

Counselor **Connection**



connecting **parent-child-school**

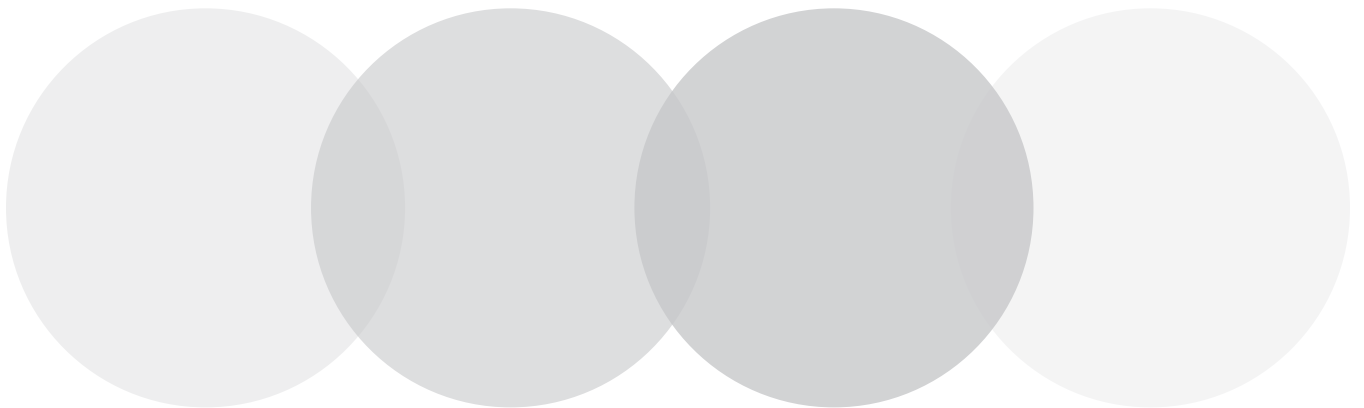


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INTRODUCTION

Raising children is one of the most important roles anyone can play in society. After all, it is our children who are the future! The array of issues, challenges and opportunities in raising children are mind-boggling. It's enough to make any parent feel overwhelmed and sometimes downright frustrated. If you're feeling that way, please understand first that you are not alone! Anyone who has or is raising children has undoubtedly felt the same way as you at one time or another.

I put this collection of my Counselor Connection newsletters together because I kept hearing parents say over and over again, "I wish I had all the great information from your newsletters in one place that I could easily look at." Although it is written primarily for a parenting audience, many of my school counselor colleagues have also expressed interest in having easier access to this valuable information. Why? Because it is always helpful for school counselors to stay in touch with what parents are dealing with in raising their children. The tips, strategies and insights contained in these newsletters can help both parents and counselors work together in creating a wave of positive momentum in children's lives that will help them be as successful as they can be. That is my intention and my hope for all parents and counselors!

Whether it's boosting the self-esteem and confidence of children to succeed, sharpening their test-taking and study habits, or dealing with a wide range of problem behaviors that are bound to come up from time to time, the Counselor Connection newsletters I've gathered together in this volume will serve as a handy reference for all parents and counselors. Enjoy!

With all my best wishes for you and the children in your life,

Erainna Winnett, Ed. S.



Aggression in Relationships

Children have unique and complicated relationships with one another — they're able to argue and be friends again in the same day! Because children are prone to swift changes in mood and demeanor, it's important to address how your child handles aggressive situations. By learning to help influence your child's aggression in relationships, you'll be able to curb the likelihood of this aggression turning into something much more severe.

Expression of Feelings

Often, when children argue with friends or family either intensely or subtly, certain signs of aggression are more prominent than others. Pushing, shoving, name-calling, and demeaning are all ways children try to cope with a situation in which they feel threatened or exposed. It's healthy for children to act on their feelings, of course, but not when it gets to the point of expanded emotions. If you see your child acting aggressively with a sibling, friend, or family member, take your child aside and clearly establish the difference between right and wrong. Even if your child is hesitant to listen, consistency in your message is very important. When repeated enough times, the message will eventually sink in.

As a parent, it's your job to look for aggressive behaviors and intervene before aggression turns into violence.

Signs of Aggression

In situations where you're unable to see signs of aggression (such as days your children are at school), it's still equally as important to be aware of specific signs. If your child is overly emotional when they go to or come home from school, it may indicate that there are aggressive activities going on. Always keep in contact with teachers and those close to your child while you're away, as they may be able to provide insight into your child's behaviors. By tapping into multiple sources of information about your child, you'll be able to stay apprised of any situations that need to be addressed. If none come up, then you're probably doing a great job!

REMEMBER:

- *Keep your tone as positive as possible, even when addressing a problem behavior. Talking down to your child can potentially make the situation even worse. Always maintain an open and honest dialogue where you're making your child feel equal.*
- *Approach the topic carefully but without hesitation. If your child senses that you feel uncomfortable with the topic, they may not take it seriously.*
- *Encourage your child to always settle their matters with words, not violence.*



Boosting your Child's Confidence

Children's early years are essential to their cognitive and emotional development. As a parent, it's your job to guide your children down a path where they'll feel not only motivated to participate in activities and school, but also with enough confidence to help them succeed. Boosting your child's confidence works best when you maintain an overall context of encouragement and excitement about their activities.

Athletic Outlets

Sports are a great way for children to become involved with groups and teams. When they cooperate with others to achieve a common goal, they learn skills that will help them greatly as they mature into adulthood. With a team sport or group activity children can actively engage in (and, more importantly, enjoy), they'll be able to achieve things far greater than they ever thought imaginable. Also, by working toward goals together and creating incentives for your child to succeed, you'll help boost that confidence even more and create a safe space for them to branch out.

Healthy Communication

Self-confidence comes from children doing something they enjoy.

Healthy communication is also essential when it comes to helping guide your child toward a more proactive path. Listening to your child on

a personal level regarding what they want to do and how they feel about their activities will help you understand the best way forward. For example, say your child is enrolled in soccer because you want them to be, but they would rather play hockey. Which sport do you think they would more likely to excel at?

Encouraging your Child

Another effective way to improve a child's confidence is to work alongside them and offer helpful hints and encouragement. This becomes even more important when your child is working up to an especially important event, such as a final tournament or championship game, recital or other performance.

REMEMBER:

- *Be open to communication and ask your children what they'd like to be doing.*
- *Always encourage rather than discourage.*
- *Set your own agenda aside to focus on what's right for your child.*
- *Be the parent you'd want to have.*



Accepting when the Answer is NO

No one likes to be told they can't do something. But while we may not like it, accepting "no" for an answer is often necessary. For this reason, children should be taught to accept "no" as an answer rather than always trying to get their own way.

Why Accepting "No" as an Answer is Important

Hearing "no" can be especially frustrating for children because sometimes they feel like the answer is always no. Even though you know that's not true, it can still feel that way to the child. It's important to both openly recognize and affirm those feelings in children because it's the reality of how they're feeling. This does not mean, however, that you should change your answer or allow the child to engage in endless whining. You can acknowledge how they're feeling while still firmly saying that the answer is "no."

There are many reasons parents may have to say "no" to their children. It could be a matter of finances where they can't afford to buy a treat or toy their child wants. It could also be a matter of safety if their child wants to do something the parents might consider dangerous or inappropriate for their age.

Learning to accept "no" as an answer isn't always easy, but it's a necessary skill that will stay with children and help them learn how to raise their

own children someday.

Teaching Children to Accept "No"

When there are two parents involved in a child's life, it is especially important for them to be on the same page concerning when an answer is "no." Children can be very perceptive about picking up on such differences between the authority figures in their lives.

When one parent says "no," the other parent should back it up so their children don't have the opportunity to play one parent against the other to get their way. Another way to teach children to accept "no" is to ignore the bad behavior they exhibit when they don't get their way. Refrain from giving in just to keep a child from embarrassing you in public or making a scene.

REMEMBER:

- *Be consistent when saying "no" to a child.*
- *Back up the other parent when the answer is "no."*
- *Don't give in to poor behavior to avoid a scene or discomfort.*



Children Who Steal

If you're the parent of a child who has stolen something, you're probably wondering how this could have come about. After all, you've taught your child better than that and provided them with almost anything they have wanted and everything they have needed. In spite of all that, plenty of parents find themselves in the situation of having a child who steals not knowing what to do about it. There's no doubt that dealing with a child who steals is very frustrating, but the good news is that there's help and hope.

Why do Children Steal?

Believe it or not, it's normal for children to steal. In many cases, younger children really can't distinguish right from wrong — they simply see an item they want. But in children over 7 or 8 years old, stealing could indicate a more serious problem. By this age, children should be able to understand the basic difference between right and wrong, and why they shouldn't take something that doesn't belong to them. There are a number of problems that could cause a child to steal. An evaluation by a doctor can discover these problems and put you on the path to dealing with them.

Dealing with Stealing

When you're dealing with a child who steals, provide them with encouragement to do the right things in life and explain the troubles that

can come with the wrong behavior. Sometimes, explaining the consequences of a child's actions can be all it takes to remedy the problem.

It's important not to lose your temper and to remain calm, even when it's difficult. Just remind yourself that you're the most important role model your children have. They learn from watching you, your reactions, and the ways you deal with situations.

REMEMBER:

- *Teach your child why it's wrong to take something that doesn't belong to them.*
- *Make it clear that this type of behavior won't be tolerated under any circumstances.*
- *Help your child relate emotionally to the situation at hand. Ask them how they would feel if someone took something they owned. This is a great way to teach empathy and help your child understand what's wrong with the behavior.*
- *Ensure the item that has been taken is returned to its rightful owner — with an apology.*
- *Refrain from excessive scolding or lecturing your child. When you go too far with those, they often have an opposite effect from what you intend.*