



Connections

Practical Parent Education

Summer 2009

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Practical Parent Education

Working Together to
Strengthen
Today's Families

2701 W. Plano Pkwy., #101
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I Can't Fight This Feeling[©]

Excerpt from *The New Intuition*[©]

By: Ann Corwin, Ph.D., M.Ed.

How did your last session of Emotional Education go, anyway? The one, perhaps, when you taught your child about the emotion of anger? Huh, you say? Does she mean when I told my son to “keep your hands to yourself?” Or when my daughter got a time-out for yelling back at me when I asked her to turn off her movie and pick up her toys? Or maybe the moment I yelled at the driver who cut me off? Is *that* “teaching my child about anger?” Perhaps the whole concept of “emotional education” seems a bit foreign and awkward to you. After all, teaching is for the ABCs and 1+1=2, right? No one needs to be educated how to feel!

Well, to paraphrase a wise sage known as Mr. Rogers to several generations of young television watchers, “It’s not the ‘mad,’ it’s what you do with the ‘mad’ you feel.” In other words, we do all *feel*, but when we are young, we are still learning what those feelings are called, how to express them, and *what to do* with them, often finding out that some feelings are more difficult to handle than others. For a little person who lacks critical thinking skills this can be tricky. Add in a shortage of language skills to adequately describe what in fact he is feeling, and you get a youngster who feels something weird he doesn’t understand, can’t describe it, and doesn’t know what to do with it! Frustrated and sometimes even scared by his feelings, lacking words to explain how he feels, the youngster has no other means to express himself than his body.

Worse even than a passing tantrum, a child who never learns to properly identify his emotions, express them appropriately, and then dispel them has trouble getting beyond those feelings. He, or she, does not develop the inner confidence that comes from being “right” with the world and satisfied with his, or her, place in it. Instead of understanding, there is confusion. Instead of order, chaos. This is scary to a child! And, since the number one defense mechanism for fear is aggression, this can lead to a cycle in which both the child and those around him get aggressive with each other, which makes for a very confused and unhappy parent-child relationship, and potential difficulty making friends. Everybody’s having a tantrum!

PPE Connections is published quarterly by Practical Parent Education. Only PPE subscribers are granted legal rights to reproduce articles and other information in this newsletter. Credit should be given at all times to *PPE Connections*, Practical Parent Education and to Ann Corwin, Ph.D., M.Ed. for the cover article.

It doesn't have to proceed this way, however. Making emotional education part of your family values isn't complex or difficult. It can even be fun! In the tricky, messy endeavor known as Parenting there are some real-life tools that really can make this whole "feelings" thing a bit less mysterious for both you and the child in your life.

By and large, we do well at academically educating our children. Even without being told, we almost always understand that repetition is the key to helping our little ones learn new concepts. Generally, we have no problem with this. We even make it enjoyable, such as using song to teach our child the alphabet, which is then sung throughout the day. If our child should make a mistake, singing "A-B-C-F," for example, we merely start them off again from the beginning to get it right, singing "A-B-C-D" right along with them, both of us enjoying their growing mastery of the alphabet. We *expect* mistakes along the way, and to have to reteach academic concepts many times before our child truly learns them. It would obviously be ridiculous to berate or discipline a child for missing that "D" after the third or fourth, or even the tenth, try. We sure don't take the mistake personally, or as intentional, just as an expected part of learning. Nor do we send a child into a corner to "think about" the mistake he just made. Similarly, we don't just identify an academic topic (for example, the number 2) to our child; we point it out everywhere we see it (on a sign, on the telephone, in a price tag), and proceed to show our child how to use it (counting apples, pouring two cups of water into the tub), so he can really grab hold of it and apply his learning in any situation.

In contrast, emotional education commonly proceeds in a slightly bumpier fashion. We explain in what we think is a crystal-clear fashion what is acceptable behavior, and then expect our child to "get it." Then...he doesn't get it, and we discipline him. We take away something, maybe give a "time-out," and expect the child to really think about his misbehavior while he is gone, and to not do it again! Then...he does it again. Now the frustration we feel mounts. We think, "Why is he doing this to me? Did he not get it the last time?" Somehow we have distinguished emotions ("feelings") as completely different than academic concepts, so we approach their mastery in a completely different fashion.

But emotions are every bit as teachable as numbers or letters! No child comes equipped already knowing what "anger" is, for example, certainly not what it is called or how to express it appropriately. If we were to compare emotions to numbers, just for fun, this would be like a child figuring out on his own how to pick up two objects, but not understanding the concept of "2," or how to say it, or how to use it. Instead of teaching the child this concept of "2," the name of it, how to use it and how to recognize it in the world, we would explain it once and then get upset when he didn't get it right forevermore!

We take the time to explain "academic" concepts, but we almost expect kids to figure out their emotional education all on their own, stepping in only to discipline them when they get it wrong. But we can be the bridge between a child's continuing and mystifying inner swirl of emotions that keep happening and a confidence that comes with knowing how to identify an emotion, deal with it, and get rid of it when he is "done" with it. We can help a child apply this knowledge in any part of his life: school, friendship, adversity. Just as in academics, this process is not automatic, and it is not mastered after one or even ten tries; we as parents need to reteach emotional concepts to our kids with patience and consistency. Believe me, the payoff of a child comfortable in his own skin is well worth the effort!



Conversely, a child unequipped to deal with emotions can be made to walk a very lonely, scary road. During the deployments of the last several years of Marines from our local Marine base, I had the opportunity to work with families of men and women sent overseas for extended periods of time, into potentially very dangerous war situations. Talk about a ripe environment for emotions to run high! After seeing off their father or mother, many of the young children of these soldiers were challenged with feeling sad *all of the time*. These kids modeled the sad adults around them, also left behind. But unlike most of the adults, the kids were unable to process their sadness in such a way as to feel it for a time, and yet also feel gladness in other parts of their lives, such as playtime. They were unable to leave the sadness long enough to even pay attention in school. They simply could not compartmentalize the sadness, and it was overwhelming every aspect of their lives. A "feeling" was happening to them, and they lacked the emotional education to know what to do with it.

Now, no one is saying that these kids were unjustified in feeling sad; the sadness was entirely appropriate in their circumstances. Feeling sad is a natural response to seeing off your parent and worrying about his or her well-being. However, it was also appropriate for these kids to live lives full of many *other* emotions and activities, too. Being able to dissipate the sadness was not wrong or disloyal, or even an indication that the child would not again feel sad, for a time. Knowing what the emotion is named, how to express it, and how to get rid of it just freed the children to live lives *uncrippled* by that sadness.

I taught these wartime kids the name for their feeling, and where “sadness” is held in the body (in the trapezius muscles of the shoulders – the “stress” muscles). Together, we dropped our chins to our chests and hung our heads, getting a good stretch of those muscles. Then we raised our chins to the sky, dropping the shoulders (again doing something different to get the muscles out of the “sadness” position) and taking a big breath all the way, blowing it out “big” once we were looking way up. We did it more than once (repetition). In releasing the shoulders and the surrounding muscles, the kids learned a tangible, concrete way to dissipate their sadness. We also talked about how it is okay to not feel sad all the time, how we could do many things, and have many different feelings while Mom or Dad is gone, and that was okay. We would probably even feel sad again, too, and that was okay, too. But when we were done for that future time, it would again be good to blow *that* sadness out to the sky (repetition needed does not equal failure), and get on with something else.

Kids are very concrete and physical. Their bodies are able to lead their brains, with a change in the body actually able to change a child’s mood. Let’s look at another popular emotion, and how to educate our little darlings on that: that pesky “anger” we began with talking about.

Envision being angry. Without thinking about it, position your body to look angry. Are your hands clenched, your shoulders forward and up around your ears, your mouth and face muscles tight? Well, you look like a boxer, ready for a fight, and that is the natural stance “anger” takes in your body. What we need to do with our kids is break this physical posture in order to let them get out of the anger cycle, which, as you know, can quickly accelerate into aggression.

Let me again stress that helping a child out of anger (as out of any other “unpleasant” emotion) does

in no way imply that his or her anger is unjustified, or that childhood should be a time of only sunshine and light, with all negative feelings properly buried. No. But in our world, even justified anger must be tempered. We cannot go around physically or even verbally expressing our unmitigated anger at those who irritate or infuriate us. We even have a nifty invention just for those individuals who choose to do this: the restraining order. Our goal is to change rage into something more manageable, and educate our child to be able to say, “Yeah, I’m angry. I know what it is, what to do with it, and I know how to get rid of it and get onto something else.” That results in a child others want to be around, and who feels good in himself and about himself. *Processing* the emotion in a healthy way does in no way equal *repressing* the emotion!



As with education for any other emotion, you will follow three steps: define what it’s called; show what to do about it; teach how to get rid of it. You will model and teach using games, movement and music.

Step 1: Define Anger

“It’s when you have a tantrum on the ground, scream, say ‘bad’ words, or feel like hitting someone because they said or did something you didn’t like. Some people say they need to ‘blow off steam’, or that they ‘see red.’”

Step 2: What to Do About It

Teach the “Fast Hands” game. You will be playing it more than once!

“How fast are your hands? I want to show you a new game – the Fast Hands Game! Okay, you stand there facing me with your hands out in front of you in fists. We are going to race to see how fast each of us can zip our hands back behind us and lace up our fingers really really tightly. Let me see how tightly you can do this.” (Check his hands and compliment him on his amazing strength when you ‘can’t’ get the fingers apart).

“I will be ‘It’ the first time, and tell you a story. Every time I say the word ‘hands,’ you zip your hands back behind you and lace your fingers together really really tightly. Ready?” Then make up a silly story about anything, being sure to insert the word “hands” plenty of times. Every time, zip your hands behind your

back, and see that your child does, too. Remember, this is a game, so play it up and make it fun. Keep it light, and full of compliments. Then let your child be “It,” and tell you a story. Play this “game” whenever you think of it, whenever you have a few minutes.

Step 3: How to Get Rid of It

Always use movement, and add in some music. Again, this is to be done with repetition separate from and before a tantrum occurs (like teaching good brushing before waiting for a cavity!).

You are teaching him on a neuromuscular level to “step back” out of aggression.

Now have your child select a special “feel good” song. Teach him to go punch on that song as soon as he feels “mad” coming on. In fact, music is one of the most powerful mood changers of all time. Try this the next time you’re heading to the market: keep your grocery list in your mind rather than writing it down (or be sneaky and test this out on your spouse). Then, on the way, crank up the tunes. Then...try to remember what you need from the store once you get there. If you are like most humans, the music will have displaced the grocery list! Music can displace rage just as powerfully, especially with movement added in.

Now to really seal the deal: enlist the help of your spouse or another adult. Person #1 comes into the house (or arrives at the park, play group, etc.). The child must be present, although he will just be an “observer.” Here is the dialogue between the two adults:

“I was so mad today!” This adult whips his/her hands behind the back and laces the fingers together.

“What happened?”

“I was waiting at the store to buy my food, and the man in front of me was so slow! Then, he had forgotten his wallet in the car and left his cart to go get it! I was really in a hurry, and I got so mad!”

“Wow – how fast did you get your hands behind your back?”

“Really really fast! Just like this (demonstrate). I was so mad, I had to! Look how tightly I had to lace my fingers together, too!” He or she shows the tight fingers, making sure everyone “tests” the tightness. “And I hummed my ‘feel good song,’ too!”

“Gosh – great job! You really used your Fast Hands game!”

Don’t fight feelings embrace them and teach your children what to do with them!

Working with Parents - Icebreakers Getting to know you...

Objective: To help participants become acquainted with, and feel comfortable about, each other early in a series of parenting classes.

First session: Pair participants and ask them to interview each other and ask the following:



1. Who lives in your home? (Extended family, children and their ages, pets)
2. What do you hope to learn while you are here?

Have each participant introduce their new friend to the rest of the group.

Subsequent sessions: To build on the feeling of comfort that was established at the first session, pair participants and have them share their answer to one of the following questions, using a different question each week. You may observe that the questions become more revealing and the answers will reflect greater trust as the series goes along.

1. What are your special talents or hobbies?
2. What are the two most important job responsibilities that you have as a mom or dad?
3. Share three unusual things that have happened in your life.
4. Who is the person you most admire in the world?
5. Pick a color or animal that best describes your personality.

The New Millionaire

Objectives:

1. To stimulate participants to stretch their minds.
2. To create an atmosphere in which sharing is accepted and encouraged.

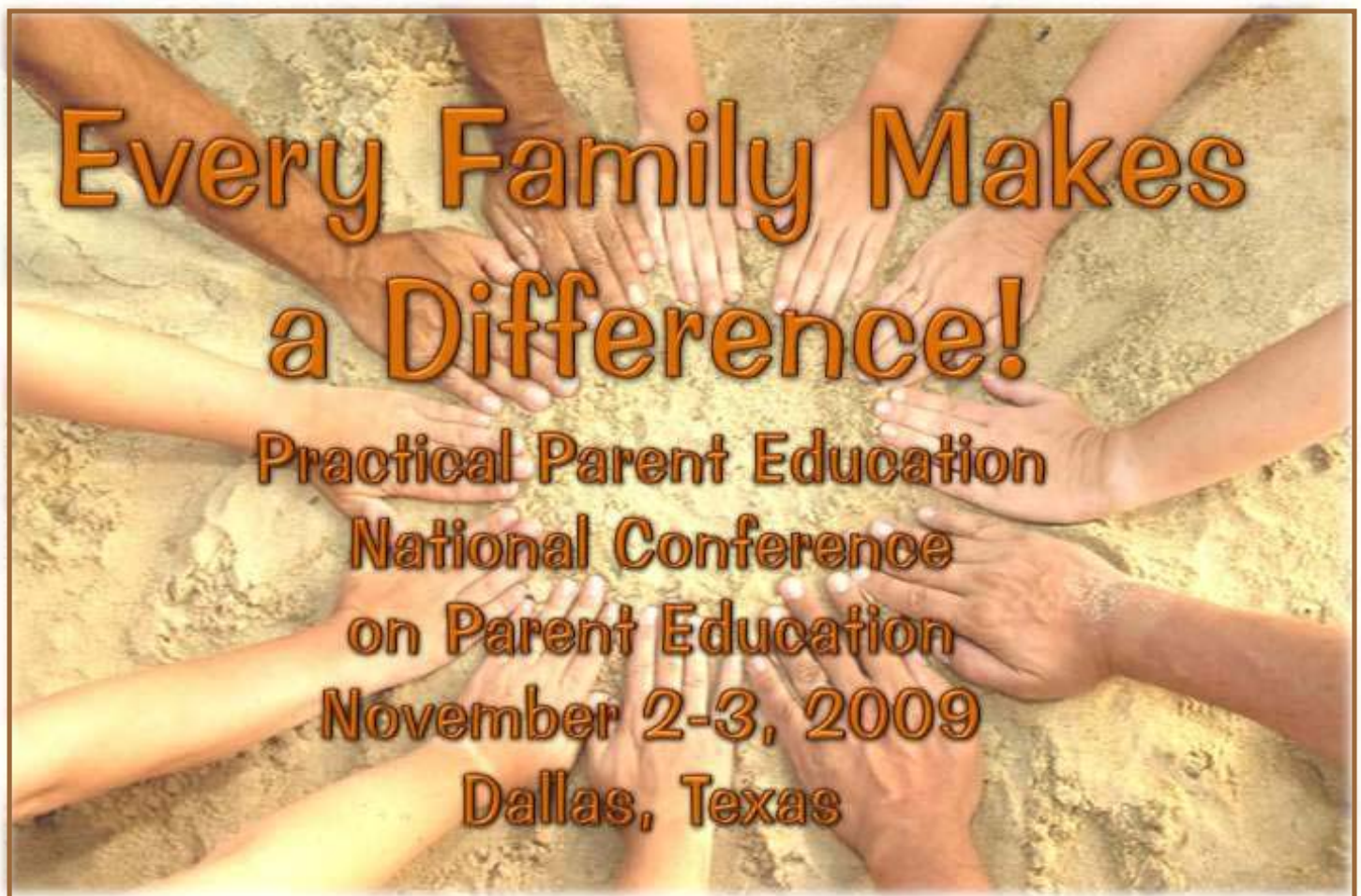
Procedure: Tell the group that they have been given a gift of one million dollars, tax-free. Ask them to share how they plan to use their newly gained fortune.



Alternate procedure: Ask one of the following:

1. If you could take a free two-week trip to any place in the world where would it be?
2. If you could become leader of any country in the world, which would it be?
3. If you could travel on a time machine to another era in time, when /where would it be?
4. If you could talk to any person now living, who would it be?

Share responses



More conference details!

Interactive Workshops: A great selection of topics focused on parenting issues prevalent today. Conference workshops begin mid-morning on Monday, November 2 and conclude mid-afternoon Tuesday, November 3.

Luxurious Accommodations! Hyatt Place/Dallas-Garland. The room rate in this beautiful brand new hotel is \$85.00 per night for a beautiful suite that can sleep up to 3 people (1 king or 2 queen beds plus a sleeper sofa). Breakfast is included in the room rate. The hotel is near lots of great shopping and a convenient drive down the highway will bring you to all the fun Dallas has to offer. Reserve your room now by calling 972.414.3500, Option 1. The group code is G-PPEG.

Conference Registration Fees: PPE Subscriber - \$225.00, Non-PPE Subscriber - \$300.00. Fees include all conference workshops, luncheons on Monday and Tuesday, and breakfast Tuesday morning. Watch for conference updates at www.practicalparent.org.

How do I register? Conference brochures will be mailed in September and will also be available on our website. A registration form is already available on our [website](#).

You won't want to miss it!



Dr. Steven Constantino Engaging All Families: A Proven Path to Achievement for All

Monday, November 2

Demand for increased student performance has never been higher. Over forty years of empirical data and remarkable success stories prove that engaging families in the educational lives of their children leads to all children learning at high levels. Still, many schools continue to struggle to meet the needs of all families. Dr. Steven Constantino, Founder and President of Family Friendly Schools and the nation's leading practitioner in family engagement shares his humor and inspiring success story to describe the framework to successfully engage all families.

Dr. Ann Corwin The Emotions Before the Explosions... Understanding Why Kids Misbehave is the Key to Change!

Tuesday, November 3, 2009

For every behavior there is feeling. The first steps to understanding feelings is to define them, but that's not always so easy. Even as adults, we wake up in the morning and say, "I'm in a bad mood today." If someone were to ask, "Why?" that adult might say, "I don't know, guess I just woke up on the wrong side of the bed!" Now imagine being a child who doesn't have a firm concept of time. Not only does he not know what he is feeling, he doesn't know how long it will last. This translates into a child not knowing if he will have any given feeling for days, weeks or even years. Lots of adults don't know how to deal with the way they feel and that confusion is magnified for kids. The key is to teach emotional education by defining feelings, teaching practical ways to deal with feelings, and finally helping families figure out how to move from one mood to the next. Join Dr. Ann Corwin, "The Parenting Doctor," to learn about defining family feelings and what to do about them!



Stand up and be recognized! It is once again time for the PPE award application process. Below are complete instructions for nominating a program or an individual for one of these prestigious awards. Award nominations are **due October 19, 2009** and can be submitted by email to ppe@practicalparent.org, by mail to: Practical Parent Education, Attn: Awards Committee, 1721 W. Plano Parkway, #101, Plano, Texas 75075, or by FAX to 972.423.6565. The awards will be presented at our National Conference on November 3, 2009.

Making a Difference for Families Award

The *Making a Difference for Families Award* is designed to recognize Practical Parent Education programs that have initiated unique parenting-related services that are truly having a positive impact on families. The service must involve parents and incorporate PPE services and/or curriculum at some level. The winning program will have the opportunity to expand their program by receiving a **free PPE subscription package, including all materials and training for one parent educator, a \$750 value!**

Applicants will be judged on the following criteria:

- The uniqueness of the program concept
- How the program meets a special need in the community
- How the program has incorporated PPE curriculum and materials
- Expected outcomes of the program
- Program evaluation
- Long term plans for the program

Instructions

- Submit all required information
- A maximum of 6 attachments may be included
- Include the following information at the top of the application:
 - Name of program
 - Sponsoring organization (if applicable)
 - Size of community served
 - Program contact
 - Address, phone number and email address
- Please answer the following questions, limiting responses to a 1/2 letter-sized page:
 1. Briefly describe your program and how it is unique.
 2. What special community needs are being met by this program?
 3. In what ways have you integrated the PPE program materials?
 4. What are the anticipated outcomes of the program?
 5. How will the outcomes be measured?
 6. What long term plans are in place for the continuation of the program?

The Linda Johnston Parent Educator of the Year Award

This award, named in honor of one of PPE's former longtime Executive Director, recognizes the work of a parent educator who goes that extra mile to provide outstanding services to the community he or she serves. These services must directly involve parents and must incorporate PPE services and/or curriculum at some level. Parent educators are welcome to nominate themselves. This outstanding parent educator will receive a **lifetime subscription to PPE, eliminating the need to renew each year.** The nominees will be judged on the following criteria:

- The commitment of the parent educator
- How the educator meets a special need in the community
- How the educator has incorporated the services and/or curriculum of PPE

Instructions

- Submit all required information
- A maximum of 2 attachments may be included
- Include the following information at the top of the application:
 - Name, affiliation, address and telephone number of Nominee
 - Number of years in Parent Education, number of years with PPE
 - Name and contact information of person submitting nomination (including email address)
- Please answer the following questions, limiting each response to a 1/2 letter-sized page:
 1. What are the Nominee's special contributions to or support of parent education in his/her community?
 2. What initiatives does the Nominee take to enhance his/her knowledge and skills in the field of parent education?
 3. Why do you think the Nominee deserves to be the ***Linda Johnston Parent Educator of the Year?***



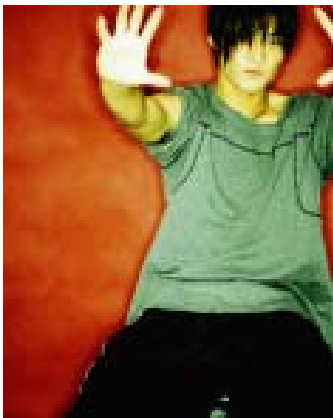
??? Frequently asked questions ???

Parent educator Cynthia Garrison M.S., CFLE, CAMS, answers questions frequently asked during her parenting sessions. If you have a question for Cynthia, send it to us at ppe@practicalparent.org and look for answers in our future editions of *Connections*.

Question: My child was once nice, easy going, compliant and generally a pleasure to be around. Once my child turned 12, rudeness, disrespectful and argumentative behavior set in. What have I done wrong? Will my child ever be normal?

Answer: Congratulations! You have a teenager. It seems overnight our children take a horrible turn in life and become children we really don't like. This is so very normal, but you will now have to parent differently than before. The tools and strategies which once worked may not now, so some extra information and understanding will play a vital role. Let's take a look at what is going on with our teens and normalize their behavior.

Physically, teen bodies are changing rapidly. With this rapid change comes some unusual behavior such as clumsiness, dislike with his/her appearance, and awkwardness. This is also a time when your teen will want to eat and sleep more than usual. This is due to the growth spurt your child is experiencing.



Emotionally, your teen may have drastic mood swings and be very sensitive to what you say or do. This is also a time when the teen is beginning to separate from the parents to form his/her own identity so your teen will start to experiment with ideas and differences you have not seen before such as hair styles, clothes, music, and friends. Ambivalence characterizes this age as well.

Socially, your teen will be centered around his/her friends who become increasingly influential and conforming to peers is important. Peer pressure increases during the teen years and communication between parents decreases while it increases with other teens. Teens experiment with identity through their relationships with their friends.

Cognitively, your teen increases in abstract thought process and with this change comes an increase in arguing with parents. This is also a time when teens start to criticize parents and look for inconsistencies. Teens are present oriented and have a hard time looking into the future and understanding cause and effect. Egocentric behavior is also common since child views him/herself as unique.



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Now that you have a better understand of your teenager, let's now look at strategies which help you deal with your teenager more effectively.

- Recognize, understand and accept mood swings as natural and normal
- Refrain from overreacting to the mood swings
- Provide nutritious meals and snacks to encourage healthy eating rather than dieting.
- Encourage adequate rest.
- Actively promote independence and breaking away from parents.
- Avoid trying to “fix” mistakes for the teen.
- Allow natural and logical consequences to happen. These are the best teachers for our future adults.
- Let go as much as possible.
- Listen, listen, listen. Our teens need more people to listen than give instruction.
- Be the role model your teen needs to live an emotionally, responsible adult life.
- Remember your primary job is to work yourself out of a job.



Practical Parent Education's curriculum lessons can be blended in a variety of ways in order to customize parenting series topics. The series outlined below is perfect for middle school parents who are the ones “frequently asking” the question above.

Help! A Teenager Has Moved Into My Child's Body!

Session 1: Normal Adolescent Development

Module 6.5 – *Easing transitions into adolescence*

Session 2: Effective Communication

Module 3.3 – *Expressing and communicating feelings and emotions*

Session 3: Responsibility

Module 5.3 – *Giving children responsibility for themselves*

Session 4: Respect and Peer Pressure

Module 6.4-*Helping children to handle peer pressure*

Module 4.7-*Teaching children kindness and respect for other children*

Session 5: From Friends to Romance

Module 3.5-*Communicating with children about sexuality*

Session 6: Effective Discipline

Module 5.2-*Choosing effective discipline techniques*

Starting a New Program Year at PPE!

By September 1, 2009, all current Practical Parent Education subscribers will receive notice for the renewal of their subscription for the 2009-2010 program year. We are



happy to announce that the renewal fee remains at \$75.00.

Upon renewing your subscription, you will receive a

CD with the complete curriculum in English and Spanish as well as a complete set of *Parenting Quick Tips*. The new curriculum modules, as selected by our subscribers, are *Raising a Financially Responsible Child* and *Raising a 21st Century Child...Starting with Day One*. These modules, new *Parenting Quick Tips*, and *Parenting the Strong Willed Child* curriculum will all be included on the 2009-10 CD. Your renewal also enables you to pay a discounted price for the 2009 conference. Watch for those renewal notices in the mail. As always, call 877.340.6262 if you have any questions.

Initial Parent Educator Training Fall Schedule

Plano, Texas- September 23-25

Plano, Texas -October 13-15

Westlaco, Texas - October 13-15

Stanton, Texas (Midland, Texas area) - October 20-22

Plano, Texas- November 11-13

Huntsville, Texas - December 1-3

Plano, Texas - December 7-9

Registration forms can be found at www.practicalparent.org.

To arrange training in your area, please call 877.340.6262.

PPE welcomes new subscribers from far and wide, including recently trained parent educators in Northwest, McKinney, and White Oak Independent School Districts in Texas, Caldwell School District in Idaho, and Virginia Beach City School District in Virginia. We look forward to training new parent educators from the Tulsa Public School District in Oklahoma in September and more in Texas and around the United States in the months to come.

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