

BARBARA BURROWS

PARENTING

M A G A Z I N E

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Helping older babies sleep through the night • The bad mother of the year award
Four minutes a day! • "Squeaking through the first day of school"
Do we really want "separation"? • The price of Motherhood • What to read with kids

CANADA'S LEADING PARENT EDUCATION SERVICE • BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE - AUGUST 2002

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Founder and Director
Barbara Burrows

Executive Editor
Barbara Burrows

Managing Editor
Angela Greenway

Creative/Production
Michelle Sharp

Barbara Burrows Parenting
1328 Janina Blvd.
Burlington, ON L7P 1K3
Phone (905) 335-8803
Fax (905) 332-4611
E-mail:
barbaraburrows@cogeco.ca

Readers are encouraged to submit parenting questions, their own stories or experiences to "Our Readers Share" and of course comment on anything in Letters to the Editor.

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Four minutes a day!

S tatsCan says we don't read to our children long enough. Oh great, more mother guilt. The national average is four minutes a day. It takes me longer than that to tidy up the dinner dishes.

It's sad to think that as parents we can't find the time to read to our kids. We make the time to shop for them, drive them places, cook and clean for them. We worry about them more than four minutes a day. We even nag them more than four minutes a day.

According to Dr. Biemiller, a University of Toronto child studies professor, "The most crucial thing while reading to young children is taking the time to explain the meanings of new words, and even reading stories and picture books up to four times in a row to reinforce the new vocabulary." There is that dreaded four again.

I would have never read my child the same book four times in a row if I could help it (only kidding...kind of...). In fact, sometimes on a really, really tired night, after a hectic and draining day with little ones in tow, it was all I could do to make it through one quarter of one book. On some nights, the kind of story that I read started on page 1, followed by page 2 and then 6, 9 and finally 12. Skipping pages works until your kids can read or someone like fresh-as-a-daisy-grandma reads the entire book, page for page, word for word.

Our oldest was an early reader. I think she learned by hearing her favourite book 4,000 times (that's 4 again, times 1,000). This book was called Rhyme Time Story Time. It was 96 pages long, with many short stories all done in rhyming sequence. Her fresh-as-a-daisy grandma gave it to her.

She had to read that book every night - all of it. While still only two years old, she had memorized each story and the order they came. Was it torture? Not at all. In fact, I was as delighted and proud as she was at her being able to finish each line.

The most crucial thing while reading to young children is the same crucial thing that shows up when we drive them places, play dinosaurs with them, make them a special meal or arrange a special

outing. It's crucial that we enjoy it too. When my two-year old could engage me with the cute little endings to each rhyme, I wanted to read every story just as much as she wanted me to. No more skipping pages! I *liked* doing it with her. As soon as we are enjoying "doing" with our children, (be it playing dinosaurs, reading, or pushing a swing at the park) we are on the right track. When all we can think of is how much laundry there is to do, it is a clue we are bored. When we are bored, our time spent with our children is not nearly as valuable.

This fall, as the literacy information starts coming home from school urging us to read to our children, do not panic. Do not skip pages. Do not count the minutes. Think about being good to *yourself*. Don't even think about reading until it can be as enjoyable for you as for your child. If you don't both enjoy it, it is time wasted.

Sound strange? It's true. The value in reading to your children isn't teaching them new words. It is giving them an experience where they know that you are enjoying being with them. The love of reading grows from them knowing that you love them, wish to be with them, and enjoy reading too. Your interest helps them perceive their value in your eyes, and this is the basis of self-esteem.

Find a book that you and your child truly like and enjoy reading together. As children become independent readers, try reading beside them - you with your book and they with theirs. Somehow the physical closeness breaks down barriers and spurs spontaneous conversations. I offered to read aloud to my young teen recently. After the puzzled look vanished, she was delighted and we snuggled in to read something about 'full-frontal snogging' (don't ask!).

If all else fails and reader rabbit waits, call fresh-as-a-daisy grandma. *

Angela

What's Up?



ANGELA GREENWAY
Managing Editor

AUGUST 2002

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About Barbara Burrows

Barbara Burrows is a psycho-therapist in private practice. She is founder of Parent to Parent Magazine and Positive Parenting. In 1999, these companies merged to form Barbara Burrows Parenting. Her syndicated column runs in newspapers across Canada.

Barbara helps parents raise emotionally healthy children and experience joy in parenting. After graduating from McMaster University in sociology and psychology, she worked to help parents with children's behaviour in Hamilton at Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals before developing her own parent education program.

She and her husband have two daughters and a son, and live in Burlington Ontario. *

Barbara Burrows Parenting International Advisory Board

Advisors to Barbara Burrows are professionals with extensive experience in both clinical work and research in child development. They are committed to helping families resolve the underlying difficulties that lead to psychological symptoms in children, without the use of medication wherever possible.

The members of the advisory board contribute articles to the magazine on a regular basis, and oversee the professional integrity of articles published in the magazine.

This advisory board insures that material printed in Barbara Burrows' publication reflects the body of knowledge developed by child psychoanalysts, together with developmentalists (attachment theory, developmental neurobiology and infant research).

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Faculty - Toronto Institute of
Psychoanalysis, Editor of a book
on masochism, author of several
papers on psychoanalysis &
literature.

Erna Furman
Faculty Member Department of
Psychiatry, Case Western Reserve
School of Medicine, Cleveland
Psychoanalytic Society; Author of
seven books and over 180 articles
on child development, many of
which have been translated into
German, Dutch, Finnish, Spanish,
Italian, & Polish and have been
the topics of some 450
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Robert A. Furman M.D.
Pediatrician, Psychoanalyst,
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Adolescent & Adult Psychoanalyst,
Author of numerous papers on
childhood development,
published in both North America
and Europe.

Norman Rosenblood Ph.D.
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Psychoanalyst,
Professor Emeritus of Humanities
McMaster University
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Otto Weinger Ph. D, C. Psych.
Clinical Psychologist -
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U of T - Toronto,
Author of 12 books and
numerous papers.

Barbara Burrows Parenting Magazine welcomes

...your questions, comments
or parenting stories
that you wish to share with others.

mail:
Barbara Burrows Parenting
3516 Mainway Drive
Burlington, ON L7P 1K3

fax:
(905) 332-461

e-mail:
barbaraburrows@cogeco.ca

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COMING OCTOBER 2002

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GOOD BOOKS - MORE THAN A REVIEW

The Price of Motherhood

Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued

by Ann Crittenden
Metropolitan Books, \$37.95
also available in paperback

by Lenka Hlavenka

This book should be made compulsory reading for every single politician and family court judge in North America. Since this is unfortunately not likely to happen, I will at least recommend it to all parents, mothers and fathers alike, whether they work outside the home or not. It was written by an award winning economics journalist who spent more than 5 years researching economy, sociology, history, child development, family law, anthropology, as well as interviewing hundreds of parents from all around the world.

"Raising children", she quotes the words of one distinguished economist, "is the most important job in the world, for in the modern economy two-thirds of all wealth is created by human skills, creativity, and enterprise – the "human capital". And that means that parents who are conscientiously and effectively rearing children are literally the major wealth producers in our economy."

So why is this very material contribution considered so immaterial? Why is the job of making a home for a child and developing his or her capabilities so often equated with "doing nothing" or "not working"? Raising children may be the most important job in the world, she asserts, but you can't put it on a resume. Politicians and everybody else talk endlessly about the importance of family, yet the work it takes to make a family is utterly disregarded - it is not considered work at all!

Unpaid caregiving is not only the lifeblood of families; it is the very heart of the economy. The total hours spent on unpaid household work (much of it is associated with child rearing) amount to at least half of the hours of paid work in the market. Up to 80% of this unpaid work is contributed by women. It is no wonder that the majority of poor people are women and children, which is directly related to the fact that they are not being paid for most of the work they do. The family and the global economy are getting a free ride, because they are dependent on (mostly) female caregivers who offer their labor in return for little or no compensation.

Yet, in spite of all that, mothers, those hard-working people on Earth came to be

defined as "dependents" (just like children or incapacitated adults) who "don't work" and who have to be "supported" by a spouse who is officially the only "working" member of the household. One of the most interesting and compelling chapters in this book is titled "How Mothers' Work Was Disappeared": The Invention of the Unproductive Housewife. This is the chapter that explains how mothers were robbed, because the creation of the human capital that takes place in the home is not accorded any monetary value.

The assumption that the unpaid labor of child rearing has nothing to do with the real economy was cast in stone in 1920s when the decision was made to include in measures of the United States' output only transactions in which money changed hands. This had later become the Gross National Product. In other words, *nothing counts unless it is bought and sold*, which produces some absurd realities: a nurse feeding formula to a baby counts as a productive activity, but a mother's breastfeeding doesn't; care for an aging relative in a nursing home counts, while at-home care by an unpaid family member doesn't; a soldier sitting 8 hours a day in a missile silo is considered to be usefully employed, but a mother taking care of two preschoolers is described as "unoccupied".

This ridiculous state of things has not always been the case: the very word "economics" derives from the Greek "oikonomia", which meant management of the household. There was an important distinction between "oikonomia" and "chrematistics", which was the manipulation of property. Oikonomia enhanced future productivity to the ultimate benefit of the community, while chrematistics sought gains for the individual. The man who practiced oikonomia was highly respected whereas the chrematistic speculator was held in low esteem.

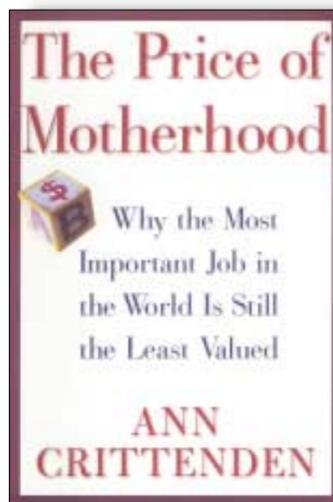
These attitudes have been turned upside down. Most of what passes for economic activity in capitalism is chrematistics, while conscientious mothers are the contemporary practitioners of oikonomia: the building of a human capital that benefits all of society. Economists (as well as society) have been resistant to the notion that time devoted to children is economically important. This

effect spills over to how childcare workers are treated (or, rather, mistreated). The bottom line is that society is used to getting childcare for free, so why pay for it? Childcare workers are competing against mothers and other unpaid relatives, so their wages are kept low.

But the myth that is extremely dangerous to the entire society is that *anyone can do it*. In fact, dog handlers are required to have more qualifications than persons taking care of children. After welfare reform some states were forcing mothers of infants and toddlers to leave their children all day, anywhere, while the mothers worked a full-time job. All this in spite of the mounting evidence that quality childcare (whether provided at home or outside) especially in the early years is crucial to children's development and can even affect society's crime rate, since well-adjusted children are much less likely to become law-breakers.

According to Crittenden, what is needed is across-the-board recognition (in the workplace, in the family, in the law and in social policy) that *someone* has to do the necessary and incredibly demanding and skilled work of raising children and that the reward for such vital work should not be professional marginalization, a loss of status and independence, and an increased risk of poverty. (As an African Safari guide once said of a troop of monkeys, "The mothers with the little babies have a hard time keeping up". Human beings, unlike apes, have the ability to ensure that those who carry the babies, and therefore our future, aren't forever trailing behind.)

It not only takes a village to raise a child, but, since the whole "village" benefits from a well raised child, it should contribute accordingly and not be content to get a free ride. Children are, in essence "public goods" whose future productivity is essential to everyone's well being. Everybody, even childless people, benefits from social programs and retirement security financed by the taxes paid by other people's children. Having children, therefore, is not just a purely personal choice for which the parents should be solely responsible. It is not the same as raising a pet, because, unlike children, Fido is not going to pay taxes when it grows up. *



OUR READERS SHARE

The bad mother of the year award

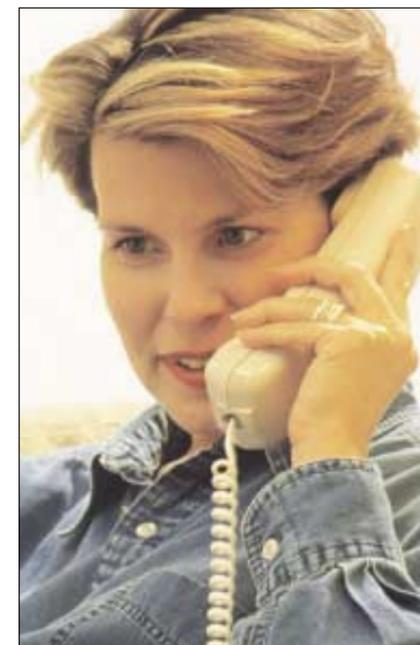
By Allison James

Usually the stories you have in Barbara Burrows Parenting Magazine are about ways mothers of fathers handled some situation very well – and achieved positive results. I'd like

to share with you an example of how difficult it is not to feel the best candidate for the "bad mother of the year" award. I've felt like the "bad mother" frequently, during this first year of our eldest away. I don't have a success story – but thought it might be worth writing, as it strikes me how many issues we face as parents where things must be "worked through" until we feel right. There isn't an easy answer. Our daughter is half way across the country at university. Well not exactly at university right now (depending upon when this gets to print). She starts her 2nd year in Sept. She goes to university out of province and chose to stay there for her first summer. It was a blow to us that she didn't want to come home at the end of her 1st year; hard to find out she wasn't missing us as much as we were missing her. Over this last year with

her being away, one of the things I have found most difficult is to know when to remain involved and kind of "keep track" of her and her responsibilities, and when to back off and leave things to her.

For example, the other day I found a credit card bill of my daughter's on the counter. She must have given our address rather than where she is now living. I opened it, thinking it might need immediate attention. It showed she had not paid her previous month's balance in full and then there was additional charges for this month, one of which was for an expensive item. I was very upset to see her credit card balance unpaid



...hard to find out she wasn't missing us as much as we were missing her.

for the last month and called her immediately. Basically I chewed her out for being an irresponsible money manager. I worked in a bank at one time, and saw this pattern frequently. Young people would get a credit card and be unable to pay down the balance. This would impact later when they might want to get a car loan or mortgage. I view this as a serious matter. When I asked her more about the expensive item, she said it was a birthday gift for her boyfriend.

I later find out they have recently broken up, she is still trying to pay for the gift she chose for him. I find out also that he broke up with her, within a day or two of me calling her to say our beloved cat had to be put down. She said it was a pretty bad couple of days for her.

I knew none of these details when I chewed her out. Would I have bought my "first love" an expensive birthday gift on a credit card (after he had done the same for me) when I was 19? Or would I have stuck to what I believe as a mature adult – if you don't have the money *now*, you can't afford it, so don't buy it. Who knows?

What strikes me is how easy it is to see things from my perspective – my worries about the unpaid bills – and overlook what might be going on from her perspective – especially when she is living away. It was after I angrily commented on her unpaid balance that all of this other information came to light. Needless to say, I didn't feel very good about being harsh with her when I discovered that she is left with a big bill (it will take a whole week's wages at her current hourly rate) and she's been dumped by a young man she seemed pretty enthused about.

If there is a moral to this story, I guess it would be the importance of trying to understand things from the perspective of our children. Although difficult to do, it sure helped me see things differently in this case. *



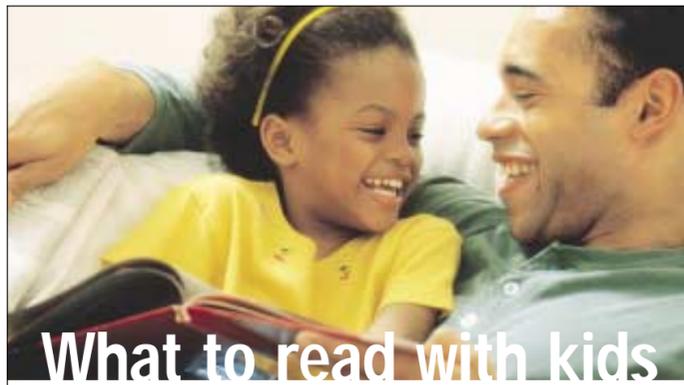
Tip for Kids – Kids love to make parents laugh – but don't laugh at them

by Jill Burrows

Children love to make their parents laugh, as long as they feel the laugh is one of admiration and delight. Children feel happy when they are able to delight their parents, because when they do, they feel "delightful".

Have you ever laughed spontaneously at children's antics, only to be bombarded over and over with the same behaviour? As tedious as it may be, try to be patient and recognize how pleased your child was to be able to please you!

Around 6 or 7 years, children start to become particularly sensitive and self-conscious when interpreting parents' responses. Their conscience is developing and they are often very strict with themselves. They frequently interpret a parent's delighted reaction as cynical. They feel the parent is laughing *at* them. No amount of explaining seems to convince the child of the parent's genuine feeling of delight. If this occurs, realize the child's capacity to perceive reality improves with age, and you won't always be "getting in trouble" for laughing. At the same time, try to take the child's sensitive reaction seriously. Even though adults can easily perceive no ill intent, a child who is ever vigilant in "trying to be good" according to his new conscience development, can be both hurt and upset when he misunderstands his parents response. *



What to read with kids

Do you find it difficult to find a book that you and your children can enjoy together? Do trips to the library leave you with an armful of books that nobody likes very much? Shelagh Rogers on "CBC Radio's "This Morning" has a regular panel who share their favourite children's book titles - Ken Setterington is Children and Youth Advocate for the Toronto Public Library, Michelle Landsberg, columnist for The Toronto Star, and Trudy Carey, Manager of Woozles Bookstore in Halifax. Here are their suggestions, found on CBC's website, under "This Morning" Nov. 19, 2001. Go to CBC's This Morning June 26, 2002 for this year's list.

KEN SETTERINGTON'S PICKS:

"Nothing Beats a Pizza," written and illustrated by Loris Lesynski, and published by Annick Press.
 "Daughter of the Great Zandini," by Cary Fagan, illustrated by Cybele Young, and published by Tundra Books.
 "Nibbling on Einstein's Brain," by Diane Swanson, illustrated by Warren Clark, and published by Annick Press.
 "The Kid Line," by Teddy Jam and Ange Zhang, published by Groundwood Books.
 "The Little Rooster and the Diamond Button," by Celia Barker Lottridge and Joanne Fitzgerald, published by Groundwood Books.
 "Of Mice and Nutcrackers: A Peeler Christmas," by Richard Scrimger, illustrated by Linda Hendry, and published by Tundra Books.
 "The Mole Sisters and the Moonlit Night" and "The Mole Sisters and the Blue Egg," written and illustrated by Roslyn Schwartz. Published by Annick Press.
 "Pants Off First," by Ruth Ohi and published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
 "Body, Crime, Suspect," by Norah McClintock and published by Scholastic Canada.
 "Apples and Angel Ladders," written by Irene Morck and illustrated by Muriel Wood. Published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

MICHELLE LANDSBERG'S PICKS:

"Bridget and the Gray Wolves," by Pija Lindenbaum, published by

Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

"Larky Mavis," by Brock Cole, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
 "Zoe's Sunny Day," by Barbara Reid, published by Scholastic Canada.
 "Judy Moody Gets Famous," by Megan McDonald, illustrated by Peter Reynolds, and published by Candlewick Press.
 "Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever," by Mem Fox, published by Harcourt Brace & Company.

"Traveling Man," by James Rumford, published by Houghton Mifflin Co.
 "Some From the Moon, Some From the Sun," by Margot Zemach, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
 "A Poke in the I: A Collection of Concrete Poems," selected by Paul B. Janeczko, illustrated by Chris Raschka, and published by Candlewick Press.
 "Big Ben," by Sarah Ellis, illustrated by Kim LaFave, and published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
 "Gus and Button," by Saxton Freymann and Joost Effers. Published by Scholastic Canada.
 "From Daybreak to Good Night: Poems for Children," by Carl Sandberg, art by Lynn Smith-Ary. Published by Annick Press.

TRUDY CAREY'S PICKS:

"The Water Hole," by Graeme Base, published by Random House.
 "No Two Snowflakes," by Sheree Fitch, published by Orca Books.
 "The Magical, Mystical, Marvellous Coat," by Catherine Ann Cullen and David Christiana, published by Little Brown and Company.
 "Olivia Saves the Circus," by Ian Falconer, published by Simon and Schuster.
 "The Dog Prince," by Lauren Mills and Dennis Nolan, published by Little Brown and Company.
 "Oma's Quilt," by Paulette Bourgeois and Stephanie Jorisch, published by Kids Can Press.
 "The Cat and the Wizard," by Dennis Lee, illustrated by Gillian Johnson, and published by Key Porter.
 "A Fiddle For Angus," by Budge Wilson and Susan Tooke, published by Tundra Books.
 "M is For Maple," by Mike Ulmer and Melanie Rose, published by Yankee Publishing.

Tip for Babies – Helping older babies sleep through the night PART 1

by Barbara Burrows

Getting older babies to sleep – especially through the night – is something all parents want to do – and there are numerous books on the market to explain how. But, it troubles me when I read again and again that it "doesn't hurt" the baby to scream for a few nights, even for 15 to 30 minutes at a time. While there may not be any long-term psychological damage (or at the same time, there may be) from leaving a baby to scream in its crib, the baby is absolutely in distress. When parents leave babies in distress it weakens good feelings between parents and babies. One may get a baby into the habit of sleeping with methods of leaving them to cry until they figure out parents aren't coming, but this isn't the best way.

Babies wake up in the night, as we all do. We know how to roll over, get comfy again and go back to sleep. Babies who demand mothers (or fathers) during the night only know how to go back to sleep with bodily contact – being rocked, nursed etc. A better way is to gradually

and gently teach the baby how to get to sleep without relying on bodily contact.

Start with helping the baby get to sleep without nursing. If the normal pattern is to fall asleep at bedtime by nursing, try offering that nursing earlier in the evening. When bedtime comes, and the baby is showing signs of being tired, talk about it. "You're getting tired, you are rubbing your eyes. It is time for sleep"

Discover whatever it is that will help your baby settle – eventually.

Find a new way to help your baby get to sleep. Maybe it is walking around and singing, or asking his father to take over while mom disappears. Discover whatever it is that will help your baby settle – eventually. It is important not to give in and nurse, even if your baby protests. Even if your baby is angry and cries, having his mom or his dad to help him with his anger is not over-whelming in the same way it is to be left alone to cry in the crib. He will allow either his mom or his dad to help him in a new way, if you refuse to nurse. *

Watch Oct 2002 Barbara Burrows Parenting Magazine for the use of transitional objects to help babies sleep.



F E A T U R E

Do we really want "SEPARATION"?

by Ginny Steininger

When parents give over the care of their children to a pre-school, day-care centre or kindergarten teacher, no matter how attractive the facility, it is an emotionally difficult time for all. Parents tend to stifle these feelings with bravado, telling their child, "There will be a lot of other children for you to play with." "Look at all of the toys and things to do!" "Your teacher will help you learn all sorts of new things!" But when the reality of the parents' leaving comes, these encouragements usually cannot make up for the child's feeling abandoned and left behind.

The personnel of some schools and centres believe that the best way to handle this difficult time for the child is to encourage the child to "forget" Mommy and Daddy while in their care and to divert their missing feelings with activities and materials. Children asked to "sit on" these feelings often react in a variety of negative or debilitating behaviours. In more forward-looking schools, the teachers and care givers know that asking a child to give up thinking about Mommy and Daddy is like asking them to give up a piece of themselves. They help the child find ways to keep those persons closest to the child consciously in mind to serve as a source of strength and comfort even when the parent is not there. Following are some suggestions these centres give to parents:

Take a picture of you (parent or parents), with your child for him to keep in his backpack or cubby at school. During times of missing stress, the child can use the picture to comfort himself and to remind him that Mommy and Daddy are thinking of him, too.

Along with the picture could be a short note (perhaps a new one every few days) telling the child that Mommy and Daddy are thinking of him, too, and will be so proud when they hear about all of the things he did at school/centre that day. Teachers can very effectively use these notes when the child's missing feelings cause him to be disinterested in an activity or prevent him from finishing one.

Sometimes, the very young child can use some personal item from Mommy and Daddy—to stand in for them and feel them with him. Just knowing Mom or Dad's handkerchief, old billfold, scarf, old piece of jew-



ellery, etc., is in his backpack, coat pocket or cubby to be checked on or touched occasionally (not played with), can be a more tangible comfort.

Some parents write out a list of tasks they perform on a schedule of their day whether at a workplace or at home so that if the teacher notices the child's attention, interest or self-control waning, the schedule can be referred to so that the child can "picture" his parents doing their work as he does his.

At times at school when the child lashes out, cries or sits morosely, the teacher may suggest that he draw a picture for Mommy or Daddy and dictate a note written on the back to let them know what has happened and how he is feeling. The teacher may also suggest a picture of apology for the classmate who may have been the victim of his unkindness during his troubled time.

When parents talk over the child's day when they are reunited, they can make a plan for what the child can do the next day when he feels lonely, angry, sad or frustrated. They

can preface the plan by saying, "If that happens again..." or, "If you feel that way again... you can tell yourself what Mommy or Daddy would do or say if they were there—then you'll be able to do it for yourself." This is calling up the "growing-up" side of the child, giving him a way, using thoughts of Mom's and Dad's words for support, to feel less helpless, to take charge of himself and move on. If the caregiver or teacher is aware of this plan, he or she can use it to advantage, reminding the child, "What would Mom or Dad say or do when such-and such happens?"

In the school or centre where the teacher understands that the best way to help a child "separate" really means helping him stay connected, the child will have more energy and attention to devote to activities and participation rather than using that energy to diffuse or squelch those missing feelings when they naturally rise to the surface. The idea is not to help the child to forget his parents while at school, but to help the child to think about them in ways that restore and energize. *



BARBARA BURROWS
Director,
Barbara Burrows
Parenting

Photo by Murray Pellowe

These Barbara Burrows columns appeared several weeks ago. Thanks to the readers who have responded.

C O L U M N 1

Dear Barbara

Doctor's cannot offer any help - maybe you can. My husband and I have a 5-year-old daughter soon to be 6. My problem is that she tends to disrupt everything in our lives. We do not let on but it is really hard to enjoy her. Do not get me wrong - our girls are the world to us but she tends to go over board with everything we try to do. If we ask her to brush her teeth and hair and then she will be able to play outside, she procrastinates and continues to ask if she can go outside without doing her jobs. I then ask her to go to her room until she is ready to listen. She gets angry, goes to her room, slams her door, throws things around, tells me I am mean and she does not love me anymore, tells me she will never kiss or hug me again. If we are in the kitchen she will grab the kitchen chair and throw it down or grab a pillow from the living room and throw it. She believes that everything we ask her to do is being mean to her. We tell her constantly that we love her and have conversations about her anger and how to deal with it.

I was sent to a pediatrician by my doctor and he asked if I wanted to take parenting classes. I am sure that it is not parenting skills that are the problem. We are very educated about parenting and believe we have tried everything. Do you have any suggestions?

Dear Parent

Your daughter is struggling with some problem and is very enraged - but what could it be? I agree with you that this doesn't sound like a "parenting" issue. Unfortunately, you can never fool a child, and she knows full well that you don't enjoy her very much, no matter how many times you tell her she is loved, which makes this a very painful situation for all of you.

Doctors are not trained to understand the complex process of childhood psychological development and therefore usually can't offer parents much help with the difficulties you describe. At least you doctor didn't offer Ritalin, which many do when hearing of children's behaviour difficulties.

There are some psychotherapists who understand the inner world of a child and can help parents understand where the child has become "stuck" i.e. cannot master anger or frustration. Others take a behaviour management approach, which I think is unhelpful. You need to get a deeper understanding of where the anger starts. Then you'll have a better idea of how to help her get over the trouble.

Generally, (and general answers aren't really very helpful) think about attachment. Your daughter is showing insecure feelings when she can't tolerate the new playmate. The trick is to try and be sensitive to her need for closeness with you and her need to manage alone. Often, when children are having trouble (i.e. won't brush her hair,) offering to help with tasks even though they are quite capable of managing alone can turn things around. The extra support might make some difference. If she accepts your help, work towards her doing these things herself in her "big girl" way, with you standing by to admire her efforts. *

Reader Comments

Dear Barbara,

I read your column in today's Banner about the 5-year-old girl who is a constant disruption to the family. Although I do agree with you in saying that I'm thankful the doctor did not offer Ritalin, I do however disagree that this is not a 'parenting' issue. For the most part children are an extension of how they are raised and treated by their parent(s). I am glad that the parents sit down with their child and discuss the child's negative behaviour; however nowhere in your column by the concerned parent or by yourself did I read anything about good old fashion discipline (that being a good smack on the butt!) To allow the child's behaviour to go on the way it is to show the child that the only consequences she will have from her behaviour is to be put in a room or have a talking to. Consequences that are obviously having no positive effect. She needs the rules to be laid down, kept consistent and understood that if she is to not obey them, that she will be disciplined! As a child if I got out of hand I got an explanation as to what I did wrong and why I was being punished, a smack on the bottom and an 'I love you' right after. Unless I was trying to push my luck, I can guarantee you, I didn't do it again! I am eternally grateful to my parents for bringing me up the way they did. Children should not have the power to control their parents by having a fit. We are the grown-ups, therefore we need to teach or children right from wrong and show them that there are consequences for their actions. If the parents don't do it, society will and it won't be pretty.

Barbara Kuszmierz, Orangeville ON

Dear Barbara,

This article hit home with me. I have a wonderful daughter who is 7. Once upon a time I too had the same difficulties, however I never resorted to doctors or psychiatrists. I had a wonderful babysitter who helped me through the rough times. In my case, my daughter was angry with me working and not spending much time with her as I was recently separated. It seems she was taking out her anger at me by being disobedient. With kids growing up with TV, computers, video games etc. they are getting used to a lot of stimulation and reward. Telling this girl that she can't go outside if she doesn't do her chores, is no big deal. The girl can get as much enjoyment inside as out. What we found worked was an incentive chart. We picked different star stickers (any kind) to use as points. Red Star - 1 point, Blue Star - 2 etc. We based the entire day as a good day or bad

day and awarded points at the end of the day. Today being a 5-point (Gold Star) day. We collaborated on this. Adults and kids have good and bad days, so we should understand and respect this. We choose an incentive that is very rewarding to the child. i.e. they want to see a movie, they will have to have a minimum silver or gold week. If they had a terrible week, then tell them where they can improve and see how the next week goes. It's pretty much guaranteed they will improve. At this point the child is testing you to see if you stick to the rules or if you break and give in. Stand your ground! Incentives like candy don't work, because they don't really care if they get it or not. Personally, I feel society places too much emphasis on analysing children these days. We are a changing world and the ideas that we are used to are different for our kids. Kids these days are bored!!!! They don't need Ritalin.

To the family, I would like to say "Hang in there, you are not alone!"

Helen Ladanyi, Grand Valley ON

Hi Barbara,

I hope you remember me, I wrote to you once before in March. When my wife and I read about the mother who said her 5-year-old daughter is disrupting the family's lives, we were a little upset. And you're absolutely right; the child does sense that her parents don't enjoy her company. We have a 6-year-old daughter, and she sometimes has an attitude just like this woman's little girl. If she does something wrong I put her in her room for a time out. She gets mad and says she doesn't love me, or she'll say she's not my friend. But 10 minutes later, she'll hug me and say, "I'm sorry and I love you daddy".

I'm a "stay at home" father. My wife goes out to work, and I work out of my house. I was a truck driver, but as soon as my daughter was born, I quit and started my own business in my house. Even when I was working away from home, my wife and I worked opposite shifts so there was always someone home when my son (who is 16 now) came home from school.

Maybe this little girl IS troubled about something. Maybe she's getting picked on at school, or even by her siblings.

I was told that my daughter is hyperactive, (which I don't think she is. She just a typical 6-year-old). Ritalin was suggested to me by her teacher. I almost pulled her out of school, and I was looking into home-schooling. There is no way that I would put a child on Ritalin. I think Ritalin is just a cop-out for some teachers and parents, because the child is so doped up that they don't make a sound.

My nephew, (who is 15 now) has been on Ritalin since he was 5. I've told my brother and sister-in-law that he doesn't need it, and I've proven it. He stays at our house sometimes, and his mother gives me his Ritalin. I put it in the cupboard and never give it to his while he's here, and he behaves fine. Yet he acts up at home and school. There must be a reason, and Ritalin isn't going to cure it.

I'm not an expert, but my suggestion to the parents would be to find a good child psychologist. Maybe they can get to the root of the problem, but I think it's probably just a phase, and she'll outgrow it.

By the way, my wife and I love your column. We find it very interesting and informative.

Name withheld

C O L U M N 2

Dear Barbara

My husband and I split more than a year ago and the children and I have since been living with my boyfriend. Not wanting to give the children too many details about why our marriage broke down, I have always had the children refer to my partner as our "room-mate".

Although our "room-mate" and I have been living as husband and wife since I left my husband, I have never discussed with the children that this is a serious relationship.

My problem is I have always tried very hard to be honest with them, and now I feel that in a way I lied by trying to play down the serious nature of my new relationship, right from the beginning. I can't think of a good way to announce that my partner is much more.

Recently my boy friend took my 9-year-old to his soccer practice. The coach asked the kids to get their parents. When the coach asked, "Is this your dad" my son answered, "He's our room-mate." The other parents laughed and my son looked very embarrassed.

Any help in approaching this issue would be great.

Dear Parent

Your children know that the man you have been sleeping with for the past year is much more than a friendly roommate. They may believe that you would prefer if they go on pretending that your relationship is casual. Or, they may wish to pretend your relationship is superficial because they may worry that a serious relationship of your could hurt their father.

Explain to them that you thought it was already difficult for them to have to live separately from their father at the time your marriage ended — you didn't think it would be fair to tell them you had feelings for another man at that time. Say you are pretty sure they will have understood that you and this man are close, although you haven't spoken about it before.

Acknowledge that for you, "room-mate" doesn't seem like the right word, because you and your partner have strong (or loving if that word fits) feelings for one another. Ask if they think another word, like partner, friend or boyfriend would be more comfortable for them.

Once you and the children have explored the topic fully and they have figured out what word suits them, you can bring your partner into the discussion. Tell him how the children would like to refer to him and hopefully he will reassure them that he feels OK with their choice.

Maybe he will want them to use a designation (i.e. step-dad) that implies a closer relationship. If so, he can let them know whenever they feel ready, he would be honoured. Your children shouldn't be encouraged to use "step-father" until they feel ready. *

A reader comments:

Barbara:

I am 77 years old this year still married to my great wife. I read your column re this subject and it makes me sick to see both the answer and the problem.

When my mother and father split many, many years ago my mother became probably the first to do what is called "shacked up" these days. Call it living in sin, whatever!!

Kids would ask me who is that man that lives in your house, is your mother married to him? They had I am sure heard their parents talking about my mother living with a man that she was not married to. In those days what could I answer, I had to lie and say he was my uncle, or my mother was getting married again. The problem was that sooner or later this one was gone and another would arrive on the scene.

First the woman should either get married or live separately, second if sex is so important to her she should insist on marriage or at least save her children the embarrassment by having it elsewhere.

You openly approve of adults living together without being married, I do not and the woman is saying to her children and any other person she knows that it is OK to sleep together so supposedly it is also OK for the children when they are of the right age, maybe before the right age to do the same.

To this day it bothers me that I was placed in the position I was, along with my sister and brother. Adults should put their children's feelings before their own in cases like this.

I have nothing but disgust for young women that have sex with the first man or boy they meet, with women or men that will have sex with anyone they meet and feel one night stands are allowed. It is a great lesson for our children or our grandchildren for that matter as older adults are also taking up this moral latitude.

For obvious reasons I do not wish to have my name printed, my grandchildren have no need to be embarrassed by knowing that their great-grandma was a sleep around.



Tip for Tots – Stopping screaming, biting, hitting, & pinching

by Barbara Burrows

A child could get so angry with his mom that he wishes, with all his heart, that she would go away forever. Even when his mommy is saying no to keep him safe, like forbidding him to run off to the park with the older children, the child can be overcome with hostile anger. When upset, a child may do everything within his power to "destroy" what angers him and stands in his way – in this case his mother. He might scream, bite, hit, pinch - using whatever means he has to get rid of his mother who is keeping him from joining the others.

The child who is biting, pinching and trying to destroy what he most loves is extremely distraught. He cannot articulate what he experiences. On one level, he fears his big, horrible, angry thoughts can hurt his mommy. On another level, he fears his big, horrible mommy will want to destroy him, as he wishes to destroy her.

The first and most important thing to do is to *stop* the aggressive behaviour — as kindly and gently as possible. Once that is under control, it is very important to turn to feelings. The child needs help with the feelings that have caused him to lose control.

Instead of punishing, help children discover that their parents are strong and dependable; they do not get eaten up, mangled or destroyed, no matter how badly the child may have wished (albeit momentarily) that this would have occurred. A parent who can help the child calm down, who does not turn against the child, helps the child differentiate between his wild, frightening wishes and reality.

As a child discovers he does not do any real damage when he feels such intense emotion, and wants to destroy by biting, hit-

ting etc. he can bear his emotions more easily.

Children feel less frightened of these intense feelings when parents do not make them feel guilty. It is important to help children understand that no matter what they wish in rage, those wishes do not hurt others. They also need to know that everyone, adults as well as children, at times, feel very angry and feel like hurting others when their feelings become very strong. They need to know that parents will *not* let them do real damage – they will stop hurting behaviour.

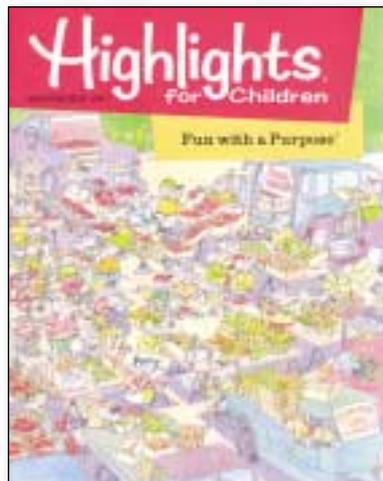
When supported and helped to calm down, a child begins to feel less frightened by his negative emotions. As he becomes less afraid of his destructive urges, he can think more clearly. With his greater capacity to think, he is more able to control strong emotions without "losing it". It is especially helpful to see mommy is still here and seems to love him, even though he hated her so *much* earlier and wished when all his heart she would be gone. When his mommy can bear his upset, he begins to think that maybe he is not such a bad child for being so angry.

The more children can be accepting of their own strong, hateful feelings, the better they become at working angry feelings through in reasonable and satisfying ways – and the better in control they are. Eventually, children can register their anger with words. When they acquire this verbal skill, they will no longer hit, scream, pinch and bite. This is a long process requiring great patience from parents.

It is time very well invested though, as youngsters given such emotional support usually gain control of aggressive behaviour early and maintain their gains throughout the rest of their growing up years. *

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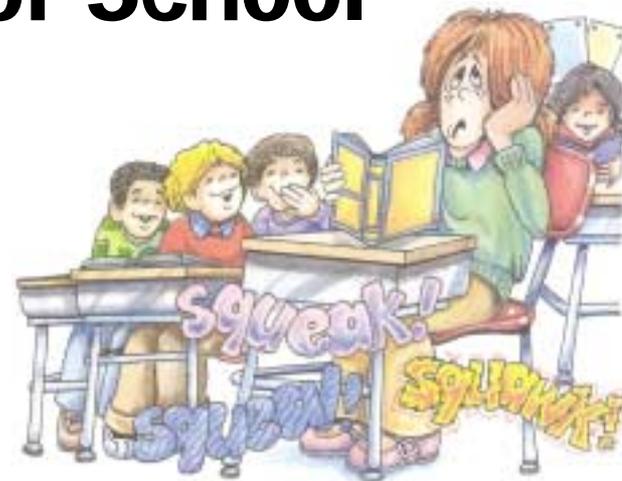
Thanks to Highlights for permission to reprint this story from the Parents Corner section of their website.



"Squeaking Through the First Day of School"

by Roger Palmquist

Illustrated by Ron LeHew



to hear people talk in this room—loudly and clearly."

How else could I talk? thought Sally. I have to shout to be heard over my desk.

Sally stood a while longer, afraid that touching her desk would bring more laughter. She would gladly have stood until recess or even till lunch—probably until high school. But she had to sit back down, and that brought complaints from her seat.

This time, only a few kids laughed, Sally noticed with relief. Maybe her plan would still work.

Sally did not raise her hand once all day. She talked—and squawked—only when Mrs. Watt called on her. At lunch and recess she waited to be the last one out of the room and the first one back. Making it to three o'clock with as little noise as possible was her goal.

Class finally ended for the day, and the other kids rushed out of the room. But Sally stayed frozen in her seat like a kid-shaped Popsicle.

"Is something wrong, Sally?" the teacher asked.

Only everything, Sally wanted to say, thanks to this rotten old desk! But she merely moved an inch to her left and let the seat squeak an answer for her.

"I know first days are a little rough," said Mrs. Watt, "but I'm wondering why you've worn that huge frown all day."

"It's this desk," complained Sally as she stood up. The desk, of course, added its squeaky two cents.

"Oh, I see," said Mrs. Watt. "I guess you did get our noisiest desk. I'll ask Mr. Thomas, our custodian, to oil it for you tonight. Is that all that's bothering you?"

Sally paused. Now that she thought about it, the squeaking had seemed to bother her more than it bothered anyone else. The other kids hadn't really been too bad. In fact, she even noticed some that she would like to get to know.

"I guess so," she said.

"Well," said Mrs. Watt, "the first day's always the worst. Now that you've survived it, tomorrow should be easier."

All the way home, Sally thought about what Mrs. Watt had said, and new thoughts chased away old worries. She could hardly wait to see what tomorrow would bring—a quieter desk, certainly, and perhaps even a new friend.

Sally McNally was sure that the first day at her new school wasn't going to be much fun; she had been the "new kid" often enough to know. The trick, Sally decided, was to be so boring and quiet that the other kids would ignore her.

Not a bad plan—except that when Sally sat down at her desk, she squeaked.

It wasn't really Sally herself who squeaked. It was the seat assigned to Sally by the teacher, Mrs. Watt.

The first thing Sally noticed that morning was that Mrs. Watt seemed to like staring at new students. The first thing everyone else seemed to notice was the racket from Sally's rickety desk. It was hard to ignore the snaps, squawks, squeaks, and the high, thin squeals that pierced your eardrums and made your teeth ring even if you didn't wear braces.

Sally learned right away that even the slightest movement produced a symphony of noises. Just sitting and breathing was hard enough; raising her hand or writing on the desktop would be impossible!

"Good morning, boys and girls!" said the teacher.

Sally (and her desk) joined in chorus with the other kids. "Good—squeak!—morning—squawk!" Several kids began laughing, and Sally felt her face turning red.

"Calm down, everyone," said Mrs. Watt. "I'm sure you've already noticed the newest member of our class. Now she's going to stand up and tell us her name and where she's from.

I am? thought Sally. Can't I tell you later, Mrs. Watt, outside, away from my desk? she wanted to say. Please?

Sally didn't say that, of course; she decided to get it over with. She sighed (squeak! went the desk), smiled nervously (squawk!), and stood up shakily (squeal!).

"My name," she said, "is Sally McNally, and we just moved here from the north side of town."

"Thank you, Sally" said Mrs. Watt. "That's the way we like



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