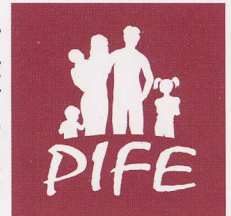


family Matters

Newsletter of the
PACIFIC INSTITUTE
FOR FAMILY
EDUCATION (PIFE)
Vol.1 No. 2
WINTER 2010/11



BORN TO SERVE, NOT TO SHOP

Effective parenting in a Nutshell by James Stenson, PIFE's featured Speaker
Parent Leadership Conference, 2007

The real evil of materialism is not the pursuit of things. It is, rather, seeing and treating other people as things--and therefore putting things ahead of people. Youngsters with a habit of thinking and acting this way are headed toward trouble later in life: substance abuse, professional problems, marital break-up, a life dominated by impulse and unrestrained egoism. So what can parents do with their young children now to build strong character and lead children away from materialism?

1. **Be confident** of your rightful authority as a parent and insist that your children respect it. Your responsibility as a parent is enormous, and you must exercise a self-confident loving authority to carry it out. Your children's confidence in your leadership will derive from your own self-confident sense of mission.

INSIDE

Bright & Cheerful
Home Workshop
Series

Next Event:
Feb 5th/2011

Breaking the
Cycle of Problem
Behaviour

About PIFE

2. **Remember** that you're raising adults, not children. When you think of your children's future, picture character as well as career. Your job is not to keep children amused and busy. It is, rather, to lead your children to become competent, responsible, considerate, and generous men and women who are committed to live by principles of integrity.

"Think of what your children will be, not just what they will do."

3. **Teach** the great character strengths (virtues): prudence, justice, fortitude, tem-

perance, and charity. In today's terms, these are called sound judgment and conscience, a sense of responsibility, courageous perseverance, self-mastery, and respect for the rights and sensibilities of others. You teach these strengths in three ways: by your personal example, your direction of your children's behavior, and your verbal explanations of right and wrong. But you teach mostly by example. Remember that conscience is the memory of our parents' voices, loving lessons of right and wrong taught to us in our youth.

4. **Teach** your children the four great pillars of civilized dealings with others: "please," "thank you," "I'm sorry," and "I give my word." Using these habitually in speech is a basis for respecting the rights of others.
5. **Teach** your children the meaning of the word "integrity." Integrity means unity of intention, word, and action - that is, we mean what we say, we say what we mean, and we keep our word. We always tell the truth and we keep our promises.

Continued
on next
page



www.pife.ca

6. **Realize** that "no" is also a loving word, and your children must hear it from time to time in order to acquire self-control. Children who never experience loving parental denial cannot form the concept of self-denial--and this can later lead to disaster.

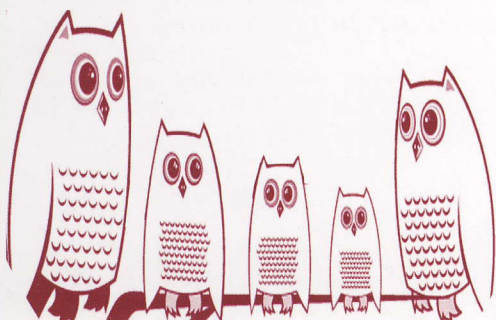
7. **Make** your children wait for something they want, and if possible make them earn it. Waiting and earning are part of responsible adult life, which is what you are after. Let the children learn the difference between wants and needs. Let them see that "everybody else has one" and "everybody else is doing it" are, at best, lame reasons for any course of action. Sound judgment and conscience are guides for life, and these should never give way to thoughtless conformity.

8. **Keep** the electronic media under your discerning control. Permit nothing in your home that undermines your lessons of right and wrong and treats other people as mere things. This means no pornography, no gratuitous violence, no glamorous portrayals of insolence and disrespect for others. Teach discernment in use of the media: to accept what is good, reject what is wrong, and know the difference.

9. **Raise** your children to be producers, not consumers. Let them put their powers up against problems to solve them, and thus grow into healthy self-confidence. Lead them to take schoolwork and home chores seriously so they will learn the meaning of responsible service. We humans are born to serve, not to shop.

"Children do not grow up when they can take care of themselves; they really grow up when they can take care of others -- and want to."

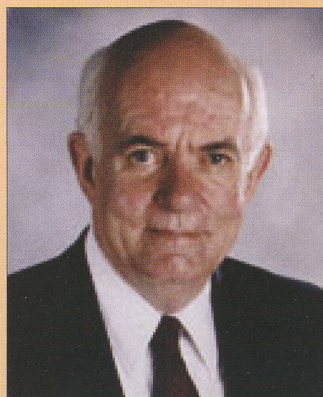
10. **Practice** "affectionate assertiveness" in disciplining your children. Correct the fault, not the person; hate the sin, love the sinner. Show your children you love them too



much to let them grow up with their faults uncorrected.

11. **Listen** to your children. That's listen, not obey. When you keep the media under your control, you will have much more time to dialogue with your children. Learn what is going on in their developing minds and guide them with your responsible judgment. Live as a responsible adult who's on top of life, and let them learn what this means.

12. **Never forget:** You have one chance--and only one--to raise your children right. Forming your children's character and conscience is your #1 priority. If you make a sacrificial effort now, while your children are still young, you can later enjoy the honor they bring you as confident, responsible, considerate men and women — who strive to pass on your values to their own children.



Mr. James Stenson is an educator, speaker and writer on family concerns. He has authored books such as **Upbringing, Compass: A Handbook on Parent Leadership**, **Lifeline: The Religious Upbringing of Your Children** and **Father, the Family Protector**. He helped establish two independent secondary schools for boys: The Heights in Washington DC, and, the Northridge Preparatory School in Chicago.

James Stenson currently lives in Chestnut Hill Massachusetts and works as an education consultant.

Please visit Mr. Stenson's website at **Parentleadership.com**

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BRIGHT & CHEERFUL HOME

WORKSHOP SERIES

*or, How Ceci
Met Peter*

A firm favorite of PIFE members, these family events are both social and instructional

PIFE, (Pacific Institute of Family Education) sponsors Saturday afternoon workshops, every quarter. The instructional component is delivered by experts in a variety of fields, with a question and answer period following the seminar. The social component is great family fun and includes a scrumptious potluck dinner. This informative quarterly series is usually held at the Douglas Park Community Centre in Vancouver, a venue that is secure and conducive to lots of good, healthy play for children of all ages.

In addition, the series also hosts a FAMILY BARBECUE once a year at a private home. All are welcome including grandparents, and older children.

It was at one such barbecue, in the summer of 1993, that two single people met - Ceci and Peter. Ceci came with her family to the barbecue, having just graduated from UBC. Peter, a friend of the hosts, was a new arrival in Vancouver, having just started his first job in teaching. Ceci noticed Peter and spoke briefly with him. Later she mentioned to a friend of her dad's that she would be interested in knowing more about him. They were introduced shortly afterwards and started dating. The following summer, Ceci and Peter married at St. Anthony of Padua Parish.

Soon after the marriage, they had their first of seven children. With the arrival of the first child, they began their association with the

Workshops at Douglas Park. When the first three children were still under the age of five, Ceci & Peter started attending the discussion groups based on the parenting books by **James Stenson**. They mention that this resource has been a most valuable guide, in fact, **"the guiding compass in how we have raised our children."**

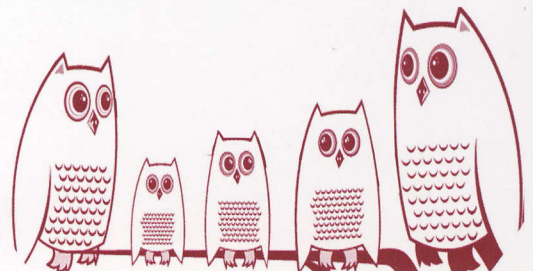
All of the family continue to enjoy these family get-togethers, and have made many long-lasting friendships.

PIFE cites this as one of the many great outcomes arising from attending the Bright & Cheerful Home Workshops.

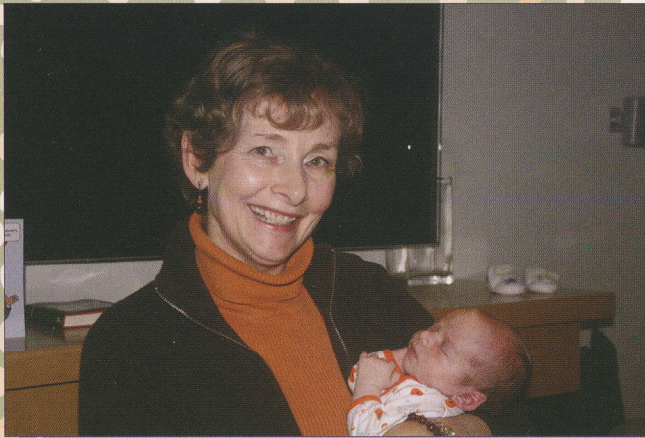


Peter & Ceci

www.pife.ca



BRIGHT & CHEERFUL HOME



Lesley, one of our illustrious baby-sitters, holding a newborn



Dominic Cummings obviously having a great time at Douglas Park



Another one of our great babysitters



Playing in the gym at Douglas Park



In the playroom at Douglas Park

- SOME OF OUR PHOTOS



Outdoor Fun at Douglas Park



The POTLUCK CAFE at Douglas Park

BRIGHT & CHEERFUL HOME WORKSHOPS - PAST EVENTS

Family Leadership Conference
with James Stenson, 2007

Father, Protector of the Family

Raising Generous Children
- the Gift that keeps on Giving

The 7'Cs' of Love & Marriage

Back to the Family Conference
with Dr. Ray Guarendi, 2009

Positive Behaviour Support
- A Preventative Approach to
Managing Problem Behaviour

Technology Overload

The Joy of Driving

Loving People, Using Things

Popular Culture
- Daring Children to be *different*

next BRIGHT & CHEERFUL
HOME WORKSHOP
Sat. Feb, 5th/2011
DOUGLAS PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE, Van.

RAISING CHEERFUL CHILDREN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Featuring

Dr. Douglas Maskall
CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY





BREAKING THE CYCLE OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

by Michelle Nix

I am sure that every parent can recall a behaviour issue that seems to recur again and again. Whether, your child is 2, 7, or 17, situations occur that leave a parent ready to pull their hair out. As we share our stories with other parents, and people close to us, some common phrases are heard: "He (or she) just won't listen", or "I've told (child's name) a million times", or "We've tried everything". These phrases are usually accompanied by the list of things that were taken away, or the punishments that have been enacted, all to no avail.

Now, this is not to say that parents should stop correcting their children's bad behaviour or to imply that punishment has no use in the discipline of our children.

"... parents should consider that we are often stuck in behaviour cycles that unfortunately we ourselves create."

Consequences are put into place without realizing that we are setting the stage for the very behaviour that we are trying to stop.

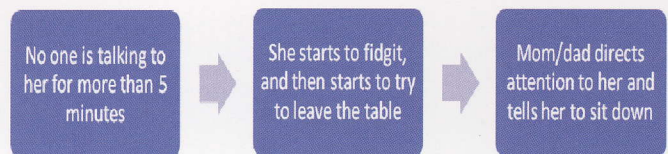
After exhausting the list of punishments in our arsenal (e.g. verbal reprimand, time out, spanking etc..), we feel dejected and not in control. Moreover, instead of finding a new bag of strategies, we use the same ones, except we do them with more intensity and with a louder voice.

Admittedly, sometimes this does work. Sally may finally stop flushing items down the toilet when her parents take away her favourite doll. Many little girls, however, will continue to flush your favourite trinkets down the toilet, even after they've lost every possible possession. And, even

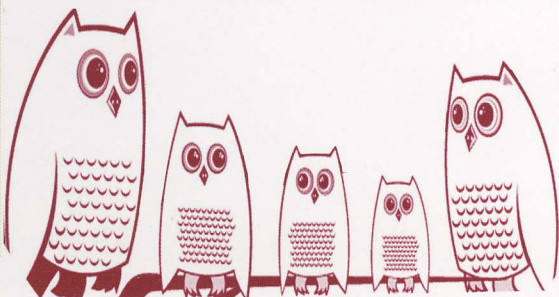
though Sally stops flushing things down the toilet, she might now plug the bathroom sink with toilet paper. The question that we will all be asking, is whether Sally's behaviour could have been stopped before daddy's new watch met its watery demise.

A few months ago, mealtime was becoming problematic in our household. Our older daughter (aged 4) would leave the table without asking, within a few minutes of the meal starting. A typical scene would play out like this: meal starts, daughter leaves the table, mom/dad tells her to sit down (sometimes new food would be offered), she sits and eats for a few minutes, she slithers from the table, mom/dad tells her to sit down or there will be no dessert, she sits and eats for a few minutes, she leaves the table, mom/dad tell her to sit down or no story at bedtime...and the cycle continues. After some frustrating nights, my husband and I decided to sit down and figure this out.

Our strategy was to write out the chain of events, including what happens before, during and after the problem behaviour. Sometimes this requires observing the behaviour a few times. In our situation, our first impression was that she was not interested in the food that was being offered. But she was exhibiting the same problem behaviour even when her favourite food was put on the table. So, after watching a few times, we were able to put together the following diagram:



After laying the situation out like this, it became clear what the problem was. Our problem at mealtime had nothing to do with food. She simply was looking for our attention. Most, if not all problem behaviour can be boiled down to one of four main functions



main functions (Repp and Horner, 1999):

1. **Attention:** "Look at me! Look at me!"
2. **Escape:** "Get me out of here!" or "I don't want to do that."
3. **Tangible:** "I want that" or "I want to do that."
4. **Automatic reinforcement:** e.g. biting nails, twirling hair.

We also realized that our reactions were giving her the attention she was craving. Yes, it was negative attention, but sometimes attention is attention. Without realizing it, we were teaching her that she could get our attention leaving the table. Hence, our reactions to her behaviour created the cycle we were stuck in. We also noted that her behaviour was more likely when she was tired.

So to break the cycle, we had to come up with a plan. A plan that has the best chance of succeeding takes into account the before, during, and after of the problem behaviour.

- **Before the behaviour:** What is triggering the behaviour? Can we modify these triggers or make them more manageable? Is there anything making the behaviour more likely but not directly causing the behaviour e.g. lack of sleep, hunger, mood?
- **Looking at the behaviour:** Is there an acceptable way for the child to get what he/she wants? Does the child need to be taught a new skill?
- **After the behaviour:** How do we reinforce good behaviour?

This is what our plan looked like:

"Not getting enough sleep"	"No one is talking to her for more than 5 minutes."	"She starts to fidget and then starts to leave the table"	"Mom/dad directs attention to her and tells her to sit down."
Enforce 9pm bedtime	Give her a role during meal time e.g. helping to set the table.	Model conversation skills e.g. turn taking, asking questions, looking at the person who is talking	Give praise at different times during dinner when she sitting well and eating her food.
If she has not gotten enough sleep, dinner will be no later than 5 pm	Make sure that everyone is contributing to the conversation.	Teach her games that could be played during dinner. e.g. I spy, rhyming games	Encourage and praise any attempts of conversation.
More praise for good behaviour	Ask her questions about anything that interests her e.g. her day, the food, her toys etc.		If she starts to give signs she wants attention, prompt good behaviour by starting a game or asking a question If she leaves the table, no dessert.

Notice that a consequence for bad behaviour is still involved. However, the focus of the plan is on strategies to prevent the challenging behaviour. There is also a plan to reward good behaviour. We saw almost immediate results when we put this plan into place. It took a little experimenting to figure out what and how to teach and encourage conversation at the table, but overall, there was a significant improvement in her behaviour. She

sometimes leaves the table, but at least we know why it happens and what we need to do to get her to behave better.

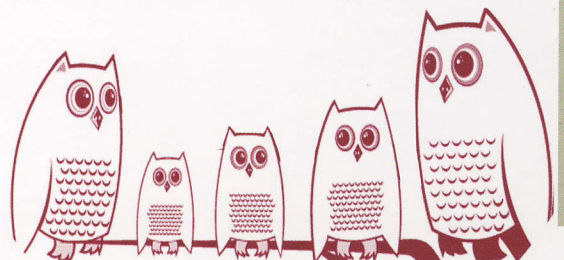
The key to this approach is creating an environment that lends to good behaviour, and then reinforcing the good behaviour when it happens. It is not easy, but it was the only way to stop the cycle of problem behaviour. To change a child's behaviour, the adults involved have to understand why the behaviour is happening. This means looking at the factors that lead to the problem behaviour, and looking at what the child is achieving when misbehaving. The strategies chosen will depend on this information, and the unique circumstances of the family.

Does this mean a formal plan has to be made for every situation? No. Although, having a plan for situations that are significantly affecting family life is useful. What this approach does propose, in every situation, is a change in perspective. We need to train ourselves to anticipate, rather than just react; instead of focussing only on the consequences, we aim to prevent. When a child engages in problem behaviour, we ask why it happened, in order to prevent it in the future. Yes, we want to break the cycle of problem behaviour, but we should want more than to stop our children from misbehaving. We want to *create* cycles of good behaviour, where the parents are teaching and reinforcing desired behaviour.

Finally, it needs to be emphasized that it is the parents who are in charge, and it is ultimately the parents who have to change before we can expect a change from our children.

Michelle Nix holds Bachelor degrees in chemistry and education, as well as a Master's degree in special education. She has been a teacher at St. Thomas Aquinas High School for the past 7 years. Also, Ms Nix has been happily married for 8 years and is the mother of two little girls.

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ABOUT PIFE

PIFE (The Pacific Institute of Family Education) was founded to help parents fulfill their wonderful role as primary educators of their children.

Throughout the nineties a group of parents met regularly in Vancouver and Richmond, BC, for informal discussions on parenting and family life.

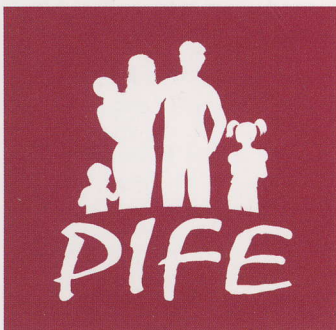
As these discussion groups expanded to other cities in the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley, we saw the need for an organized, professional resource and support centre for families.

Our members believe that the task of educating children is the parents' most important business and we endeavour to provide the tools to take it on with professionalism and finesse.

We view parents and family as being at the centre of the educational process. Because much of the education of our children takes place in school, we believe parents should be involved in their children's school life to ensure it is an extension of family life.

PIFE currently runs small discussion groups as well as seminars and conferences on parenting, family life and school life. **Visit** our website www.pife.ca to view our resources and updates on what is happening in the lower mainland.

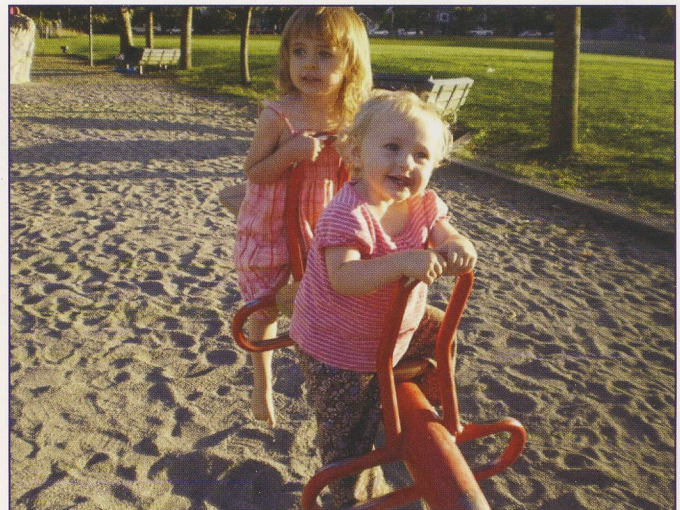
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