

Parent Times

February 2020





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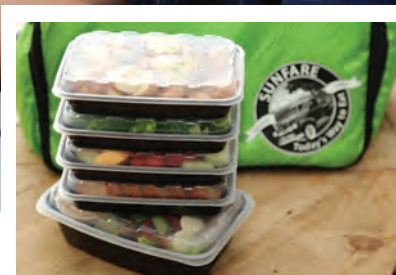
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President's Corner

Happy February!

As a nonprofit organization educating parents, the NCPG Board of Directors works hard to insure our organization runs smoothly and within budget, executes a social plan that provides our members an outlet to foster relationships and provides a foundation of tools to enable our members to parent effectively. Our Board members are vital to NCPG's success, and I want to take a moment to thank all of our 2019-2020 Board members for their tremendous time commitment and efforts to make NCPG such a successful organization! **THANK YOU ALL!**

February is already here (how did that happen!?) and that means registration for the 2020 school year is underway, it's almost Valentine's Day (which seems to have become a big deal in our house with all of the cute Valentine's cards), and I'm sure a lot of people are starting to think about and firm up summer vacation schedules. We still have 5 more classes left this curriculum year and a lot of fun to be had!

Speaking of fun, please mark your calendars, purchase tickets and book your sitter for our upcoming **"Glitz and Glam" Annual Gala on Saturday, March 7 at Arizona Country Club!** It's such a fun theme, and I'm already thinking about a fun outfit (aka sparkly jumpsuit) to wear! Watch for outfit inspiration ideas to be posted on our social media pages and buy tickets early to take advantage of our early bird price incentive! In addition, please join us this Sunday, February 9 for our **All Class Playdate at the Stomping Ground from 9:30 - 11:30am** and be sure to save the date for our **Spring Festival at All Saints Episcopal Day School on Saturday, April 4, 2020 from 10am - 12pm.**

As always, please reach out to me or any Board member if you are interested in getting involved with any committees. We have just completed interviews for **next year's Board**, and we will release our proposed Slate to the general membership for voting in early March. We sincerely appreciate your continued support and welcome your feedback throughout the year as we strive to make this our best year yet! Please reach out anytime - I am here as a resource and would love to hear from you anytime. Wishing you all much joy and happiness this year!

xo,

Megan Anderson Garvey
NCPG Board President
president@ncpgaz.org



The information provided by NCPG instructors should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

ncpg

north central parenting group



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NCPG is a non-profit, non-denominational organization providing classes to parents of infant to elementary school aged children.

www.ncpgaz.org  Like us on Facebook: [ncpgaz](https://www.facebook.com/ncpgaz)

Parent Times

Members, this monthly magazine is for your benefit, so we want to ensure our team is publishing content that is valuable, useful, informative, and fun! Please let us know if you have suggestions, comments, concerns, or any input that would help us to improve this publication. Shoot us an email at communications@ncpgaz.org. Thanks for your help!

Editors - Kelly Anderson & Colleen Fillion

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Front Cover - Carter and Karis Nelson

Photographer - Monica Stanley



Member to Meet

Rachel Patel

Class: 3A

Children & Ages: Priya, almost 3!

Spouse/Partners name: Nayan

How did you meet your spouse/partner: At work

Years married/together:
12 years together, 6 years married

Career or previous career: Nurse Anesthetist
(I put people to sleep for surgery in a nutshell)

Favorite family vacation spot?
Anywhere (almost). We love traveling!

Favorite adult book to read?
The last actual adult fiction book I read happened to be one of my favorite reads ever: "A Gentleman in Moscow".

What's your favorite thing to do with your child/children? Cuddling!

What is your favorite family tradition?
Meals together is one of my favorites

Best parenting advice given to you?
Make it silly whenever you can. A coworker who is a grandmother told me that and I'll be honest, it often works!

If you could give your pre-baby self advice, what would it be? Gaw, too many words to list on this page!

Who introduced you to NCPG and for how many years have you been a part of the group? A former member who was giving me a facial told me about NCPG

Best thing learned in NCPG? I'm doing okay!
Although, I've learned enumerable things and formed some amazing friendships.

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Why You Shouldn't Love Your Kids More Than Your Partner

By Belinda Luscombe, May 9, 2019, Editor-at-large at *TIME* and the author of *Marriageology: The Art and Science of Staying Together*.

Parents' love for their children can make them do peculiar things. Like staying up until 1 a.m. gluing glitter on a second-grade class project. Or driving 40 miles to deliver a single soccer cleat. Or, perhaps, bribing their teenagers' way into a fancy college. But one of the weirdest things parents do is love their children more than their partners.

Before you call child services, let me be clear: Of course you have to love your kids. Of course you have to put their needs first. But doing so is also a no-brainer. Children, with their urgent and often tricky-to-ascertain needs, easily attract devotion. Spouses don't need to be fed and dressed or have their tears dried and are nowhere near as cute.

Loving your kids is like going to school — you don't really have a choice. Loving your spouse is like going to college — it's up to you to show up and participate. So why do the harder work for the less adorable, more capable being in your life?

One reason, actually, is for the kids. Research strongly suggests that children whose parents love each other are much happier and more secure than those raised in a loveless environment. They have a model of not just what a relationship looks like but also of how people should treat each other.

Diary studies, in which parents log their day's activities each evening, have shown that mishandled tensions between a couple tend to spill over into parents' interactions with their kids, especially for fathers. Children whose parents are often hostile to each other blame themselves for the fighting and do worse at school, other research has found. In fact, a 2014 survey of 40,000 U.K. households revealed that adolescents were happiest overall when their mothers were happy with their relationships with their male partners. And this is for parents who stay together; the outcomes for kids of divorce — even in the days of conscious uncoupling — are, generally, darker. One of the best things you can do for your kids is love the heck out of your spouse.

If we ever knew this, we have forgotten. When Pew Research asked young people in 2010 whether kids or a

good marriage was more important for a happy life, kids won by a margin three times as big as when researchers asked the previous generation in 1997. But betting all your joy on offspring is a treacherously short-term strategy. Cuddly toddlers turn into teenagers, who greet any public display of warmth with revulsion, suspicion or sullenness. Then they leave. Grown children do not want to be the object of all your affection or the main repository for all your dreams, just as you never really wanted to hear their full toddler recaps of PAW Patrol. If you've done your job as parents, one day your home is mostly going to hold you, your partner and devices for sending your kids messages that they then ignore.

Research strongly suggests that children whose parents love each other are much happier and more secure than those raised in a loveless environment.

Parents can get so invested in the enterprise of child rearing, especially in these anxious helicoptery times, that it moves from a task they're undertaking as a team to the sole point of the team's existence. Some therapists say this is what's behind the doubling of the divorce rate among folks over 50 and tripling among those over 65 in the past 25 years: it's an empty-nest split.

Gerontologist Karl Pillemer of Cornell University, who interviewed 700 couples for his 2015 book *30 Lessons for Loving*, says one of his biggest discoveries was how dangerous "the middle-aged blur" of kids and activities and work was to people's relationships. "It was

amazing how few of them could remember a time they had spent alone with their partner — it was what they'd given up," he told me. "Over and over again people come back to consciousness at 50 or 55 and can't go to a restaurant and have a conversation."

The only way to prevent this sad metamorphosis is to remember that the kids are not the reason you got together; they're a very absorbing project you have undertaken with each other, like a three-dimensional, moving jigsaw puzzle that talks back and leaves its underwear in the bathroom. You don't want to focus on it so much that you can no longer figure out each other.

This essay is adapted from the forthcoming book *Marriageology: The Art and Science of Staying Together*.



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Birth Announcements

Help us welcome these new additions to our NCPG family!



Remington Wesley Pratte
11.20.2019
to Justin & Brittany Pratte
5 lbs 13 oz - 19"
Sibling - Owen Pratte



Brooklyn Sophia Telidis
11.21.2019
to Alex & Ashley Telidis
6 lbs 14 oz - 19.5"



Khloe Milan Kyle
12.02.2019
to Jason & Kaile Kyle
8 lbs - 21"

2019-2020 Calendar

Class Schedule

8:45 am	Nursery opens
9:00-9:40 am	Refreshments served
9:45*-11:30 am	Classes are held
*Teachers will start promptly at 9:45!	
11:45 am	Nursery closes
11:30 am-1:15 pm	Pre-Infant & Pre-Teen Class

Class Dates

January 22nd	April 8th **
February 5th **	April 22nd
February 19th	May 6th **
March 4th **	

**Parent Times magazine distributed.

Board Meeting Schedule

February 10th
March 2nd
April 6th
May 4th

Saint Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church

6715 N. Mockingbird Lane
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253



Board Announcements

Treasury

NCPG continues to offer scholarship opportunities for both membership and nursery dues.

For more information please contact: treasurer@ncpgaz.org

Membership

We still have space in a few of our classes for the 2020 year. Please contact membership@ncpgaz.org or check the website for availability!

Communications

WE WANT YOUR PICTURES!

Next month's theme for *Parent Times* is:

SPORTS!

Send us your high-resolution photos of kids playing sports or in their favorite sports team's gear for our photo spread – Who knows, your child might wind up on the cover!

Please send all birth announcements, snapshots of NCPG kids and parents, and professional photos to be considered for the front cover in hi-resolution to communications@ncpgaz.org.



Public Relations



Our private **NCPG Instagram** page [@ncpgaz](https://www.instagram.com/ncpgaz) is live! Please request to join this new account. Thanks!



Please continue to use the members only **NCPG Facebook Group** to ask questions, share advice, local events and deals, and to buy and sell. We just ask that we keep everything respectful and positive on the page. Please request to join the group and you will be approved: [ncpgaz](https://www.facebook.com/ncpgaz)

Childcare

Childcare signup starts the Thursday morning after class. Please book early as our childcare does fill up! Just a reminder that we can not accommodate day of class drop ins or refunds. If you have any questions, please contact Childcare via email: childcare@ncpgaz.org



Our nursery is a "nut free zone" so please be mindful when you pack snacks for your little ones.

For more information on our childcare please review on our website at www.ncpgaz.org/childcare

Fundraising

Our Annual Spring GALA will be returning to Arizona Country Club!
Saturday, March 7th. GLITZ & GLAM!!

- \$70 tickets online now through 1/31
- \$80 in Feb
- And winning class before 2/21 wins \$250 gift card for Pre-Party!!

Get your tickets SOON!!

DJ, Dancing, Drinks, Dinner and of course an Amazing Auction Selection!!

Education: Classroom Norms

Be Respectful:

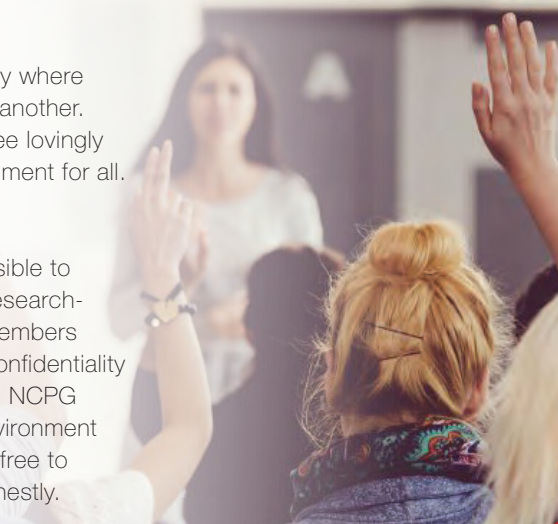
Be respectful to yourself, others and the learning environment. This includes keeping cell phone use to a minimum and having no food or drinks in the classroom (water is allowed).

Be Kind:

NCPG is a community where parents support one another. Remember to disagree lovingly so it is a safe environment for all.

Be Responsible:

Teachers are responsible to create data driven, research-based lessons. All members are responsible for confidentiality within the classroom. NCPG believes in a safe environment where members feel free to share openly and honestly.



Special Events

All-Class Playdate Feb 9th, 9:30-11:30

The Stomping Ground in Scottsdale

Kids can jump, slide, ride bikes at this indoor play area! There is even a dedicated Toddler Zone! Hope to see you all there!

Spring Gala: GLITZ & GLAM Saturday, March 7th

AZ Country Club

\$70 tickets online NOW, \$80 in Feb
Winning class by 2/21 wins \$250 GC for Preparty Festivities. Get your tickets TODAY for DJ, dancing, drinks, dinner and of course the AMAZING NCPG Auction!!!



Spring Festival April 4th, 10-12pm!

All Saints' Episcopal School

Save the date... more details to follow!



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www.kidtastics.com/npcg
480-994-5437

Dear NCPG,

My name is Laurie Ball, I am a fellow NCPG member and I own a company called Kidtastics that has been teaching kids to swim since 2008. We have taught many NCPG kids many who are now all grown-up! The bonds we have created with the families of NCPG puts a huge smile on my face so thank you for all your support. As new families enter, I want to give you information about Kidtastics, our methods and how to get your kids safe around water.

I believe informed choices are the best ones. So please know that the number 1 case of unintentional death in children ages 1-4 is drowning (CDC). Now is the time to make sure your kids are safe and we can help!

I personally have taught over a 2,000 kids to swim and my company has taught over 20,000 kids water safety and swimming. Working with so many kids has helped me develop a proven swim program that teaches kids to swim based on their strengths and development level. Each of our students receives a customized program specially made just for them. It is taught by one of our 15 certified instructors who come to your home and teach in your pool. We offer wonderful customer service and give you the personal attention large swim programs cannot offer.

Keep in mind, many parents think "well it's too early for my kid to start, he/she is only 1!". This statement is absolutely false. I recommend parents with kids who are 6 months old start in the water with professional instruction. However, it is never too late to start. Give Kidtastics two weeks with your child and I guarantee you will be amazed with the results!

Remember, no matter which swim program you choose, frequency and repetition is the secret sauce to success. A once or twice a week program simply will not produce results. Getting the kids instruction every day in short bursts is what propels them to learn more and become amazing swimmers sooner. We offer a crash course of 4 days for 2 weeks that will progress your child to the next swim level.

Now is the time to get your kids safe around water! We hope you will choose Kidtastics for your kids. Remember to ask for the NCPG member discount by April 20th. Enrollment starts now and classes fill up quickly. Please complete your form at kidtastics.com/swim or email us at sofun@kidtastics.com to secure your lessons for this season.

Happy swimming!

Laurie



*Holiday
Cheer!*

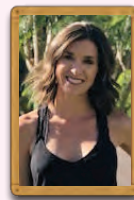




Temper Tantrums



Monique



Kristin



Joan

How do you handle your children's temper tantrum when out in public?

Monique Nelson (Pre-Infant & Newborn)

Keep your cool. Don't give into the tantrum. If needed take it out side or in to the car for a cooling off period. Look at what might have triggered this tantrum. Was this an overscheduled day, were they overtired. There is usually a reason behind it that if you figure it out you can avoid it next time.

Kristin Klecka (2B)

There is nothing worse than experiencing your child screaming at the top of their lungs in public. When this

happens, the key is to stay as calm as possible. When your child sees you lose your cool they know they are winning. Calmly get down to their level, listen to them with compassion and help them feel heard. Lastly, and this is the most important step, ask them if they would like a hug. If this doesn't work, walk them outside and allow them to finish their temper tantrum in the car. The key is to not give in to what they are wanting or else this behavior will happen over and over and over again!

Joan Sarin (School B)

Waiting is a good skill for the parent - but not an easy one! And keeping calm. One of the best tips I've heard was for the parent to say "Good stopping!" as soon as the child gains even a bit of emotional control. In the meantime, deep breathing and self-compassion are important not only for yourself, but to model for the child. If you can have self-compassion, then you're likely to have more compassion for them in these times of emotional overwhelm.:



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Raising Children with a Growth Mindset

Article courtesy of Christ Church School.

"I can't do it!" "I'm not smart enough!" "I give up!" At some point, you have likely heard your child utter such phrases of defeat when faced with a challenge. Although their development will be filled with difficulties and triumphs, there are practices you can implement that will strengthen their resolve, and help them perceive obstacles as motivators rather than deterrents.

These practices stem from a framework called **Growth Mindset**. Pioneered by Carol Dweck, Stanford University professor, Yale PhD graduate, and writer of *The New Psychology of Success*, this concept has become quite popular among parents and educators alike. The Mindset Scholars Network defines growth mindset as such:

A growth mindset is the belief that intelligence can be developed. Students with a growth mindset understand they can get smarter through hard work, the use of effective strategies, and help from others when needed. It is contrasted with a fixed mindset: the belief that intelligence is a fixed trait that is set in stone at birth.

Despite the reality that many individuals of all ages have developed fixed mindsets, it is important to know that one's mindset can shift. As a parent, there are a number of strategies you can use to help foster a growth mindset in your child. At right are some tips and suggestions you can start using today!

At Christ Church School, we are passionate about Growth Mindset and have seen how influential this framework can be on a child's academic achievement and social-emotional development. Likewise, implementing growth mindset has had a profound impact on the classroom culture from our Twos classes through 4th Grade. Students are learning to celebrate mistakes, seek out opportunities for challenges, and accept that everyone is performing at a pace that feels right for them.

If you would like to learn more about what we do at Christ Church School, we invite you to give us a call at 602-381-9906, or visit our website at ccsaz.org to schedule a tour. We look forward to hearing from you!



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Every Child Should What Know What it Feels Like To Dance!

Movement, Music and the Value of Tutu School, By Caroline Taylor, owner Tutu School Arcadia

We want the best for our children. These days parents have so many options for extra-curricular activities...we run our littles here and there trying to give them the best start. We expose them to different experiences to help shape these beautiful little beings, setting them up for a fulfilling and successful life ahead. We eagerly read about the developmental benefits of different activities and time and again, music and dance rise to the top as fundamental to childhood development at the earliest ages.

Much research has been done substantiating the immense benefits of exposing young children to music and dance. Benefits include:

- Group participation
- Social skills
- Express emotions
- Enhance self concept
- Refine listening skills noticing changes in tempo or pitch
- Awareness of movement and body positions
- Creativity, imagination
- Learn new words and concepts
- Explore cause and effect
- Develop large and small motor skills
- Improve balance, rhythm, coordination through dance and movement

Source: *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Children* by Diane Trister Dodge and Laura J. Colker (abbreviated)

I, myself, was looking for activities for my young daughter when we lived in northern California. Vivienne was 18 months old when we discovered Tutu School. What drew me to the school was not only the beautiful studio with its pastel colors, tutus and chandeliers, but that it combined so much of what I was looking for into one experience. Vivienne learned about ballet while moving her body – she used her imagination to fly like a butterfly to the beach – the room was filled with the music of great composers – she learned the stories of the classical ballets. This was a multi-sensory experience that encouraged her development on multiple levels. What a value to get all of these benefits in one class!

Also, as a busy mother, attending class with my daughter was such a gift. I had the ability to entirely devote myself to being in the moment with her without distraction, to watch her and share in her learning and curiosity, to help her point and flex her little feet, to see the sparkle in her eyes as she twirled around with pure glee, and to feel the essence of childhood filling the room. Those are some of my most treasured memories.

When we relocated to Phoenix, I couldn't find a studio that focused specifically on the tiniest dancer, so I embarked on bringing Tutu School to Phoenix and opened Tutu School Arcadia in October 2018.

Tutu School focuses specifically on little dancers (18 months to 8 years), which ensures that everything — from the tailored age-appropriate curriculum and teacher training to the studio design and the class schedule — focuses only on their needs. We believe "Every Child Should Know What It Feels Like to Dance." That is the founding principle of Tutu School. We believe that motor skill development is infinitely enhanced by Tchaikovsky and Bach, that young imaginations benefit immensely from exploring the enchanted worlds of swans and sugar plums, that dancing out stories exercises little bodies and that twirling should be a fundamental part of any childhood. While laying the earliest foundation of ballet technique, we always complement our class work with fun, imaginative activities that keep young dancers captivated, engaged, and utterly in love with ballet.

Whatever dreams they end up dreaming, the skills young dancers develop with us – confidence, coordination, creativity to name a few – will help them to chase them. Whether their favorite part of class is to blast – movement and music are gifts that should be shared with all children.

Come in and see what all the magic is about! Schedule your free trial at tutuschoolarcadia.com. **NCPG members receive 50% off your first month.**

Happy twirling!

Every Jewel Needs a Chance to Shine.

Schmitt Jewelers is proud to support the North Central Parenting Group who provides parents a forum for the exchange of ideas about effective child rearing.



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An illustration depicting a family in a state of conflict. In the background, a man and a woman are shown in profile, facing each other with expressions of anger and shouting. The woman has her mouth wide open as if yelling, and the man is also shouting. In the foreground, a young girl with brown hair and a worried expression is looking up at them. She has her hand near her mouth, as if she is about to cry or is in shock. The overall color palette is warm, with yellows, oranges, and reds, suggesting a heated and emotionally charged atmosphere.

WHAT HAPPENS TO KIDS WHEN PARENTS FIGHT

Conflict between parents is inevitable—but it doesn't have to hurt kids. Here's how to turn a disagreement into a positive lesson.

By Diana Divecha

When I was a child, my parents' fights could suck the oxygen out of a room. My mother verbally lashed my father, smashed jam jars, and made outlandish threats. Her outbursts froze me in my tracks. When my father fled to work, the garage, or the woods, I felt unprotected.

"Children are like emotional Geiger counters," says E. Mark Cummings, psychologist at Notre Dame University, who, along with colleagues, has published hundreds of papers over twenty years on the subject. Kids pay close attention to their parents' emotions for information about how safe they are in the family, Cummings says. When parents are destructive, the collateral damage to kids can last a lifetime.

My experience led me to approach marriage and parenthood with more than a little caution. As a developmental psychologist I knew that marital quarrelling was inevitable. According to family therapist Sheri Glucoft Wong, of Berkeley, California, just having children creates more conflicts, even for couples who were doing well before they became parents. "When kids show up, there's less time to get more done," she says. "All of a sudden you're not as patient, not as flexible, and it feels like there's more at stake."

But I also knew that there had to be a better way to handle conflict than the one I grew up with. When my husband and I decided to have children, I resolved never to fight in front of them. "Conflict is a normal part of everyday experience, so it's not whether parents fight that is important," says Cummings. "It's how the conflict is expressed and resolved, and especially how it makes children feel, that has important consequences for children."

Watching some kinds of conflicts can even be good for kids—when children see their parents resolve difficult problems, Cummings says, they can grow up better off.

WHAT IS DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT?

In their book *Marital Conflict and Children: An Emotional Security Perspective*, Cummings and colleague Patrick

Davies at the University of Rochester identify the kinds of destructive tactics that parents use with each other that harm children:

VERBAL AGGRESSION

Like name-calling, insults, and threats of abandonment;

PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

Like hitting and pushing;

SILENT TACTICS

Like avoidance, walking out, sulking, or withdrawing;

CAPITULATION

Giving in that might look like a solution but isn't a true one.

When parents repeatedly use hostile strategies with each other, some children can become distraught, worried, anxious, and hopeless. Others may react outwardly with anger, becoming aggressive and developing behavior problems at home and at school. Children can develop sleep disturbances and health problems like headaches and stomachaches, or they may get sick frequently. Their stress can interfere with their ability to pay attention, which creates learning and academic problems at school. Most children raised in environments of destructive conflict have problems forming healthy, balanced relationships with their peers. Even sibling relationships are adversely affected—they tend to go to extremes, becoming overinvolved and overprotective of each other, or distant and disengaged.

Some research suggests that children as young as six months register their parents' distress. Studies that follow children over a long period of time show that children who were insecure in kindergarten because of their parents' conflicts were more likely to have adjustment problems in the seventh grade. A recent study showed that even 19-year-olds remained sensitive to parental conflict. Contrary to what one might hope, "Kids don't get used to it," says Cummings.

In a remarkable 20-year-old study of parental conflict

and children's stress, anthropologists Mark Flinn and Barry England analyzed samples of the stress hormone cortisol, taken from children in an entire village on the east coast of the island of Dominica in the Caribbean. Children who lived with parents who constantly quarreled had higher average cortisol levels than children who lived in more peaceful families. As a result, they frequently became tired and ill, they played less, and slept poorly. Overall, children did not ever habituate, or "get used to," the family stress. In contrast, when children experienced particularly calm or affectionate contact, their cortisol decreased.

More recent studies show that while some children's cortisol spikes, other children's cortisol remains abnormally low and blunted, and these different cortisol patterns seem to be associated with different kinds of behavioral problems in middle childhood. Other physiological regulatory systems can become damaged as well, such as the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches of the autonomic nervous system—these help us respond to a perceived threat but are also the "brakes" that rebalance and calm us.

In 2002, researchers Rena Repetti, Shelley Taylor, and Teresa Seeman at UCLA looked at 47 studies that linked children's experiences in risky family environments to later issues in adulthood. They found that those who grew up in homes with high levels of conflict had more physical health problems, emotional problems, and social problems later in life compared to control groups. As adults, they were more likely to report vascular and immune problems, depression and emotional reactivity, substance dependency, loneliness, and problems with intimacy.

AVOIDING CONFLICT IS NOT A SOLUTION

Some parents, knowing how destructive conflict can be, may think that they can avoid affecting their children by giving in, or capitulating, in order to end an argument. But that's not an effective tactic. "We did a study on that," Cummings said. According to parents' records of their fights at home and their children's reactions,

kids' emotional responses to capitulation are "not positive." Nonverbal anger and "stonewalling"—refusing to communicate or cooperate—are especially problematic.

"Our studies have shown that the long-term effects of parental withdrawal are actually more disturbing to kids' adjustment [than open conflict]," says Cummings. Why? "Kids understand hostility," he explains. "It tells them what's going on and they can work with that. But when parents withdraw and become emotionally unavailable, kids don't know what's going on. They just know things are wrong. We're seeing over time, that parental withdrawal is actually a worse trajectory for kids. And it's harder on marital relationships too."

Kids are sophisticated conflict analysts; the degree to which they detect emotion is much more refined than parents might guess. "When parents go behind closed doors and come out acting like they worked it out, the kids can detect that," says Cummings. They'll see you're pretending. And pretending is actually worse in some ways. As a couple, you can't resolve a fight you're not acknowledging you're having. Kids will know it, you'll know it, but nothing will be made in terms of progress."

On the other hand, he says, "When parents go behind closed doors and are not angry when they come out, the kids infer that things are worked out. Kids can tell the difference between a resolution that's been forced versus one that's resolved with positive emotion, and it matters."

HOW TO MAKE CONFLICT WORK

"Some types of conflicts are not disturbing to kids, and kids actually benefit from it," says Cummings. When parents have mild to moderate conflict that involves support and compromise and positive emotions, children develop better social skills and self-esteem, enjoy increased emotional security, develop better relationships with parents, do better in school and have fewer psychological problems.

"When kids witness a fight and see the parents resolving it, they're actually happier than they were before

they saw it," says Cummings. "It reassures kids that parents can work things through. We know this by the feelings they show, what they say, and their behavior—they run off and play. Constructive conflict is associated with better outcomes over time." Children feel more emotionally secure, their internal resources are freed up for positive developmental growth, and their own pro-social behavior toward others is enhanced. In fact, many child behavior problems can be solved not by focusing on the child, or even the parent-child relationship, but simply by improving the quality of the parents' relationship alone, which strengthens children's emotional security.


Even if parents don't completely resolve the problem but find a partial solution, kids will do fine. In fact, their distress seems to go down in proportion to their parents' ability to resolve things constructively. "Compromise is best, but we have a whole lot of studies that show that kids benefit from any progress toward resolution," says Cummings.


Both Cummings and Glucoft Wong agree that children can actually benefit from conflict—if parents manage it well. "Parents should model real life...at its best," says Glucoft Wong. "Let them overhear how people work things out and negotiate and compromise."

However, both also agree that some content is best kept private. Discussions about sex or other tender issues are more respectfully conducted without an audience. Glucoft Wong encourages parents to get the help they need to learn to communicate better—from parenting programs, from books, or from a therapist. My own parents' conflict no longer has the hold on me that it once did, thanks to careful work and a loving marriage of my own of thirty years. Our two daughters are now in their twenties and secure in their own loving partnerships, and I hope that the lessons of their childhood hold. When they were preschoolers and interrupted our disagreements with concern, my husband and I would smile and reassure them with our special code: I held my fingers an inch apart and reminded them that the fight was this big, but that the love was this big—and I held my arms wide open.



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Craft: Hand Lilies & Foot Tulips

Written by: Andrea Mulder-Slater

www.kinderart.com/art-lessons/crafts/hand-lilies-and-foot-tulips

Girls and boys of all ages will enjoy making these flowers (lilies and tulips) because it involves their own body parts!

What You Need:

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Pipe Cleaners

What You Do:

1. Trace hands (and feet) on construction paper.
2. Cut out the hand and foot shapes.
3. Curl the hands and feet into flowers and tape the ends.
4. Stick a pipe cleaner through each “flower” and tie a bead at the end to prevent the pipe cleaner from slipping out.



Recipe: Brownie Pops for Valentines

INGREDIENTS

- a box of Pillsbury Chocolate Fudge brownie mix
- a canister of Pillsbury Creamy Supreme Chocolate Fudge frosting
- a bag of bright pink melting chips
- sweet little heart shaped sprinkles

You can serve them cake pop style on a stick or call them “brownie truffles” and serve them in mini cupcake wrappers.

WHAT TO DO:

1. To make the brownie pops, you simply bake up the pan of Pillsbury brownies according to the box instructions. I did it in an 8x8 baking dish to decrease the surface area of the crunchy edges and give me as much of the cakey middle part as possible.
2. When the brownies have cooled enough to handle, run a knife around the edge of the pan and release the whole brownie into a large mixing bowl. I highly recommend trimming the 4 corners to remove the crunchiest bit of the edge.
3. Then spoon in about half of the container of frosting and mix together with the brownies until completely combined.
4. I used a table spoon to scoop and then roll just smaller than golf ball sized balls of brownie dough. I lined them up on a lined baking sheet and placed them in the freezer to completely chill and harden. I don't recommend freezing them completely if you plan to use the pop sticks, you won't be able to insert them!
5. When I was ready to coat the pops, I put the pink melting chips in a microwave safe bowl and heat them for 1 minute on 50% power. Stir the chips and then heat again in 30 second increments on 50% power, mixing after each burst until smooth.
6. Insert the pop stick, dip and swirl in the pink chocolate letting the excess run back into the bowl, sprinkle with hearts for garnish! That's it!

It's a great project for the kids to help with! Let them help with rolling the balls and dipping the final pops. Or assign your youngest to sprinkle duty!! Since we didn't need that entire pan of brownies, reserve many of the brownie balls for future dipping. Once they are fully frozen, wrap them in waxed paper and thaw out what's needed. Maybe festive green ones for around St. Patrick's Day!



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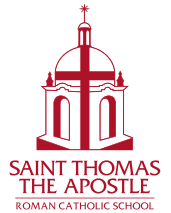
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