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Parenting tips and information for every parent

Tippaper

No.2

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www.triplep-staypositive.net



Alberta parents choose help that suits

Thousands of Alberta families have discovered the many benefits of the Triple P positive parenting support, which is offered free of charge by the Alberta government and is available through Alberta's Parent Link Centres, through the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Program and in 22 different school authorities.

Families throughout the province are choosing the type of Triple P that suits them best, with the range extending from 90-minute seminars to multi-week private sessions. Parents of children with physical or intellectual special needs also get specialized guidance for dealing with behavioural issues through Triple P's specially-tailored Stepping Stones program.

Building on this success, the Alberta government recently launched a new Triple P program – Discussion Group Triple P. Check out Page 8 to find out more about these brief workshop-style sessions.

Millions of families

The United Nations ranks Triple P as the number one parenting program in the world, based on the body of evidence behind it. Yet more than 30 years ago, Triple P started out as the research project of a young clinical psychologist.

Today, Professor Matt Sanders is considered one of the world's leading parenting authorities.

And his Triple P – Positive Parenting Program has been shown to work time and time again, helping more than six million children and families around the globe.

Tired kids act out after school



Like most parents, Calgary's Kathryn and Bob Wilson* love their children unconditionally. Daughter Jennifer and son Graham know that even if they're having a screaming tantrum, mom and dad will still love them. But Kathryn and Bob have struggled with the realization that their kids behave better for their teachers than they do at home.

"They go to regular schools, where they do very well," says Kathryn. "But when they return home, we kind of get the worst of them. It's when they act out. At school there is lots of stimulation – so much is happening and they give their best efforts to get through each day. But by the time they come home they're tired and it's harder for them to stay in control."

The situation is particularly challenging because Kathryn and Bob's children also have special needs. Jennifer, 10, and Graham, 8, have each been diagnosed as high functioning autistic with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Stressed and emotionally drained, Kathryn and Bob looked far and wide

for ways to keep calm in the home.

"Our daughter is known to have temper tantrums; our son has huge temper tantrums," says Kathryn. "I've read loads of books and taken plenty of advice but it rarely works in the real world. The doctors or psychologists say, 'If they do this – then do that.' We then try what they asked us to do, but sometimes the results are unexpected and the books don't give you the different avenues to take if one thing doesn't work. This was especially the case for us, given our children have special needs."

But Kathryn and Bob finally found support that delivered the results they wanted. They discovered Triple P,

a world-acclaimed positive parenting program offered free to parents throughout Alberta. And together they began attending Triple P's Stepping Stones program – a group course tailored for parents of children with a disability. "It worked for us and our home life has improved considerably," says Kathryn. "Doing the group together as a couple has also meant that we're now consistent with our approaches, which is great for the children." ■

Go to page 3 to read how Triple P helped the Wilsons make time for themselves.

*Names have been changed



Contact?

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2 About Parenting

5 billion

The estimated hours the world's children spend playing Lego each year.

Source: www.lego.com

15%

The proportion of five-year-old children who are bed wetters.

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society

290

The number of baby girls born in Alberta in 2011 who were named Olivia.

Source: www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca



Parenting skills and friendships 'blossom' in Calgary groups



Parent coach Sue Blackburn-Forster is a big fan of Group Triple P. "I love the interaction between the parents and watching their growing sense of empowerment. They go from the mindset of 'I'm not a good parent' to 'I can do this!'"

A parent coach for Family Connections Parent Link in Calgary, Sue is also an accredited Triple P practitioner who can offer Triple P parenting support in many ways – from brief one-on-one sessions to large group seminars and single, two-hour discussion groups.

Sue believes Triple P groups are so successful because parents are given a variety of skills and strategies they adapt to suit their own situations.

"Every individual situation is unique, so parents can determine what works for them and try appropriate tactics with their children," she explains.

She likes that parents aren't lectured or given a list of things to do. "It is not a one-size-fits-all approach. We each have something to learn, including myself as a

parent coach," she says.

"We take this journey of discovery together where there are different things for different people. Then we come back together as a group and discuss progress, with the parents evaluating themselves. This is one of our techniques; having our parents step back and say what worked well and what didn't. What can you do better? What's something that you want to work on?"

The Group Triple P course spans eight weeks, with the first four sessions done as a group. The next three are the chance for parents to work on their action plan, focussing on specific behaviours at home. Sue encourages parents to get a 'buddy' within the group and call each other for moral support. "I also call them to see

how they are going and to help determine any tweaking they can do."

Then, the final week is especially rewarding. "During the eighth week we come back together again and celebrate their successes!"

And there's much to celebrate because the changes are dramatic. Sue sees them first hand and says it's her favourite part of the group.

"(There's the change from) how they are when they come in, and then the progress they make, the stories they tell, and their blossoming as parents as their confidence builds," Sue says. "There's a wonderful feeling when you see them teaching what they've learned to others – or share it with their spouses. It's great to see the new-found confidence."



Sue knows parents get so much out of a Group Triple P course.

"(It's) their sense of empowerment, as well as the friendships (which) last long after our sessions have ended." ■

Continued from page 1 >>



How Triple P helped Kathryn and Bob's relationship

The pressure of raising two children with special needs weighed heavily on Kathryn and Bob Wilson as it no doubt would on any parent in a similar situation.

But the Calgary mom and dad found their stress levels dropped dramatically after doing the Stepping Stones Triple P group program. "The group gave us more tools to handle the (children's) behaviours," says Kathryn. "There were a lot of videos of parents dealing with different situations. It was great to see a visual of how to handle the behaviours along with a very structured approach and guidance."

Today, Kathryn and Bob feel considerably less stressed, largely because Jennifer's and Graham's behaviour has improved.

"My son's tantrums have dropped – both in number and height and length. Because I know what I'm going to do will relax and calm him, it's not going to go on all day," says Kathryn. "The issues don't disappear for children with special needs; they're not necessarily going to

stop having tantrums altogether but they are getting an immediate and consistent response to the behaviours. It includes giving the kids some quiet time to calm down."

But Triple P also helped Kathryn and Bob learn the importance of looking after themselves. "Having children with special needs puts a strain on your marriage as you rarely get time alone together," says Kathryn.

So although their group sessions finished some time ago, they've continued to hire a babysitter each week. "We just go out and spend time together – something we hadn't felt we could do for the past 10 years." ■





Claire, middle, with children Bethany and Oliver Stanger



Group means you're not alone

To a parent, it can be a daunting, if not downright scary, prospect: The idea that you will meet a group of strangers and talk about the problems you have raising your children. But most parents find Group Triple P a supportive and liberating experience. Because in the relaxed environment of the weekly group sessions, parents are relieved to know they're not alone.

"I felt really comfortable being in a small group," says one mother who completed Group Triple P. "I saw other parents who are worse off so at the end of the day, I (knew I) wasn't the only one out there with problems. It was good to talk. I got ideas off them and they got ideas off me."

What is Group?

Over two months, an accredited Triple P practitioner guides parents through their Group Triple P course, which is a very thorough way for parents to learn about positive parenting. Group Triple P is ideal for parents who have significant problems at home or for those who are coping well, but would just like to be ready for any issues that may come up. There are up to 12 parents in Group Triple P sessions.

Sessions 1-4

Parents attend four two-hour sessions – informal gatherings where Triple P's parenting strategies are shared, discussed and practiced. Practitioners don't lecture and aren't judgmental.

Sessions 5-7

These three weeks are set aside for at-home practice. During this time parents receive weekly phone calls from their practitioner, who offers support and checks how parents are doing. These calls take between 15 and 30 minutes.

Session 8

Finally, there's another group session where parents can review their progress and troubleshoot any outstanding issues. And of course, there are congratulations all round as parents take time to consider how much they've achieved. ■

No more shouting is Airdrie mom's plan



Over the past 18 months, life in the Stanger family home in Airdrie had become fairly stressful. "I became quite short-tempered and found myself shouting at the kids a lot," says Claire Stanger, mom to Oliver, 4, and Bethany, 2. When the children started hitting, biting or fighting over toys, Claire had been using a version of time-out. "But some days it didn't feel effective as it seemed Oliver would spend half the day in time-out!" she says.

Eventually, Claire decided to check out the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program to see what she could pick up. Today, Claire and her kids are much happier.

"My children have responded very well to the program. The minute I stopped shouting, so did they. We have moved house twice since the program so we have gone through two periods of readjustment and the kids handle new situations better because I am able to prepare them better for it.

"I learned to explain what's about to happen and what the rules are, and the consequences if the rules aren't followed. Because I am more consistent in my explanations and following through, they know I mean it and I rarely have to carry out a consequence."

Claire chose to do the eight-week Group Triple P and liked the way each session tackled a new topic with simple ideas. "It wasn't too much to digest during the session," she says. "The homework helped put the theory into practice and allowed you to progress and build on stuff we'd learned from the week before. Also the information was in

layman's terms, it wasn't too technical or 'psychological'. It was easy to understand, and the strategies made sense."

One of the strategies that Claire found particularly helpful was called 'planning ahead'. It made going out with Bethany and Oliver a lot easier.



Bethany Stanger

"Now I explain what is going to happen, how long for, what the rules are and what will happen if the rules aren't followed, before we get out of the car.

"Involving them means I get their cooperation"

The kids respond really well to knowing what is about to happen rather than being told 'let's go, we need to go out'.

"Involving them means I get their cooperation. Also, talking through the activity afterwards seems to help affirm which behaviour was appreciated by me and encourages them to do it again next time."

And what would Claire say to other parents considering Group Triple P? "Do it!" she says. "I would definitely recommend any parent participate in a Triple P program." ■



4 Take Care of Yourself



PARENTS SAY

Throughout Alberta, we asked parents:
"How do you de-stress as a parent?"

Darcy, Fort Saskatchewan
Mother of one – Kiley, 7 (day home mom to 5 other children)

"I do yoga to help me focus on something other than what is stressing me out. It takes me away from the problem for a bit."

Don, Bruderheim
Father of one – Teanna, 6

"I use a stress ball. Going to work helps me too."

Olga, Fort Saskatchewan
Mother of three – Eva, 6, Jack, 5, and James, 3

"I like to shop or do something on my own, like visit a friend or have a warm bath."

Andrea, Coaldale
Mother of seven – Asher, 4 months, Rebekah, 1, Abraam, 2, Sarah, 4, Naomi, 5, Bethany, 7, Tyler, 13

"I run on the treadmill 3-4 times a week for 20-30 minutes each session to relieve my stress. Exercise has many benefits and is a great stress reliever that any busy mom can do at home. Plus it sets a good example for your children; that being healthy is important."

Carolina, Canmore
Mother of one – Alejandra, 11 months

"Getting out of the house (helps) – changing the environment."

Christine, Canmore
Mother of two – Kylee, 1, and Sierra, 2

"After the kids go to bed, I always dedicate an hour each day to myself doing some form of physical activity. This refreshes me for the next day."

Jen, Hinton
Mother of two – Skylar, 7, and Austin, 4

"I put my feet up, put on my sweats and watch a soap opera!"

Adrienn, Fort Saskatchewan
Mother of two – Joshua, 5, and Calen, 2

"I used to eat, now, I exercise. It is something I can do with or without my kids."



Ten minutes with... Adine Shuchuk



Triple P practitioner Adine Shuchuk is coordinator for West Edmonton Parent Link.

What are some of the common issues that cause parents stress?

The biggest issue is that parents today feel like they need to do everything; have a clean house, well-behaved children and full-time careers. It can be exhausting. We want to be great parents but there are countless pressures.

What might prevent a parent from looking after themselves?

Again, it's that pressure to be all and do all; the guilt factor. We want to be the best parents that we can, and the media gives an image of what that is, but it isn't realistic.

Why do some parents feel guilty if they take time out for themselves?

There's a perception that whatever time we use for ourselves is taken from our children who need us.

What's your advice to parents who are feeling overtired or stressed?

Biggest advice – it's normal. Feeling overtired and stressed is normal. One of the best things we can do is acknowledge that these feelings are normal and to ask for support.

What are the consequences of parents not taking care of themselves?

To be the best parents we can be, we need to take care of ourselves. If you're stressed, your perceptions of a situation won't be the same – you may



Adine Shuchuk

perceive your child's behaviour to be more than it really is. You become more short-tempered and less likely to be calm and consistent when you're under stress.

What are three of the most common things parents tell you would make them less stressed or tired?

1) More help and support.
2) A daily, workable routine.
3) To know they're not the only parents who feel stress. There's something about normalizing that really helps.

How do most parents feel about being a parent?

I think most parents find parenting rewarding, yet challenging. They also fear judgement by others, and worry that people will consider them to be selfish if they take time for themselves. ■

Calming the morning rush hour



The morning rush hour can be the most stressful part of a family's day. You're trying to get lunches packed. One child has toothpaste all over his clothes. The other refuses to get dressed at all. Surely there has to be an easier way to get you and your kids out the door on time?

Well, the key is very simple. It is to be organized.

For a start, prepare some things the night before. You'll save a bit of time in the morning. Once you're up, get yourself ready first, before your child.

I also recommend you don't have the television on in the morning. Once the children are completely ready to leave you may want to turn it on. Otherwise it is a distraction.

It also helps to let your child know ahead of time what you expect them to do before you leave.

Teaching children to get dressed by themselves helps them become more independent too. They soon realize how important it is to be organized. And a child who brushes his own teeth, or makes her own bed will make life easier for you.

You may also like to try the "beat the clock" game. The goal is for your child to be ready before the alarm clock sounds off. If your child wins, he earns a small treat or reward – perhaps a favourite snack in his lunch box.

Tell your child exactly what tasks he

must do to be ready to leave (and win the award). Make sure you set the timer with plenty of time. Try not to repeat instructions all the time or nag your child to hurry up.

Often you'll be able to phase out the rewards and the clock after about two weeks. But of course, remember to always praise your child's achievements as they become better organized.

You should find mornings become a lot calmer.

– Professor Matt Sanders





Parents need time out too!

Getty Images



There are five basic steps to positive parenting, the Triple P way. One of the key steps is to make sure that you, as a parent, are looking after yourself. You matter too, you know! Here are a few tips to help you start protecting your own wellbeing.

When parents are stressed, anxious, unhappy or tired, it's natural for them to be on edge. And, because a frazzled mother or father will definitely find it more difficult to be patient, calm and consistent with their children, it's really important that you, as a parent, take care of yourself. Because being a good parent doesn't mean you have to be with your child every single minute of the day!

Start by finding time on a regular basis to indulge in something enjoyable – whether that's sharing a coffee with a friend, taking an exercise class or simply spending 30 minutes reading the newspaper. Doing something relaxing or fun can be a great circuit breaker and you'll feel refreshed to face the family again!

When you really need support, call on the friends and family you trust.

Everyone needs a little help now and then, so there's no reason to feel guilty about asking a close friend to mind your child or provide a shoulder to cry on from time to time.

Take notice if you're feeling upset with your child and avoid blaming the child or yourself for what's happening. It often helps to try changing the way you think about situations. For example, a child who

interrupts while you're on the phone is possibly bored and not deliberately trying to annoy you.

If you work, aim to strike a balance between your home life and your job. If you're doing too many hours at work, you may need to reassess, just as you may need to occasionally curb extra family activities when work demands.

Mornings can be incredibly stressful for families trying to get out of the house. Encourage your children to be self-sufficient in the morning rush hour. If they can calmly get themselves ready for school or kindergarten without you doing everything for them, you'll arrive at work in a much better frame of mind.

And try to work as a team with your partner or with other carers. Share the load, discuss daily events and try to agree on how you'll approach discipline. Of course it's not always easy to work as a team but arguing is only going to make you more stressed.

If you're unhappy with the way your partner has handled a situation, wait until it's over and find a time to calmly discuss what happened. Remember though that talking and sharing your ideas also means listening to your partner's points



of view and acknowledging that you have understood them correctly.

And don't forget to praise your partner when you think they're doing a good job. Everyone will feel good about that! ■

Stress alert

Everyone experiences stress differently but these are some of the common warning signs:

- Tense or stiff muscles
- Headaches
- Irritability or anger
- Disturbed sleep
- Tiredness
- Problems concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed or unable to keep up with everything
- Stomach upsets or diarrhea
- Skin reactions such as rashes or pimples
- Repeated infections or viruses



Balancing Work and Family

Juggling the competing demands of work and family can be incredibly stressful. Here are a few ideas to help you get the balance right.

- Be organized, especially in the mornings
- Teach children to do things for themselves
- Have a 'leaving home' routine and have some basic ground rules
- Avoid unnecessary conflict before work
- Make sure you and your partner work together as a team
- Make family your priority when you are with them.



How to prevent stress at work affecting home life:

- Make work a priority while you're at work
- Complete difficult tasks early rather than just before leaving for home
- Let your employer know your needs and find out about workplace entitlements and supports
- Use commuting time to unwind
- Avoid being overcommitted
- Make sure you take regular holidays
- Develop a relaxing 'coming home' routine.

– Professor Matt Sanders





TIP

Misbehaviour begins at home

Kids start learning about behaviour within the family home. But you could be accidentally encouraging misbehaviour – just by the way you interact with your child.

Put yourself in this picture: Your child asks you for a cookie just before dinner. You say 'no' but your child keeps asking. If your child keeps getting louder and more demanding, you begin to feel harassed. So, eventually, you give in. They get the cookie.

But by giving your child the cookie, you've rewarded them for being demanding. And probably you've got a reward too – peace and quiet! But these rewards mean the situation is likely to happen again and again.

Of course, the opposite also applies. You ask your child to do something and they don't, so you keep repeating the instruction, getting louder and louder each time. Finally, you get angry, raise your voice or scream: "You've got until the count of three, or else!" Of course, they finally get the message. But unfortunately, the message they've learnt is that you're only serious when you yell.

Tip: Children may misbehave if you always ignore them when they behave well. Kids often prefer attention to no attention at all. They see it as "any attention is good attention". So, take notice when they're doing something you like and praise them for it. They'll probably do it again.

– Professor Matt Sanders



Contact?

Check our website
triplep-staypositive.net



Getty Images

Good reading habits start early



On those blustery days, when even snowmen feel a chill, snuggle up with your kids and some good books. And if you happen to see a cow driving by, you're not crazy! It's either Edmonton's Classroom on Wheels (COW) or Alberta's Prairie COW bus, on its way to bring the joy of reading closer to families.

Kim Chung, program director for the Centre for Family Literacy, says the COW Bus stops in 10 places throughout the city of Edmonton, while the Alberta Prairie COW bus partners with literacy organizations throughout the province and travels to those places.

"The buses are painted to look like cows and they even moo!" says Kim. "Families are excited to see them, and when children enter with their parents, they participate in free activities designed to foster literacy skills and a love of reading. We receive amazing reactions from parents who love the way the program improves literacy, builds bonding with their children

and helps form community friendships."

The COW bus is one of several programs and resources provided by the Centre for Family Literacy, which supports other literacy organizations throughout the province to provide parents with the tools they need to share and teach their children. Other programs include the popular Rhymes that Bind for parents and their children three years and younger, Books for Babies, and the wealth of online and print information and resources available from the Centre.

"Parents are the first teachers for their children," says Kim. "The time parents spend sharing stories, rhymes, songs and

looking through pictures in books with their kids is all learning and bonding time where the family feels safe and happy."

Kim is quick to point out that literacy is a gradual process. It should be a positive experience, not treated as a chore. "You can even use it as a positive method of dealing with unhappy situations," she says. And just as generations of parents would use cookies to comfort a sad child, Kim recommends pulling out a book. "Make it a habit to share a story as a way of comforting them," she says.

Details of programs in Edmonton, as well as from partners across the province, are available at www.familit.ca

Best books for kids of all ages



Booklovers throughout Edmonton were disappointed to see the iconic Greenwood's Bookshoppe close after 33 years. Staff at Greenwood's were always eager to help find the perfect book for little – and big – kids. So before the doors closed for the last time, the manager of the "Small World" section, Tania Gigliotti, shared a few favourite reads for children.

Tiny Tots

Postman Bear by Julia Donaldson – a rhyming lift-the-flap story about a bear delivering birthday invitations.

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae – a delightful tale of a giraffe who chooses to dance even when others discourage him.

Are you a Cow? by Sandra Boynton – tots will giggle as a bossy chicken interrogates them.

6 years +

The Trouble with Chickens by Doreen Cronin – a retired search-and-rescue dog tries to help chicks track down their missing siblings.

Underworlds 1: The Battle Begins by Tony Abbott – the first part of an action-packed mythological series involving fourth-grader Owen Brown.

Agent Amelia 1: Ghost Diamond by Michael Broad – Secret Agent Amelia Kidd uses disguises, gadgets and determination to save the world from evil geniuses.

10 years +

Margaret and the Moth Tree by Edmonton writers Brit and Kari Trogen – an orphan and her tiny, winged friends battle an evil villainess.

Middle of Nowhere by Canadian author Caroline Adderson – Twelve-year-old Curtis and his five-year-old brother fend for themselves when mom doesn't return home.

Cold Cereal by Adam Rex – loads of magical creatures, both wicked and good, make this a fun-filled adventure.





Healthy apps get kids cooking



It's a natural instinct for parents to want to raise healthy, happy children. Unfortunately, busy lifestyles, money concerns and mixed messages about what constitutes nutritious food can leave even the most health-conscious parents feeling frazzled. Thankfully, the Alberta government has created some interesting initiatives that will help parents and children navigate the supermarket aisles armed with the information they need to make healthy choices, even on a tight budget.

Best of all, these initiatives offer ways of including children in the process so they learn valuable life skills while having fun with the family.

"Sugar becomes an issue as soon as the family wakes up in the morning"

Patricia Martz is a registered dietician and, as project manager with Alberta Health's Wellness Branch, is passionate about getting the right information out to families. She is concerned that parents have misconceptions about what constitutes healthy choices. One example, she says, is sugar, which becomes an issue as soon as the family wakes up in the morning.

"Parents believe that fruit juice is a great thing to give their children," says Patricia. "We believe it's like giving them a piece of fruit, so we feel like we're doing a good thing." But the reality is quite different and fruit juice – even 100% fruit juice – is the equivalent of a sugar-sweetened beverage.

"The juice limit should be half a cup a day," says Patricia. "The rest should come from fruit itself."

Added sugar isn't alone in derailing our healthy eating aspirations. Excess salt in our diets is another issue, and more often than not, parents aren't even aware that their children are eating too much.

"Portion sizes, salt in pre-packaged foods, and misunderstanding nutritional information can lead to many of the health problems our children are facing today," says Patricia.

To make life easier, the Healthy U Food Checker can help consumers to take the information from Nutrition Fact Tables, and determine which foods and beverages fall into the "choose most often", "choose sometimes" and "choose less often" categories of the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines.

Healthy U, an entertaining and informative website at www.healthyalberta.com, includes a variety of resources for adults and children. "On our website we have over 100 ways for families to stay healthy

meals... the kids just want to be part of what you're doing, so let's do it all together," says Patricia.

"Kids are creating the grocery list using the Healthy U Jr Chef app"

The site has a fun, free app to download called Healthy U Jr Chef, which will allow kids to become involved from their iPods, iPads, or iPhones. "The number of emails I get from parents who are driving while their kids are creating the grocery list using the app – it's wonderful," says Patricia. "It's so important for kids and parents to connect. If everyone participates in making the meal, sitting down, cleaning up, using the leftovers, and meal planning, it makes the process enjoyable for the family. Let's all get together – kids will step right up – especially when they're learning and having fun." ■



Jezzie, left, and Jordan Degeling try the Healthy U Jr Chef app

TOP TIPS

No more mealtime madness!

The idea of a family meal is often something parents dread. Kids get fidgety, throw food, fight with their siblings or won't eat what's in front of them. But some of the best ways parents can help avoid stressful mealtimes start away from the dinner table.

Before a meal

Try and establish a set time and routine for meals so children know when to stop playing or turn off the TV and get ready. Don't let your child snack within an hour of a scheduled mealtime and watch what they drink too. A big glass of milk or juice just before dinner can spoil an appetite.

Expect spills

Of course it's important to have realistic expectations about a family meal too. When little kids first eat at a table you should expect spills and messes. This isn't misbehaviour, just a simple learning curve. Try to stay calm and look for opportunities to praise your child.

Don't negotiate

But some mealtime problems are directly related to the way a parent and child interact at a dinner table. Children may refuse to eat because it gets them attention. This can become a problem if you are always bargaining and negotiating with your child about how much they can eat. It's better to set appropriate consequences for such behaviour, stick to those consequences and praise your child when they eat an acceptable portion of what's on their plate.

– Professor Matt Sanders



Alberta parents among first to get targeted Triple P discussions



Alberta is one of the first few places in the world to offer parents the new two-hour Triple P Discussion Group, with about 80 practitioners already trained to provide sessions to families via Parent Link Centres. The new Triple P Discussion Groups are stand-alone, small-group sessions, each targeting a specific behaviour issue. The topics are: managing fighting and aggression, hassle-free shopping with children, developing good bedtime routines and dealing with disobedience.

Lynda Shore, a Triple P practitioner in Jasper, was surprised and delighted by the response to the dealing with disobedience discussion groups she ran in August.

"I thought since it was summer, I would find it hard to get people but I had so many that I needed to run two," she says.

Lauren Boulay was one of the parents who attended. She was drawn to the group when she heard that Triple P focused on positive discipline.

"I'm a first-time parent," says Lauren. "My parents would spank me and wash my mouth out with soap (but) I wanted to find alternatives to physical discipline."

Although Lauren's daughter Jacklyn was only 19 months old at the time, Lauren saw the discussion group as the chance to get a head start. "I wanted to be involved with the discussion about discipline as early as possible so that I would be prepared in the future as well as the present."

Lynda says a discussion group session

gives parents tools and strategies to create their own parenting plans. She believes the Triple P Discussion Groups empower parents. "The discussions and Triple P information help parents to choose relevant, thoughtful solutions in an informed way," says Lynda.

Mom Lauren liked the group aspect of the program, particularly seeing other parents who had plenty of questions and issues to discuss. Now, she has plenty of strategies she's ready to try out when Jacklyn is a little older.

"I learned about not giving more reinforcement when the child is being negative – but rather, to give positive reinforcement for a job well done. We also discussed how many times to repeat yourself, depending on the situation."

When parents leave a discussion group, they take a workbook filled with tips and information, so they have reminders and support with them at home.

Discussion groups are aimed at parents with children from birth to 12 years.

Given the chance, Lauren said she would go to another discussion group. "I would certainly recommend them to other parents."

For information about upcoming discussion groups in your area, contact your local Parent Link Centre or go to www.triplep-staypositive.net and check for upcoming sessions. ■



Click for more

More news, stories and information about positive parenting in your region is available – all day, every day – at the Triple P "Stay Positive" website.

Go to www.triplep-staypositive.net and you'll land on a site dedicated to helping local parents find the support they need.

For those struggling with an issue at home, there are simple tips that give a taste of what positive parenting is all about. There's also a wealth of information about how and why Triple P's many programs work so well for families around the world.

Other local parents share their own stories too, telling of the changes Triple P has made to their lives. Then, each week, there's a link to a fresh radio podcast from Dr Alan Ralph, a Triple P author and researcher, who shares Triple P's suggestions for happier, more effective, parenting.

You can also click through to keep up-to-date with the times and details of the upcoming Triple P sessions being offered free of charge.

And if your friends haven't got their hands on a copy of the Triple P Tippaper yet, tell them to check it out online.



Kids focus when parents aren't stressed

In her 26 years as an educator, administrator and early childhood services coordinator, Bernadette Hawkins has seen families at their best – and worst.



Bernadette Hawkins

"Some parents feel they cannot go out in public places because their child will scream the whole time," says Bernadette, who is early childhood services coordinator for Black Gold Regional Division based in Nisku. "Many parents also struggle with bedtimes, picky eating, or constant interruptions while they are on the phone." But families needn't face these problems

alone, says Bernadette, herself the mother of two adult daughters.

"Children will be more successful if their parents learn how to positively handle the situations they're going to face each day. Group Triple P can provide that support."

Bernadette's first contact with Triple P was last year when Alberta Education ran a pilot project and her school division was part of the pilot project. "I believe schools and parents need to work in partnership," she says. "The earlier we can help parents with any problems they're having – whether it is us as a school district, or referring them to Triple P programs – the more successful the child will be in the long run."

From an educational perspective, Bernadette sees the advantages for children whose parents are better prepared for stressful situations.

"The children will be able to focus, engage, and learn more readily. They will

have skills to help regulate their emotions, make good choices, and understand their feelings and the feelings of others. If we can manage the parent's stress at home, the children are more successful at school."

Bernadette says Group Triple P is great for parents looking for ways to deal with difficult behaviours. "Groups provide an opportunity for them to hear that they are not the only parent out there struggling with the same problems," says Bernadette. "It is a way for them to build a support system with people experiencing similar concerns."

Although Group Triple P is a more intensive type of Triple P support – with five group sessions and three weeks of home practice – Bernadette says it gives parents time to bond with each other. "It's the best of both worlds – the chance to do things individually as well as the chance to connect as a group." ■

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