

The Childhood Scene



A regional newsletter for early childhood professionals, parents and the community provided by
Child Care Resource & Referral Region 13 serving Chatham, Harnett, Johnston, Lee and Wayne Counties

Explaining World Tragedy to Children

By Thomas Haller and Chick Moorman

Your six-year-old has just seen video footage of devastating destruction including collapsed buildings, crushed cars, and homes under water, all vivid images resulting from the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Your teen sits transfixed watching the numbers of dead and injured mount. At the dinner table your fifth grader asks, “Can anything like that happen to us, Dad?”

How is a parent to respond under such circumstances? What should you say? What should you do? How do you deal with your children’s fears without increasing them? Is it possible to reassure them at a time when you, yourself, are horrified by the images of intense pain and grief you see on the faces of parents halfway around the world?

Yes, you feel empathy for the survivors who have lost loved ones, homes, and jobs. Yes, you are extremely grateful that your children are safe in your comfortable home as the horrific images continue to flow from your television screen. And, yes, you can use

this tragic situation to help your children learn lessons of love and compassion and about the indestructible nature of the human spirit.

Once children have seen the images of tragedy and suffering, debriefing is essential— the sooner the better. By debriefing, we mean answering their questions, providing information, asking questions, and reflecting their feelings.

Provide the scientific information they’re asking for. Tell your children in age-appropriate language what you know about how nature can create an earthquake, tidal wave, tornado, hurricane, or volcanic eruption. Keep this part factual. You can even use books or magazines to assist you in providing information.

Tell your children the effects of the natural disaster. Talk about the destruction that was created by nature’s fury. This is a good time to make the connection between cause and effect. Limit what you say to what your children actually saw on TV, and provide answers to their directly asked questions. Too much information at this point can increase their fright and worry. The goal is to be brief and accurate and to provide them with the specific

Continued on Page 2

Region 13 Partners



What’s Inside This Issue?

Infant and Toddler Time	3
The School Age Corner	4
Dear Miss Challenge	6
Special Days To Celebrate	8



Promoting Healthy Social ... Continued from Page 1

information they're looking for. If you fail to give them information, if you fail to debrief, children's brains will fill in the blanks. Better to fill in those gaps yourself with factual knowledge than to have your children fill them with their imaginations.

Concentrate on feelings. Your children will be seeing a wide range of feelings expressed during TV coverage of such events. They will see sadness, panic, grief, relief, joy, depression, frustration and desperation. As a result, they will personally experience unexpressed and often unrecognized feelings.

When you sense they are feeling empathy, sadness, or pain, say so. Tell them, "You seem deeply saddened about this," or "you sound afraid that this might happen to us." Children are starving for feeling recognition and this is a great time to supply it.

When strong emotion is shown on TV, honor it by talking about it. Acknowledge the extreme sadness and grief that people are experiencing. Refrain from being an adult who ignores the grief of others and refuses to acknowledge it. Do not treat hurting human beings as if they are invisible. Talk about your own feelings. Tell your children about the sympathy and pain you feel for the losses others are suffering. Allow your children to hear and see you express feelings. By doing so, you're helping them acquire a feeling vocabulary they can use their entire lives.

When you communicate your own feelings and honor the feelings of your children for people around the world, you teach them important lessons about the human condition. You help them appreciate how we are all more alike than different. You help them see that we are all connected, no matter how distant we seem. You help them learn that we are all one.

As you go through this debriefing process, encourage your children to look for the helpers. Helpers always come. There are always people

who step forth to help. In the case of a major tragedy, there will be many helpers playing out a variety of roles. Point them out to your children. Then, when small problems occur in their own lives, they will have learned to look for the helpers. There are helpers at school, on the playground, in the mall, and on the highway when our car breaks down. Learn to look for helpers and they will be more likely to show up when you need them.

Discuss with your children how you as a family can be helpers during this tragedy. Perhaps you can send money, give blood, say prayers, send love, or call the Red Cross to see what kinds of items you can donate. Choose one or more ways to be helpers as a family and allow your children to participate in implementing those choices with you. Pray together. Let them observe as you give blood. Take them shopping for the toiletry items needed by the Red Cross. Let them help you address the envelope that sends the check. Get them involved in the process of being a helper. Let them see and be love in action.

The scope and depth of the pain and heartache of catastrophic tragedies are not measurable. Yet, those horrific events can serve a useful purpose if we use them to help our children learn about feelings, look for the helpers, and appreciate the connectedness of all human beings and the beauty of one heart reaching out to another across continents. We can help them learn that around the world is a long way away, yet still very much a part of our neighborhood.

Chick Moorman and Thomas Haller are the authors of *Parent Talk Essentials: How to Talk to Kids about Divorce, Sex, Money, School, and Being Responsible in Today's World*. They are two of the world's foremost authorities on raising responsible, caring, confident children. For more information on how they can help you or your group meet your parenting needs, visit their websites, www.thomashaller.com or www.chickmoorman.com.

Article reprinted with permission.



Infant and Toddler Time

But I'm Not Sorry!

How many times have you heard yourself or someone else telling a toddler to say "I'm sorry"? We all want to teach our toddlers to use good manners, to be friendly and social, but making them say, "I'm sorry" too early is a useless endeavor.

In order to be truly sorry for something s/he did, the toddler must have the ability to feel empathy towards others. Empathy requires that a child be able to imagine how someone else feels. Toddlers and twos are still in the 'all about me' stage. Threes and fours are beginning to learn turn taking and playing together. Some fives and sixes are capable of putting themselves in another child's place, but this skill isn't fully developed until age 7 or 8.

Some very young children do show empathy. For example, they may pat a crying child's back, give a hug to a child who is hurt or offer a toy to another child who had one taken away. These are opportunities to encourage children for their caring behavior. You can say "You gave Sam a hug because he was sad when his Mommy left" or "You helped Sarah feel better when she fell down." Helping the toddler to see how they helped someone else sets the stage for them being able to put themselves in someone else's shoes. This is a much better strategy than forcing them to apologize when they cause another child distress or unhappiness. Forcing an apology will not stop them from repeating the hurtful behavior.

When we model empathy and encourage toddlers to see the consequences of their behavior, we will put them on the path towards truly being able to say, "I'm sorry."

Author: Nancy Bartlett, Region 14 Infant Toddler Specialist.

Source: Shapiro, Lawrence E. (1977). *How to Raise a Child With a High EQ*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher.

Attention Readers!

Due to budget constraints, a smaller writing staff, etc., *The Childhood Scene* will be printed less frequently and after this issue will appear in a shorter format.

With this issue we begin publication on a *quarterly* basis.

We are also in the planning phase of an on-line training calendar.

So that we can keep you better posted on important items, please contact your CCR&R and give them your email address!





The School Age Corner

Put Time into Fostering Relationships

“An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Building a positive relationship with the families of the children in your after-school program is an ongoing process that should be fostered throughout the year.

Roberta L. Newman, author of *Building Relationships with Parents and Families in School-Age Programs*, writes that an important part of building these relationships is encouraging families to offer feedback and ideas throughout the year.

Some ideas for doing this are:

- Informal daily conversations: During informal exchanges, ask for ideas and suggestions whenever possible. Some programs assign a staff member to greet parents and families when they arrive at the end of the day. This person can offer assistance and listen to suggestions. If you implement this procedure, be sure to let parents and families know which staff member has this responsibility.
- Phone surveys: Develop a list of brief, open-ended questions and solicit suggestions and opinions about various aspects of your program. Let parents and families know that you will be doing this and ask them to let you know if they would prefer not to participate. If your

program has a Web page or you communicate with parents through e-mail, surveys can be set up in those formats, too.

- Parent/family suggestion box: Place this box near a spot that is visible and accessible to parents and families. Invite children to help you decorate the box. Post a brief, friendly notice inviting suggestions and letting parents and families know that they do not have to sign their suggestions. However, indicate that it is easier to follow up on suggestions if you can chat with the person who made it and possibly work together to implement the suggestion if possible.

Reprinted with permission from School Age Notes. To order *Building Relationships with Parents and Families* and other proven and practical resources, you may visit www.schoolagenotes.com or phone: 1-800-410-8780.

It's August— Finish With a Flourish!

It's August; it's hot. The half-way mark of Summer has passed and children and their providers alike are thinking about school schedules again. This is the time when everyone needs a little pick me up—perhaps the summer break to the beach or the mountains has come and gone, and maybe there was no get-away at all this year. Either way, this is the time when providers, despite flagging spirits or energy, need to dig deep to keep the overall positive energy of your

Continued on Page 5



The School Age Corner

Cont'd from Page 4

program up for the last little bit of summer. Hopefully a good time has been had by all and you will want to finish with a flourish to keep the summer memories good and long-lasting ones.

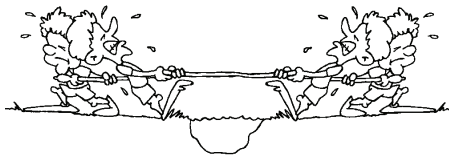
August Activity Ideas

- Make a **scrapbook of memories** by punching holes in paper children have painted and use for the “book covers,” binding sheets of paper that can hold hand drawn pictures of the favorite things they did or actual pictures or postcards. Save a page or two for autographs of friends, tie it off with ribbon or yarn and decorate with glitter, beads or whatever suits their personality. As in all projects, be sure you have ample materials to support the activity.
- Is a concrete surface available? Take buckets of water and paintbrushes and “paint” designs. You can call it **Japanese brush painting** where designs are not permanent but the enjoyment is found in the process. Talk about the science of evaporating (disappearing) water! Or try using sponges — and remember how much kids love water play! It’s OK to get wet — they will dry!
- **Take a pretend camping trip!** All you need is some rope and sheets. Sit around your new camp and tell ghost stories or sing camp songs.
- **Paint Smiley Faces!** It’s proven that if you smile, even if you don’t feel like it, it actually makes you happier! Paint smiley faces on paper plates using black and yellow and display them in a “happy gallery.” For snack cut apple smiles (quarters) and let the children spread them with peanut butter—add small marshmallows for the teeth!
- **End of summer medals**—Have an end-of-summer award ceremony giving out “medals” for certain accomplishments, letting the kids make them and then brainstorm on awards to be given, e.g., “Funniest Joke Teller,” “Most Helpful,” etc. To make the medals, cut out a 3” diameter cardboard circle and cover it with foil. Decorate with small beads, etc., and use a permanent marker to write in the award. Tie ribbons through a hole for wearing around their necks.
- **Dream Catchers**—August 28 is *Dream Day*. The Native Americans made dream catchers that hang near beds for bad dreams to get caught before they reach the sleeping person and for the good ones to float on through. You will need paper plates, yarn, feathers, beads, masking tape, a hole punch, and scissors. Draw a circle on the inside of the plate rim and cut the center out, leaving the ring. Punch 16 holes around the ring. Wrapping masking tape around the end of the yarn, create a crisscross “web” to fill the holes, leaving the center open. Take another 8” piece of yarn, loop it through the bottom hole, evening up the ends, and tie on beads and feathers. Hang near the bed.
- **Make a dream journal** by using plain paper and binding pages together. Let the kids decorate their journals and encourage them to write down their dreams.

Submitted by Jan Waugh
Region 13 School Age Specialist



Dear Miss Challenge:



Dear Miss Challenge,

I teach four year olds in a large child care program and in just a few more days many of my students will be transitioning into kindergarten. I feel that most of my students are definitely ready. They know their colors, their numbers, and their alphabet. Most can write their name and many can write and spell other words. Two have actually begun to read. But there are approximately three or four that really do not have these skills, they still confuse their colors, numbers, and alphabet. I feel that I have failed these children and to be perfectly honest I think their kindergarten teacher will think poorly of me. Should I talk with these parents about holding these children back or will they catch up?

Sincerely,
Ready Or Not?

Dear Ready Or Not,

Watching young fours mature into young fives and watching them transition into "big" school is quite an experience. Sometimes, like with our own children, it is difficult to let them go. Perhaps they have been in your program since infancy or for several years. They know all the teachers. They feel loved and safe. It is

difficult imagining them stepping onto that school bus and into that school building, so tiny compared to those 11 year olds. But hopefully, most will take those steps into a kindergarten classroom that is ready to meet each child at their individual level.

Your brief letter doesn't really give me enough information to know whether you should talk with these children's parents about "holding their children back." I hope that you and the children's parents have met on an on-going basis and that you have reviewed the goals (both academic and developmental), and that you have shared with the parents samples of their children's progress. Regular meetings allow you to help the parent see where their child is and to strategize ways to work together. According to your brief letter, the academic goals seem to be the major focus of your concerns. The skill sets that kindergarten teachers are looking for are not necessarily academic. According to a survey done by Scholastic magazine with Kindergarten teachers across the USA, the top readiness skills that they looked for were:

Enthusiasm toward learning -

Does the child approach learning enthusiastically? Is she eager to explore and discover? Does she ask questions, take initiative, and persist when tasks are difficult?

Solid oral-language skills -

Children need wide background knowledge about their world and the words to go with it. What information

Continued on Page 7



Continued from Page 6

can they share? What details will they include? Real or fantasy, can they tell you a story?

The ability to listen -

Kindergarten students must be able to concentrate on what the teacher is saying, listen carefully for directions, and tune in to the sounds in letters and words.

The desire to be independent -

It is important for kindergarteners to have good self-help skills, such as going to the bathroom and washing hands, blowing noses and covering mouths, and following 2-step directions such as "take off your coat and hang it in the cubby."

The ability to play well with others -

Social skills such as sharing, compromising, turn-taking and problem-solving are very important, though children are still expected to have some problems with this.

Strong fine-motor skills -

Students hands should be strong enough to master coloring, cutting, pasting, and holding a pencil.

Basic letter and number recognition -

Kindergarten teachers believe that it is their responsibility to teach children letter sounds and how to write, but they do hope most students can recognize **most** letters by sight, children can count to **10**, can identify numbers **1-5**, and know **some** shapes and colors.¹

The children, whom you have concerns about, may have issues in several of these

areas. If so, then I hope that there have been ongoing discussions with the parents to try to address these issues. As you can see, the expectations under basic letter and number recognition are not as high as perhaps you have set in your four year old classroom. Certainly, problems in **many** of these areas might be reasons for you to be concerned about kindergarten success. It is essential to look at the "whole child" and not just focus on one specific area such as academics. Many parents decide to delay their child's entry into kindergarten to give them the "gift of time" and they personally feel that it makes a difference in their school career. Research is not clear whether this practice is helpful or not. For some families paying for another year of child care is not an option. All you can do is to provide the parents with factual information regarding what you have seen in the classroom, support them emotionally as they make the decision, and then respect the decision that they make.

¹*Ready for Kindergarten?*, <http://scholastic.com/earlylearner/age5/childcare/readyfork.htm>.

*Submitted by Pam Pace
Region 13 Behavior Specialist*

Info From Cooperative Extension!

If you would like help on how to help children understand the death of Osama Bin Laden or other issues dealing with war, terrorism, etc., you might go to:

www.extension.purdue.edu/purplewagon/EDUC-TEACHERS/ClassrmActRes_teach.htm

and check out the tabs on the left side of the screen.

**Child Care Networks, Inc. CCR&R of
Chatham County**
P.O. Box 1531
Pittsboro, NC 27312
(919) 542-6644



**Harnett County
Child Care Resource & Referral**
126 Alexander Dr., Suite 300
Lillington, NC 27546
(919) 893-7530/7597



**Partnership for Children of Johnston County
Child Care Resource and Referral**
1406-A S. Pollock Street
Selma, NC 27576
(919) 202-4893



**Coalition for Families
CCR&R Lee County**
507 N. Steele Street, Box 3
Sanford, NC 27330
(919) 776-7157



**Partnership for Children of Wayne County
Child Care Resource & Referral**
800 N. William Street
Goldsboro, NC 27530
(919) 735-3371



Turning the Page from Summer to Fall



July: National Anti-Boredom Month

4 ... Independence Day

24 ... Parents' Day

Amelia Earhart Day

August: National Picnic Day

National Eye Exam Month

7 ... Friendship Day

September: Classical Music Month

Baby Safety Month

Self Improvement Month

1st – 7th ... Child Injury Prevention Week

5 ... Labor Day

11 ... Grandparents Day

Patriot Day

16 ... Stepfamily Day

21 ... International Day of Peace

23 ... Native American Day

First Day of Autumn

