



THE HEALTHY CHILD

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Swanson, Conti & Associates Releases

"THE HEALTHY CHILD!"

In a continued effort to help children and families experience more fulfilling lives, the clinicians at Swanson, Conti and Associates (SCA) have decided to release a quarterly newsletter under the title, "THE HEALTHY CHILD." The mission of this newsletter is to provide valuable information to those parents and professionals who can make a difference in the lives of children around them.

SCA plans on sending out its trial newsletter to pediatricians, psychologists, psychiatrists, educational therapists, schools and the human resource departments of various community corporations. At some point, SCA would even like to send the newsletter directly to the homes of interested parents. Parents who would like to be added to our mailing list should contact us on our website at www.SwansonContiAndAssociates.com.

In an effort to welcome and include community involvement, SCA invites other child-related professionals to contribute articles to this newsletter. If you are a professional in a child, adolescent or family-related field and wish to contribute an article or idea that you believe to be important, please contact us at (818) 986-9666.



Teach Your Child How to Express Feelings

Written by *Dr. David Swanson, Psychologist*
Swanson, Conti and Associates



So often as parents we get caught in the trap of telling our children *how not to express their feelings*. “Calm down,” “This behavior isn’t okay” and “Stop it or else...” are all statements with which most parents are familiar. The problem with these types of statements is that they do not teach our child how to solve the problem of expressing strong emotions. These statements only educate them on what not to do.

In my private practice, I have parents use a ‘script’ in order to teach their child how to express intense feelings.

The script I teach parents is, “I feel _____ because _____.” With this script, the child is instructed to insert an *emotion* in the first blank space and a *reason* in the second. An example of this script in action is a child who might respond to a parent by saying, “I feel mad because you won’t let me play videogames.”

Even though using the script may not result in your child getting what it is that he wants, following up with empathy and a statement recognizing your child’s effort may be reward enough for him to continue using the script in the future. An example of an appropriate parent response would be, “I understand that you’re upset about not being able to play videogames right now but I am really proud of you for being able to use your words.”

Talking to your child and recognizing his emotional growth or telling your spouse about his use of the script while he is within earshot is another way that you can praise your child for his efforts and insure that he will continue to express feelings appropriately in the future.

Notable Quotes...

“Healthy children will not fear life if their parents have enough integrity to not fear death.”

-Erik Erikson (Child Development Theorist)



Taming Aggression

Written by *Dr. Rachela Conti, Psychologist
Swanson, Conti and Associates*

Many children under six years of age have difficulty controlling their tempers. This is because they have not learned how to reason or compromise as a way of problem solving. Although these children can understand that stomping their feet on the ground, hitting, or throwing an object across the room is not acceptable when they are calm, these maladaptive behaviors may seem like a reasonable alternative when they are angry or frustrated. Teaching a child how to cope with these strong feelings is a responsibility that every parent realizes. It is important that these children learn how to problem solve effectively so that they can get along better with others.

Note: If your child is displaying aggressive behavior as a regular part of his day and it is disruptive to friends, family, and yourself, you may need to seek professional help in order to understand what may lie beneath your child's angry play.

If you are concerned about your child's aggressive behavior, consider the following suggestions:

Avoid modeling aggressive behavior: Children watch our behavior closely. This is why it is important to behave in a way that you would want your child to behave. When a parent complains that their child is a yeller, I often ask the parents, "who yells in this house aside from little Johnny." Not surprisingly, one parent confesses to yelling when under stress. Furthermore, hitting walls or throwing things teaches children how to behave aggressively when mad.

Supervise Play: When our children are playing with others we need to watch them play and correct aggressive behavior by replacing it with the socially appropriate way of getting along. Tell your child what he/she can do instead of hit. For example, he/she can ask an adult for help or say, "I'm not playing anymore." The child can also walk away from the stressful situation.

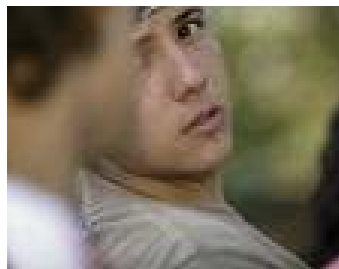
Point out biting and hitting when you see someone else doing it: At a time when your child is not engaging in aggressive behavior but another child is, explain how it is making the other child feel to be bitten or hit. This is done in order to help the child gain empathy by putting them in someone else's shoes.

Compliment getting along: Tell your child you like how he/she shares, takes turns, or asks for help. Always be specific about what you are praising.



Use Reprimands: There are three parts to a reprimand. First, you must give a command to Stop (Stop hitting!) Giving an alternative to hitting (When you are angry just walk away) and then provide a reason for stopping (Hitting hurts). If your child keeps up the aggressive behavior utilize time out.

Forget behavior when it's over: There is no reason to review past behavior. It just reminds the child how they can act in a negative manner.



Talking With Your Teen

*Written by Aaron Buckwalter, LMFT
Marriage Family Therapist
Swanson, Conti and Associates*

Hectic schedules can make it difficult to find the right time to talk to your children. Teenagers are especially busy with the need to juggle both a social and academic life. In the first of a two part series, I have created some tips to make it easier for parents to communicate with teens. Approaching your teen in the appropriate manner can make it easier to establish a more fulfilling interaction.

Don't wait until your teen approaches you. Many teens won't. Go to them and tell them you would like to talk.

Set a time to talk. Approaching them to talk might put them on the defensive and they may feel cornered. Tell your teen you would like to talk and discuss a time that works for both of you.

Eliminate distractions from the conversation. If you are meeting in the house, shut off the T.V. or radio. Meet in a room that won't have traffic coming through it. Give your child good eye contact and let them know that you are focused on the conversation because it is important to you.

Don't give ultimatums. Discuss your concerns and possible consequences to behaviors. Try to come to an agreement on what is appropriate. Once you lay down the ultimatum the conversation is over.

Share your feelings regarding the topic of the conversation. It is okay to disagree with your teen and let them know your feelings. However, be sure to listen to their disagreements. It is okay to be firm on your values and your hopes for your child, yet, make it clear that you don't stop loving them because they disagree.

Admit it when you are wrong. Say you are sorry if during the conversation you realize you were wrong. Your teen will respect you more and most likely listen to you more in the future.

Insufficient Sleep is a Modern Problem

Written by Mary M. Moebius, MD, FAPA

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From the ancient times until the light bulb was invented, we human beings slept from sundown to sun up.

What came first the proverbial “chicken” or the “egg”?

In children and adults with symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder, some contend sleep deprivation is the cause of ADD and sleep is the treatment. A more probable conclusion is that the attention and behavioral symptoms of ADD are improved when one is well slept. It is thought persons with ADD start to elevate the hormone (in charge of responding to light and dark) called Melatonin later in the evening than others. Evolutionarily, these individuals may have been guarding the caves at night for our ancestors who would in turn go out to hunt food for these other clan members who “slept in”.

Does someone you know snore, stop breathing or end up sideways, upside down, off the bed by morning? Multiple arousals from quality sleep at night might not even be known to a person unless someone else, kindly, points it out to them. This inefficient sleep leads to the body feeling tired, run down, lazy as well.



Anxiety before bed may lead to inability to fall asleep (especially in your child's own bed!) that then leads to a sleepy anxious child by day (doesn't want to go to school). Sound familiar?

Disrupted sleep or changes in sleep occur in depression and manic depressive bipolar illness as well as may lead someone in to these states. Extreme sleep deprivation shows that people suffer from hallucinations, paranoia, and false beliefs (delusions). They actually look Schizophrenic!

Medical concerns associated with sleep debt are: seizures, metabolic imbalances including elevations in serum lipids and the stress hormone Cortisol, weight gain, diabetes, growth problems, weakened immune systems, high blood pressure, and memory decline with heightened chances of dementia later in life. Did I leave out car accidents?

Sleep "training" begins from birth. However, if that's too late options are available. To be continued...



“Ask the Shrink...”

Response by Dr. David Swanson

Question: “Are there different types of parenting styles? And if so, what is the best approach for me to use with my child?”

- K.W., Calabasas

Dear, K.W.,

Indeed there are different parenting styles. The three most often referred to are the (1) Authoritative, (2) Authoritarian and (3) Permissive styles.

The **Authoritative Parent** can be firm and demanding of appropriate behavior on the part of their children. They can also be warm, rational and receptive. The Authoritative Parent places a value on verbal give and take but values discipline, self-reliance and uniqueness.

The Result: Children who are raised using this style of parenting tend to be independent, self-controlled and socially responsible. They are also exploitative and self-reliant.

The **Authoritarian Parent** exerts strict control and can be quite critical of the child's behavior and attitudes. These parents possess ironclad rules and often rely on physical forms of punishment. The Authoritarian parent allows for very little verbal give and takes and often seems less warm and more emotionally detached.

The Result: Children who are raised using this style appear withdrawn and distrustful of others. They often seem discontent as well.

The **Permissive Parent** is non-controlling and non-demanding. This parent rarely gives a punishment or uses any power they may have. The Permissive Parent usually relies on reasoning to instill change in their child's behavior and is often viewed by others as warm and accepting.



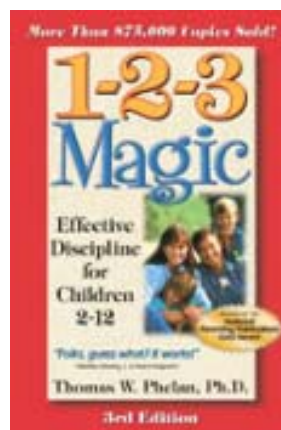
The Result: Children of the Permissive Parent are often seen as lacking in self-reliance. In addition, these children fail to learn boundaries observed by other children of their age and are perceived as lacking in self-control. Lastly, these children tend to lack exploitative tendencies.

So what does all of this mean? Although there are different styles of parenting, you need to act in accordance to what feels right in your heart. If not, your children will pick up on your reluctance and challenge your limit setting. In addition, fickleness on your part can lead to anxiety on your child's part. Assuming you have your child's best interest at heart and have an ability to know when you may have made a mistake, you should trust your instincts. Children do need firm limits and boundaries and they do need to know that consequences are not only fair but predictable. Consequences born out of parental anger or frustration are never a good idea.

I often tell parents in my private practice that we should always strive to see the good in our children. Offering them praise and encouragement can go a long way towards building self-esteem. The only time we will need to be punitive in our parenting style is when our children are not acting appropriately. During these times, we should strive to set a limit and follow through with either praise for responding to the limit or a punitive consequence for failing to respond.

I have added the name of a book below that I believe to be a good "basic parenting" primer. But if you continue to struggle, seeking out professional help from a child psychologist would be a good idea. Your child's pediatrician is always a good place start. Pediatricians are usually aware of the better referral in your community.

Recommended reading:



1, 2, 3 Magic by Thomas Phelan

Upcoming Events



SCA offers “Yellow Belt Group”

Dr. David Swanson has collaborated with Master Chang Ko of the US Tae Kwon Do Center in Porter Ranch in order to offer a “Yellow Belt Group” to children between the ages of 7 to 13. This group is designed to teach children discipline, self-control and respect. During this ten week group, participants will learn the various martial art skills and techniques needed to earn a Yellow Belt in Tae Kwon Do. Uniforms will be included to all group participants free of charge and the group will culminate in each active member earning a Yellow Belt. The group will also include three parent education classes led by Dr. Swanson. The first will explore and examine problems that each of the parents are experiencing with their children. The second will focus on providing strategies aimed at addressing the problems stated in the first meeting. And the third meeting will consist of a follow up meeting where parents will discuss progress and closing suggestions will be offered.

This group will be limited to six spots (participants). To learn more about this group or if you are interested in having your child be a part of this group, contact Dr. David Swanson at (818) 488-1000.

If you are a parent or professional and you are interested in receiving The Healthy Child, please fill out the following form and send it to:

**SCA
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Are you a: Parent, if so, how old are your children? _____

Professional – If so, what is your title? _____

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