

Behavioral Resources And Institute for Neuropsychological Services

the BRAINS *Express*

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Seminar: Thursday, March 25, 2010 "Aspie 101 for the Special Education World", with **Liane Holliday Willey, EdD**, East Lansing, MI - Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center

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Edited by: Rochelle Manor, PhD & Michael Wolff, PsyD



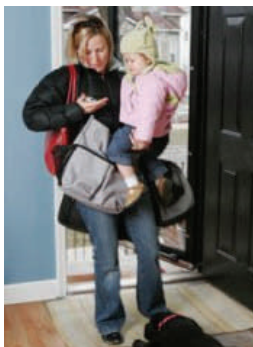
How to Make Single Parenting Easier

By: Dr. Katharine Bennett

Parenting is the most important job there is and will hopefully be the most rewarding. Families with two parents at home often have their hands full with child rearing, especially if both parents work full time.

Raising children is an extraordinary effort for most parents but raising children as a single parent present extra challenges. The obvious are: handling all financial worries alone, being lonely, being tired, discipline with no back-up support, juggling all of the kid's extra-curricular and school activities, working, cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry—the list is endless.

Single parenting can be done more efficiently and with unexpected rewards. This article will provide tips to make parenting easier and more rewarding. Whether you are doing it alone or with a partner,



life is so busy; we can all use some help in making it easier and more fulfilling.

Flexibility is the single most important quality to have as a single parent. Whether it is flexibility in your work setting, flexibility in your attitude, or flexibility in your behavior – it is the key to making parenting and your life more efficient.

Life happens – kids get sick, injured, or tell you five minutes before school that they need fifteen dollars in multiple coins for math class (This happened to me a few days ago with my quadruplets. You can imagine the bank teller who had the job of dividing up fifteen dollars worth of coins for four kids)!

You have to be able to go with the flow and allow for plans b, c, d or the unexpected to unfold. Consistency, predictability, structure, reliability, and routine are the foundations of a secure childhood. You have to follow through on everything.

You and your children should review the plan for the day—everyday—so it



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is predictable. If you do not want a chaotic life, then live in an environment that is organized. In my house, everything has a place. There are hooks for lunch boxes, baskets for shoes, hooks for coats, etcetera.

This does not mean that things do not get lost, but it helps with the flow and routine of life and teaches children to be organized. Family rituals, such as dinner together or church every Sunday should be adhered to as part of the family routine. Scheduled bath nights, time for homework, and chores all help life run smoothly once set in place and routinely followed.



Parenting is easier if you are taking care of yourself as well. There is a reason why you are supposed to put your oxygen mask on first before attending to your children in case of an emergency on a plane.

A support system is crucial if you are a single parent. I do not know how I would do it if I could not pick up the phone for a brief laugh with my best friend or call my neighbor to give my girls a ride home from play prac-

tice or vent to my mother about one of my kids acting out. You require support in this awesome responsibility of parenting alone.

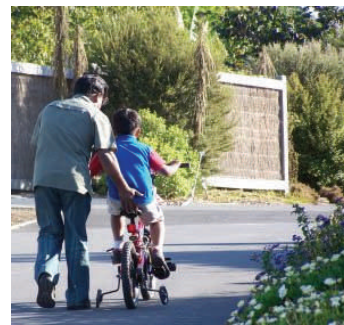
After divorce or death, it can be easy to isolate yourself. But that is precisely what you should not do. You need to have life, too. Although I know how hard it is to find time for much of anything, you need time away from your kids here and there to recharge, replenish, and renew yourself. You will benefit, but **most** importantly, so will your kids!

Lastly, be a mindful parent. Our lives are so busy and our heads are filled with obligations, to-do lists, grocery lists, birthday parties....I am thinking out loud as I try to juggle my life and my four children's lives in my blackberry brain!

I am trying to stop and be present for my kids. It is hard to do, but is so worth it. Rather than ignore their stories or requests because there are so many more important tasks to be doing, I am consciously trying to take a few moments to stop and pay attention to what they are saying. It is amazing how easy it is and how rewarding to actually stop and focus on the present moment with your child telling you about something ridiculous that happened to them at school.

Stop what you are doing, get down to their level if they are young, and

maybe hold their hand while you intentionally listen to their "news." You can then get back to your household/



parenting duties feeling connected and happy, and it only took a minute or so. It is a much different experience and outcome for all involved than the usual "in a minute, tell me later, can't you see

that I am busy" response which usually results in the child walking away feeling defeated, ignored, unloved and you feel annoyed, stressed, and overwhelmed. Try it—it works.

Use the "crazy moments" of your life to pause and remind yourself about what matters most. Sometimes when a child has a quality interaction, they are less likely to continue to "annoy you," trying to get your attention. Obviously, you cannot stop everything every time your child talks to you, but being more mindful in parenting has many rewards.

Breathe in peace and breathe out

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chaos. Look into your children's eyes and relish in their stories. It only takes moments—dinner will still get cooked, laundry put away, and bills paid. Financial stress, well that is for another article.

In sum, single parenting done effectively requires double efficiency. An organized home, set rules, routines that are consistently followed, predictability, reliability, structure, and quality interactions make it not only successful, but rewarding.

Taking care of yourself, surrounding yourself with a support system, and being mindful of how precious childhood really is makes parenting not only easier, but so fulfilling.

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Play: The Most Important Class in Your Children's Career

By: Carrie Zinser, LMSW

There is an old saying, "Play is children's work." In an ASAP, over-scheduled world, our society has lost sight of this. Kids are involved in extra-curricular activities every night



of the week, and schools are under enormous pressure to decrease play and increase academic as well as enrichment activities. There is no time left for kids to be kids and just play.

Through play and peer engagement, kids learn a variety of pro-social behaviors such as impulse control, delay of gratification, emotional and behavioral regulation and problem solving. Kids learn how to interact with and appropriately react to others by engaging in child-led activities where the children set, negotiate, and follow the rules.

During imaginative play with other children, kids learn the art of private speech or self-talk. Kids talk to themselves about what they will do and how they will do it. If adults set up and direct their play, kids miss out on developing and practicing this crucial step in social development. Kids need to practice policing themselves or they will never learn how to do it on their own.

We have a generation of children who do not know how to play, and adults who do not know how to let them. Allowing kids to play and develop their own types of play is uncomfortable for many adults. We

want to save them from making a mistake, being frustrated, or feeling the pain and disappointment of losing.

In order for kids to learn how to handle frustration and disappointment, we have to let them encounter it and work through it themselves.

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Successfully Talking to Kids After a Tragedy

By: Branden Lyon, ACSW

Following the recent earthquake in Haiti, many parents had questions about how best to talk to their children about a disaster. In a recent radio interview with WCSG, I shared some recommendations that have been very helpful for the families I work with at BRAINS.



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The first, and sometimes most difficult, task is to limit the amount of media children are exposed to. This is especially important for very young (pre-school age) kids. Studies have shown the level of a child's distress after events like the one in Haiti or 9/11 increases with the amount of coverage they watch.

Since at least some media exposure is almost inevitable in today's world, it is extremely important to check in with children. Ask them what they've seen and how it makes them feel. Listen to them and do not dismiss their fears, no matter how illogical they seem. Reassure them that they are safe and offer extra emotional support.

When you do talk about the event itself, be honest, but make sure the information you give is age appropriate. For example, with an elementary school aged child you might say, "There was a terrible earthquake and many people were hurt and some died". With an older child or teen you might want to watch some news coverage with them and discuss it. Teens may not want to "open up" right away, but it will be helpful for you to set a positive example by

sharing your feelings with them. In every case, emphasize the work that is being done to help the people affected and ask if your children would like to help too.

Events like natural disasters and terrorist attacks can be hard for children and adults to deal with. Yet, they can also be learning experiences that help kids understand their feelings and teach them the power of helping others.

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Current Groups

Call for more details or to reserve a place in one of our groups!
616-365-8920

**Autism Spectrum Disorder
Parent Support Group—Free**
2nd Saturday of Every Month
Adolescents to Adults 10a-12:00p
Younger Children 11a-12:00p

Social Group for Girls

Ages 11-17
Tuesdays 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Katherine Bennett, PhD

Social Awareness Group A & B

Adolescent to Young Adult Males
Tuesday Nights 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
Tom Denczek, LMSW

Social Awareness Group

Ages 12-14
Thursdays 5:00 PM—6:00 PM
Brad Bridges, LMSW

Play with a Purpose Groups

Ages 2-4 & 4-6
Saturday Mornings
Carrie Zinser, LMSW

Please call for details and to let us know you will be attending. Some groups require a prescreening to attend.

Join Us in the Community

Forest Hills Community Expo
March 20th 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Location: Ada Christian School
The spotlight will be on local businesses, charitable organizations, municipalities, churches, and schools.



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Grand Rapids, MI 49525
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Grand Rapids Christian Schools Family Fun and Health Event

March 20th 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Location: Grand Rapids Christian
High School

*Designed to inform, educate, and
empower the community to adopt a
healthier lifestyle. A variety of free
health screenings will be available!*

*BRAINS will be providing free Body
Mass Index and Sensory Screens*

Autism Society of Kent County Annual Walk for Awareness

April 25th 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Location: Kuyper College

*This event will allow the community
to unite and direct attention to ASD
and its effect on our lives.*

"Politics is not about big money
or power games, it's about the
improvement of people's lives."

- Paul Wellstone



Insurance Tips

Your insurance policy may
have made some changes this year
due to the Mental Health Parity Law
that may affect your copayments,
deductibles, etcetera.

Please contact your insurance car-
rier today to learn about your new
policy. You can always ask a
BRAINS support staff if you need
any clarification on your policy or
what this new law means for you.

BRAINS Support staff will do
their best to inquire what your
benefits, eligibility, and what cov-
erage is available for your policy
to be sure that claims are processed
and paid within a reasonable time
frame.

Please understand that there
are circumstances that are out of
their control that may delay pay-
ment or benefit information that
they are not able to be made aware
of.

If you ever have questions on
your insurance coverage or your
account at BRAINS, please do not
hesitate to contact a support staff
who will be happy to answer any
questions you may have.

By: Emily Senecal

New Art Exhibit

Come and see the New Art Exhibit
in our lobby! We have partnered
with local artists and Kendall Col-
lege to host various art exhibits
throughout the year. The art work
offers variety for families actively
working with BRAINS, the chance

for local artists to display work, and to
bring the community to a venue where
the artists recognize the importance
what we aim to do.

Hitting Its Mark: The BRAINS Foundation

The BRAINS Foundation began react-
ing out to the community to provide
Neuropsychological and Psychological
Services in June 2009. Since then we
have served over 100 children, families
or adults. **Seventy-eight percent** of
those seeking services have qualified
for **NO COST** services and for those
who have had to pay, their average cost
per hour for services is \$8.13. With
Michigan being one of the hardest hit
by the Economy, the Foundation is
"hitting its mark to support those in
need." We hope to expand services as
funding is available.

Please Consider Supporting the BRAINS Foundation

Donations can be sent to:

[BRAINS Foundation](#)
[3351 Eagle Run Dr. NE](#)
[Grand Rapids, MI 49525](#)

For More Information or how you can
help: Please call: 616-365-8920 and
ask for Drs. Manor or Wolff.

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