday stresses of life such as work, caring for other members and financial issues, and it is no wonder that parents are often stressed and tired. Many

parents have difficulty taking care of themselves. This only complicates how they interact with and deal with their children. But a child with a mental health issue can be especially challenging. As a result, it is very important for parents to know that they are not alone. Secondly, it is important to

know that there is support available in the community to help parents better take care of themselves. The better an individual takes care of him or herself, the better parent he or she can be.

Turn to page 2 for a list of community resources for parents.

Community Resources for Parents

- Family to Family Connections: A support group for families with children with special needs, meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month in Coon Rapids. Call Lois at 763-767-3107.
- NAMI: Support groups for families of children with mental illness. In Elk River, call Sue at 763-633-0894 or in Forest Lake call Brenda at 651-335-7832.
- Parent Resource Groups: Call Suzette Scheele at 651-645-2948.
- MACMH (Minnesota Association Children's Mental Health): 651-644-7333, www.macmh.org
- Autism Society of Minnesota: Parent support groups in Coon Rapids on the third Tuesday of every month and in Spring Lake Park on the fourth Thursday of every month. For Coon Rapids groups call ARC at 952-920-0855 and for Spring Lake Park groups contact Jacklyn Hall at jhall@district16.org.
- Children and Adults with ADHD of Minnesota: Support groups and resources for adults or children with ADD/ADHD: 952-922-5761 or www.chadd.org.
- Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association: Advice, advocacy, and support for grandparents and other kinship caregivers. 651-917-4640 www.mkca.org.
- MOFAS (Minnesota Association on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome): works collaboratively with communities to provide resources and support for families living with FASD, 651-917-2370, www.mofas.org.



**You may be
only one
person in the
world,
but you may
also be the
world to one
person.**

Proactive Parenting

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challenges.

Pay close attention to what is going on right before he or she has the most difficulty. Busy lives and multiple demands on parents' time and attention can make it very easy to miss seeing the connections between events and behaviors that follow. It may be helpful to take a few minutes to write down details of past behavior problems, or even start keeping a log, noting time of day and specific events that happened before the difficulties began. Spotting trends or patterns can result in some great opportunities to change situations that your child is not yet able to handle successfully.

Consider some of the

following factors when preparing your child to have the most successful experience possible in any situation:

Time of day: Is your child most alert or at his or her best at certain times of day? If your child is more anxious or irritable in the morning, maybe it is better to schedule that dental appointment later in the day.

Need for movement: Many children are unable to sit still for long periods of time without becoming irritable or agitated. Some children focus best when moving. Build time and opportunities for movement (running, jumping, squirming and wiggling) into activities. Plan to take movement breaks, even it means adding time to an activity. Planned breaks are better than unplanned

melt-downs.

Language: Some children struggle to understand what is being said to them. Keep directions simple and short. Give one direction at a time. Remember that fewer words are usually better. Expecting that you may have to repeat something over and over may reduce your own frustration. Ask the child to tell you what was said, using his or her own words.

New experiences: New situations and experiences that are merely ordinary or interesting to us can produce a lot of anxiety in children, or can be overwhelming for children with little self-control. Prepare children for new situations in advance. Using simple words and short sentences walk them through what is likely to happen. This is also a good time to tell them what is expected of

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Proactive Parenting



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them in regard to behaviors. You may even go so far as to rehearse the event or do some role-playing.

Exit strategies: Give children an opportunity to feel some control in challenging situations by planning what he or she can do if feeling overwhelmed, scared, angry, etc. Talk about what they might say (for example, he or she might ask to be excused to take a drink or use the bathroom as a natural break), who they can go to and where they can go if they need to take some time. Talk to other caregivers in

advance, with or without your child, and let them know of your child's needs. Develop a plan together when possible. Praise participation but expect that your child may need time and space apart from the group or activity.

Code words: It can be embarrassing for a child to ask for help or let others know that they are having difficulty. Develop code words or signs that your child and other caregivers can use to discreetly communicate a need or a cue. A child might learn that he or she can say they "forgot something in the car" if they need to take a

break. A student might place a paper on his desk in a certain position to let the teacher know he needs to leave the classroom. Likewise, a parent might cue a child to use a coping strategy by using an agreed upon word, phrase or question.

Distraction: Does your child get "stuck" on a scary or negative thought? Does he or she have a hard time letting go of the notion that someone else has done something wrong? Arguing or trying to get the child to see another viewpoint may only result in escalation of the child's agitation or

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**Twin Cities
Mobile Crisis
Team**
763-755-3801
*For Adults and
Children*

**24 hours
7 days per week**

Previously known as
Riverwind Crisis
Mobile Team

Need Help with School Supplies?



Need assistance with back-to-school supplies? Below is a list of resources that may be able to help you.

- Contact your local school district office or church to see if you qualify for any school supply program they may have.
- The CEAP (Community Emergency Assistance Program) Back To School Program can provide students (K-8th grade) with school supplies, including backpacks. For more information on this program, please call (763) 783-4930.



- A limited number of backpacks and school supplies also will be available to families receiving services through the Anoka County Social Services/Mental Health Department. Interested families should contact their county social worker/case manager regarding this program.
- If you have not received your child's school supply list, your local discount store may have the list available.



*Tell me and I'll forget.
Show me, and I may
not remember.
Involve me, and I'll
understand.*

Individualized Education Plan

The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to develop an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** for every student with a disability who meets the federal and state requirements for special education. An IEP refers to both the educational program services to be provided to a child, and to the written document that describes that

educational program.

An IEP is developed to meet the unique educational needs of a particular child and is intended to help the child reach educational goals more easily than they otherwise could. The IEP must be tailored to the individual student's needs, as identified by an evaluation process, and must help teachers and related ser-

vice providers (such as paraprofessional educators) understand the student's disability and how that disability affects the learning process. The IEP should describe how best the student learns, and what teachers and service providers will do to help the student learn most effectively in the least restrictive environment possible.

To determine if a child qualifies for special education services, a parent can make a request to the school to have a special education evaluation completed. The request needs to be in writing, dated and signed by the parent.

The request should be addressed to the principal of the child's school as well as to the special education director of the school district. The school should respond to the evaluation request within 10 school days (or two calendar weeks). If no evaluation has ever been done, the school and the family will meet to develop an evaluation plan. Once the evaluation plan is signed by the parent(s) and returned to the school, the school has **30 school days** to complete the evaluation, meet with the family to review the findings, and present the family with a written copy of the results. If the school refuses to

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Proactive Parenting

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problem behaviors. Sometimes a complete change in subject, activity and/or environment can help generate a fresh start and help your child to shift his or her attention to more positive things. Surprise tactics sometimes work as well. Try doing something unexpected or silly that you child would not expect of you in that situation.

Endurance: Pay attention to your child's early warning signs of impending tantrums or meltdowns. Increased

irritability or tearfulness may indicate that it is time to quickly wrap things up and say your good-byes. Leaving before all self-control is lost spares everyone feelings of embarrassment or a sense of failure. The rule of thumb is that whenever possible, leave an activity at a point when things are going well. This will reinforce success and prevent everyone from associating community or family events with feelings of chaos or stress.

These are just a few of the potentially limitless variables and strategies

that can be considered. Working with your child, teachers, other caregivers and mental health professionals, you and your child can learn to anticipate and manage small problems and uncomfortable feelings before they seem unmanageable. At the same time, you and your child will increase your understanding of his or her vulnerabilities, skills and strengths.





Bullying Affects Everyone - Bully-Proof Your Child



Twelve years old, Johnny came home from school one day, threw his backpack on the ground and ran outside. Johnny's parents thought it was good that he was finally getting outside instead of burying his face in a book or isolating himself in his room. What his parents didn't know at the time was that Johnny was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. Johnny's parents knew that he struggled with facial tics and depression, but did not know he had been singled out and bullied because of these issues. Tragically, Johnny ended his life that day after a bout of bullying went too far.

Johnny loved to read and often kept to himself, but always enjoyed the time he spent with friend's and family. Aside from his desire for alone time, his parents did not see the pain behind his compliant demeanor. Johnny and his parents always had open communication, yet it is unclear why he remained silent about the bullying he endured. Unfortunately, Johnny's parents would not fully realize the true nature of his struggle until it was too late to help him.

Interventions	
by:	
Adults	4%
Peers	11%
None	85%

Every seven minutes a child is bullied. Bullying is defined as repetitive and ongoing negative actions by one or more people.

Bullying is *not* a rite of passage, it affects everyone and no one is immune to bullying. Bullying can be physical/verbal, peer exclusion, cyber bullying, and racial/sexual comments; to name a few. For all the reasons that children are bullied, there is one question that always remains...why? While there is no simple answer or response to give the bullied child, there is a definite imbalance of power. Bullies often seek this imbalance of power and/or have gained positive attention (most likely from their peers) for this behavior. Thus the bullying continues.

Bullying has changed dramatically over the years: from physical acts to the passive aggressive [cyber bullying] behaviors we see

more often with our youth. Cyber bullying is using electronic media to further harm the victim. Cyber bullies hide behind a computer screen and often will use this avenue to say things to their victims that they would not normally say to their face. Electronic media also provides increased access to the victim. The bullying no longer occurs just at school. It is difficult to avoid the bully at school; however it is that much harder for a youth to avoid the computer and/or cell phone.

There are too many children that are losing the battle to bullying. Many like Johnny suffer in silence. Bullying is not a rite of passage and no one deserves to be bullied for any reason. For our youth, school is their world.

Therefore helping a child to become Bully-Proof might be the most powerful tool you can provide.

How to Bully-Proof your child:

- Spend time with your child.
- Get involved in school.
- Model positive behaviors to your child: children will do as you do.
- Know your child's passwords to any social network, email accounts, etc.
- Check your child's phone.
- Encourage participation in a sport or club.
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents.
- Allow your child to communicate unpleasant feelings. Do not dismiss their feelings. Become an "emotional mirror" to your child and assist him/her in identifying a plan.
- Document all bullying incidents with time, date, detail, any witnesses, etc.
- Document your attempts to correct the situation (i.e. contacted teacher, talked to child, set plan, etc.).
- Be patient and understanding.

If you are being bullied:

- Tell an adult (parent, teacher, family member, school resource officer, school counselor, mentor, etc.). If you do not feel heard then tell another adult.
- Document the bullying.
- Do not join into any bullying behaviors.
- Join a sport or club.
- Do NOT share your passwords with friends (email, social network sites, etc.).





Working with People to Improve Lives

Children's Mental Health

3300 4th Ave N. Bldg #9

Anoka, MN 55303

Phone: 763-712-2703

Intake: 763-712-2722

Fax: 763-712-2728

We're on the Web:

www.anokacounty.us

You'll find Children's Mental Health
under help for
families, individuals, seniors, youth.

Individualized Education Plan

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evaluate a child, they should document this refusal on a Denial of Parent Request Form. This form will specify the school's reasons for not proceeding with the requested evaluation.

If a child is eligible for special education services, the child's IEP team, which will always include the parent(s), will meet to write the IEP. Each IEP should include the following components:

• Child's present level of

performance (with regard to a particular area/skill)

- Goals to assist a student in building needed skills (including behavioral goals, if applicable)
- Adaptations for academic work and expectations (both academic and behavioral)
- A list of services to be provided, who will provide them and for how much time.
- A timeline for review of the program and the reporting of progress.
- Behavior Intervention Plan

(if applicable)

- Other concerns/areas
- At some point following this meeting (usually within two weeks), the parent(s) will receive a copy of the IEP to review. A parent then has 14 calendar days to respond and either approve or decline the IEP. If a parent objects to any part of the IEP, he or she needs to let the school know immediately, in writing, using the form attached to the IEP. An initial IEP will not go into effect without a parent's signature. For subsequent

IEPs, if a parent does not sign and return the IEP within 14 days, the plan **still goes into effect.**

Every three years, a child who receives special education will be re-evaluated to determine continued eligibility for services and to update their educational and/or behavioral needs. Parents can request a re-evaluation at any time, but this should be done so only if the child has experienced a significant change or event (including new testing) that could affect school services.



Brought to you by the Children's Mental Health Newsletter Committee: Sandy, Angie, Julie, Mike, Carrie, and Gena.