



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERHIPS
Working Together for Our Children

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APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

by Janet Shepard, Director

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month across the country. As a program of Missouri KidsFirst, which also holds the charter for Prevent Child Abuse Missouri, we at PPP are more mindful of our role in preventing child abuse. Virtually everyone who works with children and families is mandated by state statute to report suspected child abuse and neglect. How powerful it would be if each of us who are mandated reporters also accepted the responsibility to prevent child abuse.

[Missouri KidsFirst](#) and the Missouri Prevention Partners have identified five steps that each of us can take. Four are prevention steps and the fifth is an intervention to prevent or intervene in child abuse.

- Care for yourself
- Care for children
- Care for others
- Get involved
- Report

You will find more details on each idea on the [website](#) in a camera ready pdf format. This would be a great list to share with parents and community partners in April newsletters.

Schools and communities can also become involved by wearing blue or wearing [Go Blue t-shirts](#) on Go Blue Day in Missouri, which is April 15, 2011. You also participate in the [2011 Pinwheel Garden](#) or create a pinwheel garden in your community. Check out the links for order forms and details.



In addition to creating awareness in your community during the month of April, please consider how your work throughout the year relates to prevention. Here are some ideas for primary prevention at your school or organization:

- Offer parenting education through discussion groups, morning coffees, or lunch-and-learns using your PPP resource notebooks
- Model respect and caring for children
- Create or promote a parenting resource library
- Connect families with community resources
- Provide networking opportunities
- Listen for feelings
- Seek to understand root causes of behavior in students and families

We must keep our networks of prevention and support strong for children and their families.

PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

Spring is still conference time for PPP even though we don't attend as many as we did previously. Shelly will once again be presenting and assisting with the Conference on the Young Years. Janet will be sharing exhibit space with Missouri KidsFirst at the Missouri Association of Elementary Principals and will present on home visiting at the [Children's Trust Fund Conference](#).

We have begun featuring schools and programs who are supporting PPP by ordering resources, scheduling on-site professional or family workshops or attending training. For March we offer a tip of the PPP umbrella to:

- Ritenour School District for a large resource order
- DAEOC Head Start for training four Head Start Center Directors in Kindergarten Transition and four Coordinators in Home Visiting
- Afton Primary for hosting family night
- All regional meeting participants

PPP is earning money through Schnucks. If you shop Schnucks for groceries and are not already supporting another cause, we hope you will help PPP! Just request an e-scrip card from your local store then go on-line or call the 1-800-9316258 to register your card to support PPP. PPP's number is 500025472. We can also do "power sign ups" for groups, so we will be carrying cards and sign up sheets at upcoming events. Thanks for your support!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March is [National Nutrition Month](#)
- March 31, 2011 [Child Advocacy Day Jefferson City](#)
- April 13, 2011 Pinwheel Garden on the Capitol lawn, Jefferson City
- April 15, 2011 [Go Blue Day](#)
- April 19, 2011 [Home Visit Training](#) Springfield MO



KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION

Janet Shepard, Director

PPP is pleased to be featured on the agenda for the April Moving on Together Regional Meetings. Our topic will be Kindergarten Transition. I know participants will want to hear about best practices. I have many which I have collected over the years we have been offering training, but invite you to send your ideas, too! Please let me hear from you soon so we can compile them into a handout. Just e-mail me at jshepard@pppctr.org.

The regional is open to all early childhood educators. You will find the registration form on the [Moving on Together website](#).

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING PARENTS

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

With April being child abuse prevention month we heighten our awareness of the importance of providing education, support and help to parents. As educators, we know that when we work together with parents, we attain higher success with children. This partnership can take on many different roles. We strive to empower parents to take on the role of helping us educate their child. We identify ways we can provide help to parents to

support them in their role as nurturers. We try to recognize, understand and provide support to help parents in whatever ways we can to help better educate children.

Schools can provide assistance to parents to help them deal with the stressors of parenting. Here are a few ideas:

- Communicate with parents on a regular basis. Keep parent informed of what their child is learning and how their child is doing.
- Explain test scores and assessment results in a clear manner to parents.
- Hold parent nights such as reading, math and science fairs to educate and support parents in helping their child learn.
- Invite parents in to the school to become familiar with the school environment, reducing worries and concerns they might have.
- Provide opportunities for parents to get acquainted with other parents. They can gain support from each other.
- Become familiar with resources available in the community for parents to access and provide parents with the information as needed.
- Host a community fair including area health services, clubs, organizations, and businesses.
- Do home visits to get to know the families of your students and better understand their strengths and challenges.
- Offer discussion groups for parents to learn new parenting strategies.
- Contact parents with a positive message throughout the year.
- Provide opportunities for parents and children to become comfortable in transitioning from one building to another.
- Establish a food and clothing closet in the school to assist families in need.
- Send home activity bags to provide families healthy, educational activities to do together.
- Open a parent resource center where parents can check out books, videos, games and other resources. Offer support through resources in both educating and nurturing.

The PPP Yellow Notebook: Wellness provides several modules that schools can use as a tool in planning workshops, hosting discussion groups, providing handouts, and to increase knowledge about dealing with stress. PPP can also come on site and do a family workshop on dealing with stress. What can your school do to help provide a framework of support to parents?

SAVE THE DATE!

Children's Trust Fund Conference
April 13-15, 2011

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PPP is a program of Missouri KidsFirst.

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TIPS FOR PARENTS IN TIMES OF STRESS

By Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Children bring love, joy, and countless memories of happy times to our lives, and there is no deeper bond than that between a parent and a child. However, raising children also brings stress to our lives. Parenting takes the responsibility and commitment to nurture another human being from birth to adulthood. While each parent faces unique stressors, many demands of parenting and the stressors experienced are universal. Here are a few parental stressors:

- **Relationship Demands:** As parents invest the necessary time into their relationships with their children, sometimes other relationships take a back seat. Parents often feel torn between meeting the needs of their children and still having the time and energy to devote to their spouse, friends, and relatives. Single parents might struggle to commit time to dating.
- **Finances:** Whether your young child is in day care, with a sitter, or you are surrendering a full income to stay at home, caring for children is expensive. The expenses don't end when they become school age. Children get involved in new activities, grow into new clothes, and eventually go off to college. These costs can put a strain on a family's budget. The financial burdens sometimes lead parents to take on extra jobs, thus straining the family in other ways.
- **Time Demands:** With all the care and nurturing that children require, most parents feel that there are not enough hours in the day. Whether it's a lack of sufficient time to get the laundry done, time to spend playing with the children, time to one's self, or time for the many other important activities, lack of time to do it all leaves parents stressed.
- **Worry:** The parenting role comes with protective instincts. We take on the responsibility to care for a vulnerable young child and nurture him or her to adulthood. We worry about their safety as they play, we worry about their school success, we worry about their safety as young drivers, we worry about their friendships and dating, and continue to worry as they make decisions about college, career, and life.
- **Questioning Self:** Parents have a fear that they're not doing things right. We question our discipline, guidance, and decisions. We try to adjust because we know that each child has a unique temperament, individual needs, and he continually changes. We constantly adjust our parenting techniques and reevaluate what we're doing, looking for new insights. We try to stay one step ahead of our kids and challenge ourselves to be the best parents we can be. But, it never fails. There are always crises that come up and fires to put out along the way.
- **Time for Self:** Parents find it difficult to make time and save energy to care for ourselves. We give up many personal enrichment activities and goals. We often sacrifice our health and well-being due to lack of time to exercise and eat a proper diet. Many of us need time to be alone to take care of ourselves in order to be in a good position to care for others.

Faced with all of the stressful demands of parenting, we must stay aware of our physical and mental well-being and do what we can to reduce stress in our lives. When we handle stress in a healthy way, we are better parents and better role models for our children. Here are some ideas to help deal with the stressors of being a parent:

Support Network: Develop a support network; this network can include family, friends, or co-workers. You can get to know the other parents at your child's school through school functions. You might try to find a play group or mom's group to attend. Volunteer at your child's school.

Relax: Leave time for relaxing. Don't overbook yourself. Be selective about the activities you commit to for yourself and your family members. Children need time to unwind, just like adults. Stressed parents can create stressed children. Enjoy relaxing with your children. Have fun playing board games, going for walks, or watching movies together. Take time to relax by yourself or with friends.

Hobby: Start or continue a personal hobby. It might be crafts, gardening, reading, bowling or playing music. You might take a class or lessons to learn more about your hobby. Participating in a hobby is also good role modeling for your children. Help your child take interest in a hobby or participate in a hobby together with your child.

Exercise: Regular exercise is one of the best stress reducers. Keep yourself physically fit. You can exercise alone or with friends or family. You could make exercising a family activity. You might join a gym, power walk, ride

your bike, purchase some exercise equipment or an exercise video. It's a great idea to alternate your exercise routine to avoid boredom.

Sleep: It is important that you get enough sleep. Rest is incredibly important for maintaining good health and reducing stress. If you continuously have difficulty with nighttime sleep, discuss this with your doctor. Set a schedule in your home that promotes down time prior to bed time to make it easier for everyone to fall asleep.

Journal: Jot things down that make you feel stressed. Look for patterns. Try to pinpoint your exact stressors. Try to come up with ways to reduce these stressors. Sometimes, merely the act of recording your feelings in a journal will help alleviate your stress.

Delegate: Don't be afraid to ask for help. Teach your kids at a young age how to help around the house. Share household responsibilities with your spouse. Ask extended family or friends to pick your child up from school when you can't get there. At work, ask for help if needed or speak up if you feel that your work load is overwhelming.

When parents are stressed, likely, your children are feeling some stress as well. Parents set the tone in the house and the stress we feel contributes to a more stressful environment. Therefore, it is important to have stress relievers you can practice with your children. Not only will this reduce stress at the time, but it will teach children stress relievers to use on their own when they need them. The following are some great stress relievers you can generally practice with your children:

- **Walking:** You can enjoy the benefits of exercise as a family. Put younger children in a stroller, allow older children to bike along side you, and vary your strolls. Walking gets you outside, enjoying nature and away from most frustrations and responsibilities.
- **Drawing:** Kids generally love to draw, but expressing oneself artistically can be great for adults, too! The next time you're feeling stressed, get out some crayons and create beautiful pictures with your kids. You can work through your feelings in an abstract way and create something beautiful in the process, and your children can create their own beauty.
- **Enjoying Music:** Music has some extremely useful stress relief properties, and can provide fun opportunities to bond with your children as well. You can sing or dance together and blow off steam, or just relax and enjoy listening. Keeping music on in the background throughout your day can keep you and your children in a more peaceful mood, or get you into a more playful one, depending on what you play.
- **Social Support:** Doing fun things with friends and including your children (and theirs) can provide you with a supportive social outlet, and your children with play dates and opportunities to create friendships and learn social skills.
- **Gardening:** You can relieve a lot of stress through the act of gardening, and it can be a great activity for your children as well. Even small children can help you tend to a garden if they're able to lift a small watering can, and can also have a great time digging in the dirt. Watching seeds grow into plants can be fun and educational for young kids, and older children can take pride in making their home more beautiful by tending to the yard.
- **Yoga:** Increase flexibility, improve your health, and reduce stress with Yoga, and let your children enjoy the same benefits by joining you. With them around, you may not be able to get the same type of workout or achieve a true meditative state, but it can still be a bonding experience that relieves stress and encourages health for all of you. You can purchase or check out from the library videos to guide you.
- **Pets:** Pets provide proven stress relief benefit and can also be great fun for kids. Playing catch with a Frisbee-loving dog, gently stroking a cat, feeding hay to guinea pigs, or even watching fish swim in an aquarium can help you relieve stress, and can also teach your children to care for others.

Remember, being a parent is hard work and brings with it many stressful challenges. It is important to be aware of these stressors and practice stress reducing techniques. As you incorporate these stress reducers, you and your children will benefit!

The Parent Page is prepared by Practical Parenting Partnerships for distribution by schools to family and community members.