



PARENT TRUST
FOR WASHINGTON CHILDREN



Strong Families Begin At Home

Child & Teen Services Newsletter

March 2012

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FAMILY HELP LINE
1-800-932-HOPE

Parent Trust's statewide, toll-free phone number provides callers with a greater understanding and awareness of child development, guidance and resources.

If you have any comments, or suggestions for future articles, please contact:


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MIRROR ME

This is a great movement activity to play indoors and promote a child's self awareness. A spin on "Simon Says," this activity called "Mirror Me" works for only two people.

Instead of saying "Simon Says," one child is the leader and the other child must follow, quietly! Just like a mirror would do, the leader does a motion and it's the job of the other player to copy those exact motions but with opposite limbs just like a mirror would do.

Promoting spatial and body awareness is important for a child's gross motor development, and this activity also stimulates the mind by causing the child to think in an opposite motion like a mirror.

MOVE 



Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity. ~JFK

PLAY



You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation. ~Plato.

PUPPET SHOW

A puppet show is something that kids tend to love, and it's a great way to build in some creativity during "must be inside" days.

What you'll need:

- Pre-made puppets
- Or you can even make your own puppets:

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PLAY

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~Plato.*

PUPPET SHOW, CON'T.

Start with old socks or old mittens.

Collect some simple household objects like: buttons, beads, paper, dried pasta... these will become facial features.

Adult part—fabric glue to secure the objects on (let dry overnight for extra security) If you don't have those objects, using a plain white sock and permanent marker to draw a face on is a great substitution.

Either way kids will get the opportunity to create their own puppets.

The Big Show: Kids can create their own storyline for the puppet show, or have their puppets act out a story from a book (through

memory or as someone reads the story), or put on some music and the "puppets" can have a dance!

Gather the family around and make a mini-production of it so the kids can share their work and entertain everyone too. Puppet shows aren't just a great way to engage and entertain the whole family. Through dramatic play kids build confidence, can express new emotions and develop stronger vocabularies!

LOVE AND THE BRAIN

"Early childhood nurturing affects school-age children's brain.", says a new study from Washington University's School of Medicine.

This long-term study started a decade ago and looked first at children when they were ages 3-6, and then again at 7-10 years old. Using brain-imaging technology, the researchers did brain scans on 92 children who had had symptoms of depression or were mentally healthy when studied as preschoolers. Those children without depression, who had received nurturing parenting** had a hippocampus almost 10% larger than children whose
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CONNECT

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day for survival.
We need 8 hugs a
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~ Virginia Satir*

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Love And The Brain continued

mothers were not nurturing. "Although 95 percent of the parents whose nurturing skills were evaluated during the earlier study were biological mothers, the researchers say that the effects of nurturing on the brain are likely to be the same for any primary caregiver — whether they are fathers, grandparents or adoptive parents." The hippocampus is the part of the brain that activates the system of nerves controlling the stress response. It's also a key "player" in

learning and memory and a larger hippocampus would

suggest a link improved school performance.

The take away message? Nurturing parenting affects the structure of young children's brains, impacting later stress regulation and cognitive learning.

Want to learn nurturing techniques?

Call our Family Help Line for ideas! 1-800-932-4673.

* Study published in the Jan. 30 2012 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Early Edition.

** Nurturing parenting was measured objectively, not on parent self-report, but using independent raters looking at videotape of parenting behavior during a stressful parenting task.

PARENT TRUST READS

When You Reach Me, by Rebecca Stead
Ages 9-12 years old

I love books with puzzles, mysteries, and unexplained events that become clear(?) at the end.

When You Reach Me (2009) has all that and more. The story follows a few months in the life of Miranda, a sixth grader living in Manhattan's upper west side, in 1978/79. Part science fiction, part mystery, and partly a story of friendships, the novel has three story lines:

- Miranda's mom getting to appear on the \$20,000.00 Pyramid
- Miranda's friendships at school
- And of course, there are the notes. Who is leaving these notes (and how) that drop hints and leave questions about:
 - What bad thing was going to happen?
 - Whose life needs saving?
 - Why Miranda? Why does *she* receive the notes?

When You Reach Me is a NY Times best seller and Notable Book, Newbery Award winner, USA Today best seller, a Kirkus Review's Best Children's Book. But more importantly, I couldn't put it down. Read it in one sitting. That's as good a review as it gets!

EAT

*Tell me what you
eat and I will tell
you what you are.
~ Anthelme
Brillat-Savarin*

SMARTER LUNCHROOMS

"...nutritious foods don't necessarily make nutritious eaters," according to David Just, PhD,

David Just is talking about a recent study* which showed that an effective way to get high schoolers to eat healthier was to take one of two lunch lines and make it a Convenience Line which sold only healthy grab-and-go style foods.

What happened as a result of this change?

Sales of healthier foods increase by 18%

Grams of less healthy foods consumed to decrease by nearly 28%.

Healthier foods' share of total consumption increased from 33% to 36%. This study highlights the motto of Just's organization, the Smarter Lunchroom Movement (<http://smarterlunchrooms.org>), "Food isn't nutritious until it is eaten."

This interesting non-profit has the mission of "designing sustainable research-based lunchrooms that subtly guide smarter choices."

Rather than focus on changes that schools might find unrealistic, unprofitable or unfair economically, the organization focus is on environmental changes in the setting where students buy and eat lunch. Although the organization (and their website) is primarily targeting systemic change through school districts, it has helpful ideas for home too, as well as ideas about how parents can become advocates for their child's health and nutrition by becoming involved in the work of Smarter Lunchrooms. *To be published in upcoming issue of **Journal of Public Health**

STRESS WARNING SIGNS

When I teach high school students about stress and relaxation, we talk a lot about stress symptoms/warning signs. Sometimes we get so used to being stressed out so often that we don't even realize anymore that we are stressed! We can start to think that being frustrated, or overeating, or isolating ourselves, or any other stress sign is actually normal. Instead, I teach teens to become aware of their warning signs so that they can take action when they are starting to be stressed rather than when things get over the top.

We all have different warning signs; sometimes they are physical symptoms (e.g. headache, tummy ache), sometimes they are behavioral (e.g. stopping eating, yelling, getting grumpy),
continued on next page

RELAX

*Every now and then
go away, even
briefly, [and] have a
little relaxation, for
when you come
back to your work
your judgement will
be surer...
-Leonardo da Vinci*

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STRESS WARNING SIGNS, CONTINUED

sometimes mental (e.g. worrying thoughts, forgetfulness, loss of sense of humor), sometimes they are emotional (e.g. sad, lonely)

Can you identify at least 5 of your own warning signs? If your best friend were to identify *your* warning signs for you, would they match the ones you identified? What about your child(ren)?

I encourage my students to start thinking of these warning signs as coping strategies. I tell them that there are healthy coping strategies and unhealthy coping strategies. If you are interested in learning some healthy relaxation techniques, now that you know your own warning signs of stress, check out our webpage at <http://parenttrust.org/smart-teen>



Remember to check out our website for additional parenting tips and fun family activities!

www.parenttrust.org



United Way of King County



United Way of Snohomish County



United Way of Central Washington County

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