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Tippaper

Parenting tips and information for every parent

No.3

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www.triplep-parenting.net



Triple P in Alberta

The Alberta government first introduced the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program to Alberta in 2007. Since then, Triple P has helped thousands of parents become more confident about their parenting skills.

Whether you're struggling with common issues such as tantrums, bedtime dramas, fighting siblings or teenage rebellion; or dealing with more complex situations such as mental illness, ongoing family stress, disabilities or significant behavioural issues, Triple P can help.

Triple P is delivered across the province, from larger population centres, such as the Edmonton-Calgary corridor, to small regional and remote areas. It's available free of charge at Parent Link Centres throughout Alberta.

A new type of Triple P is now available in Alberta. Triple P Online is an internet-based program that parents of children up to age 12 can complete at home at their own pace.

[Find out where to get help, Page 8](#)

Find confidence

Sometimes it seems as if everyone's got an opinion about how you should raise your child. And that can make the job of parenting harder than it needs to be.

The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program is one of the few parenting programs in the world that has been scientifically proven to work, with more than 30 years' research to back it up.

Triple P's well-researched strategies can help you turn down the stress levels at home, promote your children's wellbeing and encourage their healthy development.



From snappy to happy



When Camrose mom Tanya Welch's working hours reduced, a dream opportunity to spend more time with her daughter didn't exactly go as planned. Her gorgeous little 19-month-old had started acting aggressively.

Tanya and husband Dustin were also worried by the way Natalie behaved when playing with other kids.

"She'd hit and bite other kids and myself if she didn't get what she wanted," Tanya says. "She would share fine with me and my husband, but when it came to sharing with other kids her age, everything was, 'Mine! Mine!'"

Tanya and Dustin, a mechanic and farmer, learned about Triple P Discussion Groups through the Camrose Family Resource Centre (CFRC), which also serves the family's hometown of Bawlf, a village a half-hour's drive southeast of Camrose.

Triple P is considered one of the world's most effective parenting programs and offers parents simple tips and strategies to tackle a range of childhood behaviour issues.

Tanya signed up for CFRC's Managing Fighting and Aggression Discussion Group, and admits she was nervous about asking for help.

"We hadn't done anything like this before," Tanya says. "I was thinking I was all alone, the only one dealing with a 19-month-old who didn't listen and didn't play nice. But it was very laid-back, very informal. It was interesting to know there were other parents working with the same issues and April [McCorquindale], the facilitator, made everyone feel comfortable."

Tanya says Dustin was also apprehensive about what the experience might achieve.

"He didn't think anything would work and it was just a phase... but then he actually started to see that the strategies were working," Tanya says.

Once Dustin and Tanya changed the way they were doing things, they started noticing changes in Natalie's behaviour within a week.

"Natalie was really picking up on things and listening and cooperating more and sharing," Tanya says. "She was a different little girl."

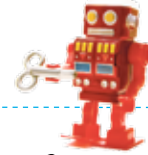
Tanya now feels Triple P has brought the family closer together because they're now all on the same page.

"Before my husband and I had different parenting styles, now we all have the same expectations," she says. "I'm confident Natalie will be OK."

[Find out how discussion groups helped the Welch family tackle the 'terrible twos', Page 2.](#)

Contact?

Check our website
triplep-parenting.net



Triple P practitioner April McCorquindale

It's okay for families to ask for help

Trained Triple P practitioner April McCorquindale says asking for help doesn't come naturally to most families, even when life seems a little overwhelming. Many parents find it helps to talk to others in the same boat.

"For parents, it isn't their first instinct to run out and seek support," says April, the early childhood program co-ordinator at the Camrose Family Resource Centre (CFRC) – a Parent Link Centre.

"Usually, disobedience and fighting becomes a concern, and then they'll seek support. A lot of parents will not feel like they should seek support for something they feel they should be able to deal with."

Triple P Discussion Groups, which the CFRC provides free of charge to parents of children aged 12 years and younger, is a program that helps parents learn how to cope with their common, everyday problems. Being in the group setting

helps parents realize how common these problems are.

The CFRC, a provincially designated Parent Link Centre, is one of 53 Parent Link Centres servicing more than 185 communities throughout Alberta.

Discussion groups are brief, small group sessions run by a trained Triple P practitioner bringing together up to 12 parents who are all going through the same parenting issue.

There are four discussion group topics: Dealing with Disobedience, Developing Good Bedtime Routines, Managing Fighting and Aggression, and Hassle-free Shopping.

"[We look at] what's contributing to the problem and what strategies they can put in place before going into discipline and consequences," says April.

Often, April says, parents just need to learn to use strategies such as setting out expectations, or giving descriptive praise by catching their child doing the right thing, and praising them for it.

For April, the rewards of work come from "having a parent have that light-bulb moment where they go, 'I do know how to deal with it!'"

"We like to say that, if we can get them in the door, that first experience with Triple P can make such a difference." ■



Discussion Group turns the tide on the 'terrible twos'



Handling defiance can all be in a day's work for Tanya Welch. But when the "terrible twos" turned up with a vengeance at the Welch household in Bawlf, a town of 350 people near Camrose, Tanya found her skills as a part-time correctional peace officer being tested to the max.

During the week, Tanya struggled so much with daughter Natalie's behaviour, she would often feel like handing her over when husband Dustin came home.

"By five, I was so frustrated and felt so useless and helpless, I was just exhausted," Tanya says. "It was, 'You go play with her for a while.'"

Concerned when her daughter started acting aggressively to other children, Tanya found out about the Managing Fighting and Aggression Discussion Group, one of four Triple P Discussion Groups offered through the Camrose Family Resource Centre.

Tanya says that she and Dustin learned how they could help Natalie calm down without the need for raised voices.

In the discussion groups, Triple P-trained practitioner April McCorquindale gave parents exercises so they could learn strategies to help reduce aggressive behaviour.

"We were given a workbook and exercises, and watched a video to see examples of how children were behaving and what some parents do – and perhaps more positive approaches," says Tanya.

Tanya learned that giving clear and calm instructions and setting out



Tanya Welch with her daughter Natalie

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consequences for misbehaviour made a big difference.

"I found the way I was talking with my daughter wasn't in a constructive way. I would ask Natalie questions, for example, 'Can you pick up your toys?' and she'd say 'No'.

"So instead I would say, 'OK, now you have to pick up your toys before we go outside.' And she responded differently to me. And when she listened, there was the positive reinforcement (from us) — 'Good listening!'"

Natalie and Dustin have also found strategies such as quiet time and time-out useful. But the charts, diaries and

checklists in the Triple P workbook have shown them that quiet time and time-out might soon be a thing of the past.

"You can visually see that the number of quiet times and time-outs are going down," Tanya says.

Triple P-trained and accredited discussion group practitioner April McCorquindale says the impact on the Welch family was clear when she got a call from Tanya two weeks after the final session.

"It was hearing the difference in her voice as to her stress level, her confidence levels," April says. "It was like speaking to a completely different person."

For Tanya, participating in the group format also made her feel as if she wasn't the only parent going through the kinds of problems that she was having.

'It gave me confidence. I can do it and my little girl is going to get through it.'

"It gave me confidence – I'm not a horrible parent because my child is going through this," she says. "I can do it and my little girl is going to get through it." ■



500

The approximate number of provincial parks in Alberta

Source: albertaparks.ca



22

The number of partially developed bones in a newborn baby's foot

Source: kidshealth.org

21

The number of years that winter lasts on Uranus

Source: kids.nationalgeographic.com



Deana and Gage

Find a program just right for your family

Most parents agree that when you're raising children there are ups – and there are downs. The ups? Well, of course, they're great. But the downs ...

The toddler tantrums, the child who won't go to bed, the son who's being bullied at school, the daughter who's telling lies or the siblings who can't play together without fighting – these are some of the problems that can make home life harder than it should be.

Fortunately, if parents in Alberta are concerned about a particular or recurring problem, they can access one of the world's leading parenting programs for support.

Triple P is available free

Triple P is available free through Parent Link Centres in a wide range of formats, from parent seminars and small discussion groups, to one-on-one private consultations and intensive group-based programs.

Families of children with disabilities are also supported with a range of Stepping Stones Triple P programs through the Family Support for Children with Disabilities program.

In Alberta, one of the largest providers of Triple P has been Parent Link Centres. Triple P Online is also now available to Alberta families.

Parents seek support

In 2013-2014 alone, more than 6,000 Alberta parents took part in a Triple P program through the network of Parent Link Centres, which have served more than 94,000 people in more than 160 communities within the same period.

To find out which Triple P program can help you and where to get help, go to www.triplep-parenting.net

Stepping Stones group helps turn life around



When Deana Johnson first met Stepping Stones Triple P practitioner Angie Thompson, the Fort McMurray single mom was in tears. Deana had first started seeing doctors about her son Gage when he was 12 months old. She says by the time he was four, she didn't know where to turn.

"We were going to one doctor who said nothing was wrong," Deana says. "Then the violent outbursts started – the hitting, biting, head-butting. I couldn't take him to the grocery store without him pulling my hair or trying to bite me."

Deana took Gage from doctor to doctor, and he was diagnosed not only with autism, but also oppositional defiant disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and social anxiety.

"They started him on drugs immediately because my first meeting with the doctor was an hour and a half and Gage freaked out the whole time and bit the nurse," says Deana.

Eventually, Deana was referred to Angie Thompson, a Fort McMurray Triple P practitioner with McMan Youth Family and Community Services, and enrolled in Group Stepping Stones Triple P. The mother of two says the impact of

Stepping Stones on life for both her and Gage has been profound.

'Gage is so much easier to handle.'

"It's been a saviour for me because I was severely depressed when I first started going," says Deana. "During my first meeting with Angie, I was crying. I didn't know if I'd be able to do this. But with her help and learning the things I did, Gage is so much easier to handle."

One of the big things Deana learned was how to control her own levels of frustration, "learning how to just cope and deal with things that are happening", she says.

Group Stepping Stones Triple P was developed for parents of children aged 12 years and younger with a disability. Groups of parents participate in up to

nine sessions and learn positive parenting skills and strategies to manage behaviour, promote their child's development and to help teach their child new skills.

"It's all about the children, but it's also about you as a parent dealing with your new situation," says Deana.

"A lot of the time when you have a child who is disruptive, when they're quiet you just want to enjoy the silence. I learned in the class that when they're quiet, you've got to check on them... and also praise them for playing well."

Deana says she learnt to start taking notice of what was making Gage irritable and mad. "When he has a fit, what happened just before that?" she says.

"Having a child with autism can be overwhelming and frustrating, so my suggestion to (parents in similar situations) is to take Stepping Stones Triple P," she says. ■



4 Create a safe, interesting environment



Getting crafty

With these ideas, keeping the kids entertained can be easy, low-cost, and fun!

While colouring is a perennial favourite to keep tots busy, there are so many other simple crafts that can keep little ones occupied. You can use the kinds of bits and pieces you're already likely to have around the home.

Here are a few favourites for a little crafty inspiration. Many more terrific ideas can be found by searching "easy crafts for kids" on the internet.

Homemade 'play dough'

This is a no-cook recipe that your kids can help you with. Then, once it's made, it's virtually guaranteed to keep them entertained for hours. To make, all you have to do is mix the following in a bowl:

- 2 cups of plain flour
- 4 tablespoons of cream of tartar
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 cup of salt
- 2 cups of boiling water

It takes a little while for the dough to come together, so don't give up too soon. Then knead it on your kitchen counter or table. To create different colours, add food colouring to different portions of the mix. A drop or two of peppermint oil or vanilla essence

will give the dough a nicer scent and a longer life, and for real pizzazz you can even throw in some glitter!

Paper bag kite

Use a strong paper shopping bag with handles. Cut out long thin strips of coloured tissue or crepe paper and staple them to the bottom seam of the bag. Tie a long length of string to each handle and your kite's ready to go. When children run holding the strings, the kite will billow out behind them. If you have permanent coloured felt-pens, you could have your child decorate the bag before you start attaching the tails.

Egg carton bouquet

From an egg carton, cut out the cups individually. Your child can paint the outside of each cup one colour and the inside of the cup a different colour. To make it really zing, sprinkle a dusting of glitter to the outside while the paint's still wet.

Then, pierce a hole in the middle of each cup and push through a green pipe cleaner. Tie a knot at the end inside the cup so it doesn't slip out again.

Repeat until you have a beautiful bouquet to tie up with a ribbon, wrap in coloured paper or put in a vase. ■

Ten minutes with... Angie Thompson



Angie Thompson works for McMan Youth Family and Community services as a developmental/behavioural support worker and Triple P – Positive Parenting Program practitioner based out of Fort McMurray. She delivers Stepping Stones and Primary Care Triple P.

Do you often see instances where bored children misbehave for their parents?

Often, when children aren't stimulated or engaged, they will look for things to do. More often than not, it's things their parents don't want them to do. If parents keep their children busy and engaged, they are far more likely to behave well, especially if their parents pay attention to the good behaviour and the fact that they are doing as their parents wish.

Do some parents have to learn to play with their children, and what advice would you give them?

Absolutely! As adults, we sometimes forget what is fun for kids. I would tell parents – especially parents of children with disabilities – that they should follow their children's lead; figure out what their kids think is fun and go with it. Often, our children are so happy to spend time with

us, it doesn't matter what we do. Get them involved around the house, or just be silly with them.

You don't need to spend a lot of money to keep children occupied. What are some of the most interesting activities you've seen parents set up for their children in the home?

I have worked with some really great and creative parents over the years. Some of the things kids are the happiest with are the simple things: filling up the sink with warm water and a squirt of dish soap and a straw to make bubbles with; making forts in the family room with blankets, pillows and chairs; [or] bins with rice or beans in them, with tiny treasures for kids to search for.

Kids love computers, but getting them off can be the trigger for trouble in many homes.

How would you recommend parents use Triple P strategies to tackle the issue of setting time limits and saying, "Time's up" without sparking tantrums or arguments?

It's important for children to know what to expect, so when kids are set up on the computer, parents should be proactive and tell them up front how long they should expect to be allowed to use the computer for. For children with disabilities, additional strategies such as a timer, as well as a picture schedule, can be helpful to remind them how long they have left and what's coming up next. A five or 10-minute warning before time is up is also a helpful strategy.

Can parents be over-protective about their child's play? When is too much supervision a bad thing?

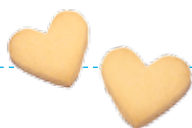
An important skill that children have to learn is how to be independent, and that includes independence in play. Children need to have some freedom to explore and also to learn to be without their parents. Children can sometimes get anxious when their parents aren't right there next to them at all times.

Is it OK for kids to be bored? Are there benefits to a child having 'down time'?


I think that sometimes parents – especially parents of children with disabilities – think that their children should be doing something and learning something all the time, but children need a break sometimes too. They need to be able to recharge and process all of the things that they are learning. ■

Triple P practitioner Angie Thompson





Home safety gives parents breathing space

 **Creating a safe, interesting environment is one of Triple P's five key steps to positive parenting. It's also one of the most practical ways to set up a child to feel secure and respected.**

Some may say that "it's a jungle out there", but what about inside your house? Is it a potential minefield? An obstacle course of hidden dangers?

Even in their own environments kids are inquisitive, so most parents will want to take stock of the potential risks around the home and try to prevent accidents before they happen.

A room-by-room safety check can help identify some of the potential hazards. Here are a few ideas to get you thinking. Start childproofing your home and you'll be on your way to keeping the little ones safe, and putting your own mind at ease too.

Kitchen and living areas

There are some serious dangers here. Knives, matches, lighters, glasses and dishes should be out of reach or locked away. The same goes for plastic bags, cleaners, bleaches, chemicals and medicine – even leftover dishwashing powder can cause burns and poisoning if swallowed.

Electrical outlets and cords pose problems for toddlers and infants. Electricians can install safety switches or



More safety tips for Alberta families can be found at: www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca

you can buy safety covers. Stove guards can prevent children from touching hot elements, and you should always turn pot handles towards the back of the stove and away from little hands. Never lift or carry hot pots, pans or cups of liquid above your child's head.

Safety corners can smooth the sharp edges of furniture and it's a good idea to check that TV or stereo knobs can't be removed and swallowed.

If you have potted plants, make sure they're not poisonous – or better still, put them up high.

Bathrooms

Kids usually love water. They'll probably try to pull themselves into the bath from a very early age – generally from around eight months. So never leave an infant or

toddler alone in the bath or bathroom. Children can drown in a puddle – 5cm of water is all it takes.

If you are bathing your child, fill the bath with cold water first and then slowly and incrementally add hot water. You could also turn down the temperature of your hot water system. Make sure the taps are turned off as tightly as possible to prevent baby hands from scalding themselves.

Of course, all cleaning products, cosmetics and medicines should be locked away, and electrical appliances such as razors and hair dryers unplugged and put out of reach.

Stairs

From about nine or 10 months, children will be fascinated by stairs. Fit safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs and don't

forget to keep them closed! Make sure you're with your child whenever they're trying to go up or down the stairs.

Doorways

Doorways can squish little fingers, toes and even faces. Where possible, keep doors propped open with doorstops, wedges or latches, or use finger jam protectors.

Toys

Some toys are unsuitable for young children so always follow manufacturer's age recommendations. Small removable parts from an older child's toy can choke a smaller child – particularly any parts smaller than 4cm. ■



PARENTS SAY

We asked parents in Rocky Mountain House, Fort Saskatchewan, Red Deer, Edmonton, Banff and Airdrie: What kind of play or activity does your child like to do at home?

Claire
Mother of 1 – Daniel, age 4

"Cutting and sticking activities are a favourite in our house. It doesn't really matter what he is cutting or sticking. And Lego/Duplo have been on the reliable list for the past three years. (There's) a new interest in 'writing' letters and cards to his friends and posting them in the real postbox."

Breann
Mother of 2 – Julia, age 8, and Gabby, age 5

"We love to bake, dance to music, go ice skating and always make crafts. We love to colour and paint."

Dawn
Mother of 1 – Julia, age 3

"My daughter likes playing with her babies, making sure they are fed and putting them to bed, tea parties and playing with her Sands Alive – and make believe."

Krystal
Mother of 2 – Jett, age 4, and Jewelz, age 3

"Hide and seek is a big game for us as well as obstacle courses, building blocks, watering flowers during the summer and cooking."

Mai-Britt
Mother of 1 – Sidney, age 4

"Travelling through space, swimming with sharks and building tall buildings are all of his favourite pretend games. The stories and explanations that accompany them are my favorite."

Alana
Mother of 2 – Alexa, age 4, and Amelia, age 1

"We often pretend we are in unique locations doing a wide assortment of adventurous things. My daughter Amelia enjoys playing in our homemade sensory bins, pouring rice into cups, scooping up pasta, squishing cloud dough and much more. We enjoy reading together and can often be found snuggling and reading books."

Trish
Mother of 2 – Finn, age 3, and Tennyson, age 1

"We like to run in circles. We also like to chase leaves."

Jennifer
Mother of 2 – Joshua, age 11, and Maija, age 9

"We use recycling to make craft projects, Legos, building forts with blankets, pillows, tables and so on. We create a map and go on an adventure in the house or yard to find stuffed animals or treasure. We like Frisbee, soccer, bike rides, hide and seek, dress up and acting out stories. Also dance parties: turn on the music and just have fun!"



6 Active families



Try these ideas to stay on the go in Alberta

For families wanting to keep active in Alberta, there's no shortage of affordable, fun and family-friendly options that everyone will enjoy.

Most Alberta municipalities offer recreation programs that offer a wide range of inexpensive ideas to get you moving, from skating and dancing to having fun in a gym.

"The City recognizes active families are a key to quality of life," says Lisa Fleece, a spokesperson with City of Calgary Recreation (calgary.ca/recreation).

This year, City of Calgary Recreation offered 800 programs for parents and kids.

"We had an 84 per cent fill rate – so there's definitely demand," Lisa says.

Swimming is by far the most popular option and typically the most popular pool programs are where parents and children can swim together.

In Edmonton, visit edmonton.ca, or contact your local town or city hall for recreation programs in your area.

Aside from local recreation centres, there are many other options available. Useful online resources include the province's Healthy U web portal, (healthyalberta.ca), and the Boys and Girls clubs of Canada website: (bgccan.com).

Two left feet on skates? Don't worry: a number of facilities, such as the Trico

Centre for Family Wellness in Calgary (tricocentre.ca) and the Leduc Recreation Centre (leduc.ca/LRC) offer special skate times just for families. Trico even offers private learn-to-skate instruction for the whole family.

Many aquatic centres such as Airdrie's Genesis Place (airdrie.ca) offer family swim times, too.

Lack of resources shouldn't be a barrier to getting active, so there are also initiatives such as KidSport (kidsportcanada.ca/alberta) and Canadian Tire's Jumpstart (jumpstart.canadiantire.ca), with local chapters that help get kids into sport programs and other healthy activities. ■

Mom, Dad: Join in to get the kids moving

Most families realize the importance of keeping kids active, especially when statistics show that almost a third of Canadian children are considered obese. But shoo-ing the kids off their screens and sending them outside to play is not the only solution.

Alberta sport and recreational experts believe one of the best ways to get kids moving is to involve the whole family.

Children who get out and about with their families tend to be happier kids who manage to fit more into their day and sleep better at night.

Director of the Alberta Centre for Active Living, Nora Johnston, says the benefits of healthy levels of activity for children are wide ranging.

"You've got the physical benefits – healthier heart, better body weight," says Nora. "You also have the social benefit – of kids interacting with each other and not just electronic devices. It builds a stronger family structure too."

Nora says activity promotes the development of something called "physical literacy" in children – such as balance and skill development – as well as brain function.

Professor Matt Sanders, a professor of clinical psychology and founder of the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program, says parents can help children's social and emotional development by ensuring they grow up in a safe and interesting environment.

"Children who are actively engaged in learning new skills or just getting out and discovering their own environment are not only more engaged, they're actually learning new skills," Professor Sanders says.

"Kids are learning how to interact with each other and navigate the social world. They're learning how to build positive peer relationships and deal with disappointment."

For the Heddema family of Airdrie, there's not much time to sit in front of the television. The family say they regard Genesis Place Recreational Centre almost as a second home. Brooklyn, aged 8, is an avid swimmer and dancer, while Kellen, aged 4, is keen to try skating.

"When the [the kids] are cooped up in the house, they tend to get grouchy and bored," Stephanie Heddema says. "So having access to these activities is huge for them and I try to take advantage as much as I can."

'Learning how to balance competing interests is an important life skill'

Child and youth program co-ordinator at Calgary's Triucoi Centre for Family Wellness, Michelle Paradis, says getting parents involved in physical activity is also important.

"I believe it promotes overall wellness and health, and healthier eating and having more energy through the day and sleeping better at night," Michelle says.

For some families, scheduling recreation time can be tricky and there can be a risk of "overbooking" kids.

Stephanie says she tries to avoid that by only committing her children to a couple of activities.

Professor Sanders says learning how to balance competing interests is an important



Mom Stephanie Heddema puts Brooklyn, 8, and Kellen, 4, through their paces at Genesis Place in Airdrie.

life skill that parents can help their children learn.

"Children should be encouraged to work out for themselves what they can fit in,"

Professor Sanders says. "Parents can help their kids learn to develop strategies such as planning ahead and thinking about where they need to be and when." ■





Tami Rambow, of Calgary, with her children and three of her dogs

How to make the right choice

Many Alberta communities have humane societies where you can adopt dogs, cats, guinea pigs and other pets that have been given medical examinations, have been spayed or neutered and have undergone behaviour testing.

Try the Edmonton Humane Society (edmontonhumanesociety.com) and Calgary Humane Society (calgaryhumane.ca) and ask about classes aimed at teaching safe pet ownership.

A list of other Alberta humane societies and shelters can be found on the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals website at albertaspca.org.

Alberta also has many animal-rescue organizations that offer pets for adoption, including the Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society (aarc.ca), the Animal Rescue Foundation of Alberta (arf.ab.ca), and the Second Chance Animal Rescue Society (scarscare.ca). ■



Sian Ramsden with a Calgary Humane Society guinea pig



Pets can be family life's little helpers



There's something about having a pet that transforms a home. A friendly bundle of energy that loves nothing more than the occasional belly rub can quickly become one of the family. But a number of experts say there are many other benefits to pet ownership.

Professor of Psychology at the University of Alberta, Connie Varnhagen, says pets can provide incredible social support for children.

"If a kid has a bad day at school, their dog offers unconditional love and it helps the child feel better," Professor Varnhagen says. "There are stress-reducing aspects of having an animal. Pets are very patient."

Professor Varnhagen, whose teaching subjects include the human-animal bond, says research shows that children who read to a pet, such as a dog, read with greater fluency and have better comprehension because the dog is regarded as a non-judgmental audience.

"The child might be stressed-out reading to a peer or a teacher," she says.

Triple P founder Professor Matt Sanders says pets can help provide a great sense of stability for children. But it's important that parents remember that, ultimately, they will need to be responsible for the animal's welfare.

"Just providing a child with a pet because they want one without fully taking into account what it means for the family is probably a mistake," Professor Sanders says. "The adult is the one who has to

Don't bark up the wrong tree

If you've done your homework and decide a dog is right for your family, the Calgary Humane Society has a few tips:

- Smaller breeds might not be best for young children. They can be timid, nervous and easier to injure. Larger dogs might tolerate activity, noise and rough play.
- Consider getting an adult dog, rather than a puppy, as they require less time to train. If adopting, look for breeds known to get along with kids.
- The entire family shares responsibility for taking care of a dog, not just the child. For example, the whole family can go to classes on dog obedience. ■

ensure that the animal is going to be well looked after."

A dog or cat is not always the best choice for a child's first pet, Sian Ramsden, humane education coordinator with the Calgary Humane Society, says.

"We definitely try to encourage people to do research before they get a pet and make sure it fits into their lifestyle," Sian says.

"Sometimes, parents like to start off with a smaller animal like a fish or hamster... so kids can learn about cleaning and

feeding," she says. "Cats and dogs are fantastic, but a lot of work."

A great starter pet, she says, is a guinea pig. "They require daily care; they need to come out of the cage to exercise, but the cage is a good separation between the child and animal."

Tami Rambow, of Calgary, has five dogs, including four rescue dogs.

As dog adoptions manager with the Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society (AARCS), Tami sees the impact of pets on children first-hand, both at work and with her own three children.

She says it takes work to take care of one dog, let alone five, but for her kids, who have seen how AARCS works to give abandoned and surrendered animals a safe home, "the rewards far outweigh the time and effort you need to put into them".

"For my kids, certainly, they learn empathy," Tami says. "It has taught them the value of being kind to others. And if one of them is upset, the dogs can pick up on that and that dog will find that kid and sit with them, or demand that they play ball and distract them [out of the mood]."

Angela Hill, who works in communication and curriculum development with Edmonton Early Childhood Development Support Services (EDCSS), says there are health benefits to owning a dog.

"You're playing with them, going for walks... it helps with cardiovascular development and social development," Angela says. "Lots of children who might have anxiety or autism or speech delays will speak to a dog or cat or guinea pig instead of other children or parents because the animal doesn't judge you." ■



Now there's help when and where you need it – online

The Alberta government is committed to ensuring families have access to one of the world's most effective parenting programs.

Since 2007, thousands of families across Alberta have taken part in the many different programs within the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program system.

'It helps you focus on the positive, not the negative'

Now the good news for Alberta families is that the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program is also available online.

The Alberta government has made Triple P Online available free to parents of children under 12 years of age.

"Triple P Online makes sure that parents who might be having trouble finding the right time or place to access Triple P still get the help they need to manage the ups and downs of raising kids," says Jennifer Weber, senior manager of the ECD (Early Childhood Development) Program Design & Policy Development Unit, Ministry of Human Services.

"The online program is a great way for families to learn about the full range of

Triple P's 17 positive parenting strategies," she adds.

Already families in Alberta are finding out how easy it is to access and how great the benefits can be.

Marco and Laura Perez, foster parents from the Calgary region, have found that life has become a lot less stressful since they completed the eight-module online program.

"It's very helpful and helps you focus on the positive, not the negative," Marco says.

"We found it works on all different age groups and developmental needs. It was easy to understand and easy to practice."

The program has been designed to be as easy to use as possible. Triple P's Professor Matt Sanders appears as a virtual practitioner, guiding parents through a mix of video clips, worksheets and activities.

Each of the eight modules of Triple P Online takes around 30 to 60 minutes to complete. Parents can also

choose to sign up to receive podcasts, emails and text reminders.

The worksheets can also be downloaded to keep as handy reminders of some of the strategies that parents have learned.

'It was easy to understand and easy to practice'

For parents who don't like the thought of completing a program totally on their own, some email support is available, as well as referral to other options, such as Parent Link Centres.

Practitioners can help parents adapt Triple P's strategies to their particular situation at home. ■

Alberta parents can get an access code to do Triple P Online at www.triplep-parenting.net. Look under the Get Help menu for Triple P Online, then fill out the request form.

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Find help in Alberta



The best place to find a Triple P practitioner or a session closest to you is Alberta's Triple P website at www.triplep-parenting.net.

You'll be able to search for an individual practitioner in your city, town or region, plus there's a calendar that lists some of the upcoming groups, seminars and discussion groups around the province.

Under the **Get Help** section of the website, you'll find descriptions of the Triple P programs that are delivered to groups of parents and programs that are delivered one-on-one.

There'll be programs for parents of young children and parents of teenagers. Some programs will be one-off sessions and others will be ongoing courses.

Once you have an idea of the type of program you might prefer, you can use the website calendar and sign up for group sessions and courses that suit you. Or you can use the Google map facility on the website to find a local practitioner and contact them directly.

New practitioners are training all the time throughout Alberta so the maps and calendar are updated regularly.

The website will also take you through the steps of how to access Triple P Online for free – with or without the support of a trained Triple P practitioner. While you're on the website, have a look around.

Your Triple P website is a great place to read Triple P's take on some of the hot parenting topics of the moment. ■



Supporting all families

Dealing with behavioural issues is challenging for all families, but for parents of children with an intellectual or physical disability, it's good to know that tailored support is available.

Their child might be unwilling or unable to follow instructions or master new skills. They might be having terrible tantrums or emotional meltdowns.

Stepping Stones Triple P is a program developed specifically for families of children with a disability. Families in Alberta are ensured of access to Stepping Stones thanks to the Family Support for Children with Disabilities program (humanservices.alberta.ca/disabilities).

Stepping Stones Triple P is a program based on Triple P's successful system of positive parenting support.

It helps parents to address developmental issues common in children with disabilities, and to manage problem behaviour while encouraging the kinds of behaviour they would like to see more often.

Stepping Stones Triple P also helps parents of children with disabilities cope with stress, develop a close relationship with their child and help their child learn new skills.

Three different Stepping Stones programs are available in Alberta:

Primary Care Stepping Stones

Primary Care Stepping Stones is a brief and tailored way to get help. Parents meet privately with a practitioner for around four sessions of between 15 and 30 minutes each time to tackle one or two specific problem behaviours.

Group Stepping Stones

Group Stepping Stones was developed for parents who might be experiencing significant problems or simply want to know how to encourage their child's development and potential.

About a dozen parents come together for six sessions, which last 2½ hours each. The Stepping Stones practitioner also calls parents who participate in the program at pre-arranged times to offer support, feedback and ideas.

Standard Stepping Stones

Standard Stepping Stones is recommended for families with significant problems. There are eight to 10 private consultations with a trained practitioner. Each session lasts around an hour. ■