



Serra Preschool

A Parent Participation Nursery School
Where Kids and Parents Learn Together.

February
2019
Newsletter

Mrs. Nowicki's Message

~Help!!!!
This child is misbehaving and not listening to me, what should I do?~

This question will come up at the end of a preschool day when working parents notice that a child was having a tough day. The child was hurting others, not listening, **and was simply "out of sorts"**

I have been thinking a lot lately about this question and the kids that have challenging behavior or an out of sorts kind of day.

We have had many discussions through the years at school on how to help children give and receive messages from each other and the adults in the classroom. We talk about the rules at school, about taking care of each other, ourselves and our things. Hand outs and articles in the newsletters have been written and shared with parents on how to talk to kids and to

provide some understanding of how a child is thinking and developing.

The other day we talked about why kids might listen to some adults but not others. Is it out of fear? Is it because they know certain adults will swiftly implement a consequence and are better at following through? Maybe!

Could it also be because kids feel more connected to some adults than they do to others? I hope that's why, and I do know that if you want cooperation without threats or punishment you need to focus first on connection so that children will want to follow your lead.

When I really think about it, the classes of kids with the least challenging behaviors are the groups that are the most connected. The kids feel a connection with each other and with the

adults that interact with them.

Something I said when parents were asking me questions that I did not have answers to was, that I really did not have much trouble with my own kids while they were growing up.

It occurred to me later that maybe part of the reason for that, despite all the yelling and other things that I wish I would have done differently was because my kids, my husband and I feel deeply connected to each other.

I think the more connected we are to our own children and the children in our lives the more we will be able to influence them in a positive way as they grow. Hopefully all of you can remember a favorite teacher, aunt, uncle or coach, someone who you had a deep connection with who influenced you in a positive way.

Being part of a co op gives you an oppor-



Patty Nowicki
3 Day Director

tunity to be a more meaningful person in the lives of the kids you have come to know. You might feel more of a connection with some kids but maybe not all the kids. I think it's hard to connect with a child who is a challenge to us. We have to make a bigger effort sometimes.

Here are some ways to strengthen your connection, even if you are only in the classroom 2 days a month.

Make eye contact and say hello to each child. If you tend to hover around your child, or the kids your child plays with the most, try to make an effort to engage with more children.

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Miss Cori's Message

Let's Talk About Sex Cori Preisler

I know it's hard to believe, but sex education should start at a very, very early age. Like now. It sure might seem uncomfortable to be talking to your preschooler about sex, but rest assured, it's not "that talk." Experts agree that it's never too early to have conversations with your child about sex and body safety. Rather than it being a single lecture, consider sex to be a part of your normal conversations about safety. Maybe not as often as what to do in case of a fire in your house or what to do if a stranger approaches you at the park, but your children having open and comfortable conversations about their body with you, the parent, can lead to a healthier (and easier) conversation when time comes for those more serious conversations. The sex conversation grows and develops as your children grow and develop.

Feather Berkower is a licensed clinical social worker whose website, www.parentingsafechildren.com, is a good resource for you to check out. She navigates this sensitive and often uncomfortable topic of sex and body safety very well both on the site and in her blog. She also authored the book, Off Limits, which gives age-appropriate information on sexual development, body rules, and sample language when talking with young children (and sample language when talking with teens). I know, you just don't want to address this right now. There's *time*. There's *later*. There's *but this is so weird*. And while you don't need to run out and get the book right now, what you do want right now is to teach your kids how to be safe and how to have confidence in themselves and have an understanding that they are entitled to their own bodies.

As Berkower explains in her book, one of the most important things you

can do right now with your preschooler is to use proper words for proper body parts. Don't use cute words like "peenie" for a penis. Use "penis" for a penis. Girls have a vagina. Girls and boys have nipples. Babies come out of a mommy's vagina. Pee pee does not come out of a girl's vagina... are you feeling squirmy yet? Continual open conversations with real words help keep our kids safe. Answering their questions and letting them know that the topic is always open for discussion leads to trust. When you answer their questions, you can still be age-appropriate and to the point without giving *all* the details. For example, my oldest daughter watched me go through 3 pregnancies. At age 3 she knew that the baby grows in mommy's womb (not stomach) and milk for the baby is in mommy's breasts and comes out of mommy's nipples. At age 7 she knew that the sperm comes from the dad and the egg comes from the mom. But she didn't know *how* the dad got the sperm into the mom until she was 10 when Capo Unified starts sex education (in hindsight, she actually didn't need to hear that detail from me then since 5th grade sex ed mostly just deals with puberty). Answer kids' questions truthfully and scientifically, but when they persist and want more details, it's ok to say, "I'll tell you more when you're older."

It may feel hard to know just what to say to kids at what age. There is a series of 3 books to help you along the way that came recommended by Cassie Kawling, Serra alumni. If you decide to get these books or any sex education books, please read them first yourself so that you know exactly what you're presenting to your children. One of the best ways to feel comfortable talking with your children about body awareness is to anticipate what they might ask about and then be prepared. Families find all kinds of approaches to dealing with sex ed. You want to find what works best for your family. It's



Cori Preisler
2 Day Director

Not the Stork is for preschoolers, It's So Amazing for age 7+, and It's Perfectly Normal for age 10+, all by Robbie Harris. Like any good storybook, keep the age-appropriate book in your usual rotation of books. It doesn't need to come out once, read, and then put out of sight. They are good books to read and discuss together, again and again. Your comfort level will rise, for sure! And the more comfortable you can be, the more comfortable your children will be in talking with you about their bodies.

Good luck! It won't be so bad! You can do it!



Mrs. Nowicki's Message Continued

Notice what children are doing and make a reflective statement.

An example might be, "Jackson today it looks like you are having a great time riding bikes with Leo. The last time I was at school I remember you were playing with trains."

When children comply with a request, you can say **"Thank you, that was helpful, I appreciate it"**.

Making an effort to go to the park after school is another great way to build those connections.

Play with the kids, talk to them, notice what they like to do and think about ways you can engage with them based on their interests.

Children will still have meltdowns and push us to the end of our rope no matter how well connected **we are. When a child, your own or someone else's is having a meltdown or hurting themselves or others or just being stinky and not listening it will be our job to de-escalate things. No teaching can occur when kids are in a heightened state of arousal. Young children have big feelings and their brains haven't developed enough to suddenly switch off and process emotions by talking. That's a why talking, threatening, bribing or lecturing, even re-directing will mostly make things worse when a child is in the peak of emotion.**

Usually in these situations one has to become very calm and wait until the child is ready to hear what it is you have to say.. They have to be ready to receive the message.

At school that might mean at the end of the day when they are happy and their feelings have changed that you revisit the situation and give your message.

Children need lots of help identifying and expressing their emotions, their wants and needs and calming down when they are upset.

Books and stories are a great way to teach children to identify emotions. We can model for children on how to identify and express their wants and needs **by saying things like, "I'm thirsty, I am going to get some water". Or, "I want to play in the sand table so I am going to ask Mary."** "Can I have a shovel?"

We can help children learn to calm themselves by quietly giving them the time to do so, and by giving them the techniques whether it be deep breaths, blowing out pretend candles, or whatever works for your child.

Special time is a great way for you to connect with your child at home. I learned about this when my son was in preschool.

We live in a stressful culture that disconnects us from each other, from our feelings, and from our inner wisdom. Special time heals the upsets and disconnections of daily modern life. It convinces a child on a primal level that he/she is central to you the parent, that he/she really matters and is important.

If your child is in an "out of sorts" state right now I would suggest doing this every day, even if your child is in a state of equilibrium I would do it because it is an excellent way to build and deepen your connection.

Special time is a set amount of time that you set aside each day to play with and give your child your undivided attention. Nothing short of a fire or earthquake can pull you away. Make sure other children are being cared for or napping and turn all devices off. Set a timer for 15 minutes and play with your child, do what your child wants to do no matter how much you dislike the game or activity. One parent did say to me that all his child wanted to do was roughhouse. I think its ok to alternate days with today you pick what we are going to do and tomorrow it will be my turn to pick.

I would also suggest a no screen rule during special time.

I would love to hear if anyone has used special time in the past (I have mentioned special time in previous newsletters) or is going to try it and what you think about it.

I'll leave you with this thought from Patty Wipfler (author and parenting expert)

-Giving your child special time is an active form of listening in which your child's play becomes her vehicle for telling you about her life and perceptions.-

Happy connecting!!!!

Love, Mrs.Nowicki



Valentine's Day Poem

Valentines of pink and red,
Special words of kindness said,
Small surprises, funny jokes,
Paper hearts and friendly jokes,
The best part of this happy day,
Is that I get the chance to say,
Today and for the whole year too,
I'm glad I have a friend like you!

Dad Joke of the Month

Is it just me, or are circles pointless?



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when shopping on Amazon, and Serra will receive a percentage of your purchase (you pay what you would normally pay anyways, but Amazon will donate funds to Serra!).

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Dates to Know:

- Jan 28 | Whale Watching
- Feb 7 | Open House
- Feb 8 | Serra Movie Night
- Feb 13 | Street Sweeping
- Feb 13 | Board Meeting
- Feb 14 | Street Sweeping
- Feb 15 | Presidents Day No School
- Feb 18 | Presidents Day No School
- Feb 24 | Trike A Thon
- Feb 27 | Returning Family Registration Due
- Feb 27 | Street Sweeping
- Feb 27 | General Meeting
- Feb 28 | Street Sweeping

February Birthdays

- Feb 1 | Isaias Camarillo
- Feb 7 | Ryder Millsap

