

The Child Advocate

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Maintaining
Your Child's
Emotional
Well-Being

Washington State
PTA[®]
everychild.onevoice.[®]

2012 Legislative Focus Day

February 20, 2012



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Onion
116 Legion Way
Olympia, WA
98501

We need you this year to help shape 2012 legislative priorities in what will be a historic year for our state. We need your voice to help shape the future of Washington.

Join us for a day of advocacy, networking, and education. We will have a variety of activities, including a legislative briefing, a panel discussion, and a networking session. We will also have a chance to meet with legislators and staff, leave notes, and share our concerns. We will be at the Olympia Convention Center from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on February 20, 2012. We will be at the Olympia Convention Center from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on February 20, 2012.

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Save the Date...

Washington State PTA Convention
Seattle Airport Doubletree Hotel
May 4-6, 2012

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VISION: "Making every child's potential a reality."

MISSION:
PTA is:

- > A powerful voice for all children,
- > A relevant resource for families and communities, and
- > A strong advocate for the well-being and education of every child.

The Washington State PTA accomplishes the mission of PTA by providing a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for the well-being and education of every child. The Washington State PTA accomplishes the mission of PTA by providing a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for the well-being and education of every child.



Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or guardians may carry the primary responsibility for a child's health, welfare, education and safety.

Preventing Self-Destructive Habits



Cutting

Eating Disorders

Substance Abuse

The teenage years are a time that kids naturally desire more freedom from their parents, are often moody, and more likely to engage in risk-taking activities. However today's rapidly changing culture makes our kids more at-risk than ever before. Consider how much has changed since we were kids:

- › Increase in technology. Many of our kids need to use computers and the Internet to access online textbooks and do their homework. It is virtually impossible for parents to keep track of what their children see or do online. Our children can stumble across inappropriate information and images.

In addition, cell phones make it easier for parents to reach their children, but more difficult to know where they actually are. It used to be the parents could call their home phone and know that their kids are at home. This isn't the case anymore.

These technological advances also bring new pitfalls, such as online predators, increases in identity theft, and cyberbullying.

- › Increase in availability of drugs.

drugs can do so with products already available in their own households. The abuse of inhalants is on the rise, as well as the abuse of prescription drugs. In fact, there is a growing trend in parties where teens bring whatever prescription drugs they can find at home and put them in a pile and the party-goers just take whatever they want, often without even knowing what they are taking.

In addition to drugs being increasingly available, marketing messages have helped spread the idea that if you have any sort of problem, there is a medication or a product that can fix it. In fact, some performance boosting energy drinks are even marketed directly to young people by sponsoring some sporting events.

- › Changing social norms. Many music lyrics, movies and television shows in recent years are more provocative and have helped loosen social norms. When kids use ipods, parents may not even be aware of the nature of the lyrics their children are listening to.

Additionally, parents used to be able to prevent their children from watching movies or television shows that they didn't find appropriate, but now kids can access a wide variety of shows and movies at any

time through websites their parents may have never even heard of.

- › Increased competition. There is a lot of pressure for our kids to stand out academically, athletically and through other activities so that they might be accepted to a college of their choices. The level of competition is greater than what many of us experienced as teenagers.
- › Decreased sense of safety and security. The increase of school shootings, domestic terrorism, and media attention to violence against children by once respected figures have also made many of our children feel more anxious and insecure.

What Parents Can Do

Talk to your children about personal responsibility. Tell them that you know that it is possible for them to access inappropriate websites, or listen to music with disturbing lyrics, but you hope that they would not. One of the ways that disturbing lyrics and lyrics into their brains is that it desensitizes them to these things and can actually alter the way they think and view the world. Once they have viewed inappropriate images, it's something that children can never take back. Talk to your children about your family's moral code and why you believe.

Have conversations with your children about drugs, sex, anxiety, depression, and body image. These are all things your children may face as teenagers and they need to hear you break the ice on these important topics. Acknowledge that growing up today is difficult and that you want to help them, even if you don't really understand all that they are going through.

Encourage your children to avoid self-destructive habits, such as cutting, eating disorders, or substance abuse. Following is a summary of what parents need to know to recognize these problems, so parents can make appointments with their children's doctors for further assistance if problems are suspected.

Cutting

Cutting is a form of self-injury that an increasing number of kids are using as a way to cope with extreme mental or emotional pain or anxiety. It isn't usually a means for getting attention as often kids hide their cutting habits. Parents who discover signs of cutting should be loving and withhold criticism, but should make it known that they need for their children to get help from trained medical professionals to learn positive coping mechanisms.

Eating Disorders

Recognizing the signs of eating disorders is important because early detection is often the key for positive results. People with eating disorders are often very good at hiding this from their families. Anorexia is an intense fear of being fat that causes people to severely restrict the amount of food they eat, such as vomiting, use of laxatives, diuretics or excessive exercise. Bulimia is characterized by binge eating or are underweight, or often say that they have already eaten or that they are not hungry, often go to the bathroom after meals, or develop unusual eating habits, then an eating problem might be present.

Substance Abuse

If students experience a sudden drop in their grades, lose interests in sports and extra-curricular activities, exhibit a significant change of behavior, suddenly have a new set of friends who are not interested in being introduced to you, or suddenly seems uninterested in their appearance or style of dress, parents should pay attention. Look for possible signs of substance abuse by talking to their friends and teachers, checking their rooms and pockets for any drugs or items that can be used for inhalants, and paying attention to smells on their clothes.

Finally, if your student takes medications, make sure you keep those medications away from other members of your family who may be tempted to try them for other purposes. When pain medications are prescribed, discard any unused pills after the treatment of the injury.

Teaching Kids Stress Management Skills

Our body's natural "fight or flight" response to stressful moments can help us to perform better on tasks, but when these feelings last too long or are present in situations where they aren't needed, our body's stress response can be damaging to our health and well-being.

Teaching kids to cope with stress is one of the most important life skills parents can pass along to their kids:

- › Avoid overscheduling. When your kids are overscheduled, they are often anxious and have a harder time concentrating on homework, winding down to sleep at night, and staying focused at school.
- › Encourage your children to exercise. Regular physical activity helps regulate moods and increase positive attitudes.
- › For stressful situations, such as tests or performances, teach your children to relax their muscles. Remind them that no matter what happens, you will love them and they will be ok.



- › To manage heavy workloads at school, encourage your children to make a manageable plan of action and a list of all the things they need to do and when they will complete these tasks.
- › Finally, for students who are stressed out about friends, problems, or conflicts, suggest that they write about worries in a journal or encourage them to talk to you about things that are causing stress.

Depression and Our Youth:

What Every Parent Needs to Know



Depression is a real threat to our children. It interferes with their relationships with others, their ability to do well in school, and to participate in activities. If left unchecked, it can alter what they ultimately do with their lives. Teenagers can at times be very moody and insecure, but if you notice a sustained pattern for two or more weeks that is characterized by: reduced concentration at school, decreased interest in friends or activities, reduced self-confidence, changes in sleeping and eating

of sadness, then you should discuss your concerns with your children and possibly make an appointment with their physician. There are many avenues for wellness that could involve therapy or even medications if needed and your child's doctor will be able to help determine what's best for your child's situation.

In addition to seeking help for a child showing signs of depression, parents can offer to listen to what's troubling them. Tell them that you won't lecture or try to solve their problems, criticize them or trivialize their problems, but encourage them to talk to you about what they are feeling and the kinds of difficulties they are facing with friends, school, and

individuals. Provide encouragement to your children and loving support. Love your children as they are, even when they make mistakes or fail at things.

things, such as talking the dog for a walk, going for a hike, or watching a movie. Many times, we are too busy for these simple pleasures, but they are important for a balanced lifestyle. These unstructured moments can also provide an opportunity for meaningful conversations with our children.

Any child can develop depression, however most at risk are students with a history of depression in their family, or those who have had significant losses or changes in their lives, such as a divorce, a loss of a close friendship or a recent move. Also more at risk are students with learning difficulties or those who have difficulties making and maintaining friendships. It is also not at all unusual for students to become depressed

after an illness, when they face returning to school and are behind in all their classes.

Of special concern is when a depressed individual begins to exhibit warning signs that indicate suicidal tendencies. Recent studies have estimated that around 19 percent of teenagers have considered suicide.

In addition to depression, some other warning signs may include: giving away prized possessions, dropping hints of suicidal thoughts either in person or on social networking sites, writing a suicide note, saying goodbye to people, taking unnecessary risks, writing about suicide or death, or isolating themselves from others. However, it is important to note that only 75% of teens who attempt suicide exhibit any warning signs other than being depressed.

This is why parents with teenagers struggling with depression need to gently address the topic of suicide with their teenagers, even if no other warning signs are present. There is no evidence to suggest that by discussing this topic with your teenagers that parents somehow introduce the idea to them.

One way to discuss this topic is to tell your child you are concerned about his depression and are wondering if suicide is something he has ever thought about. If he indicates it's something he's considered, then ask him how seriously he has considered this.

Find out if there are some specific things in your child's life that is causing her to feel this way, such as problems with schoolwork, friends, family members, school bullies. Take measures that might help relieve these pressures right away.

appointment with your child's therapist or medical doctor.

Take any reference to suicide seriously. Make sure you pay close attention to your child, especially at night when it is easy to feel alone and in despair. Remove medicines and poisons from your home, and other means he may use to harm himself.

feels overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness. >

How to Help Your Child Handle Strong Emotions

Courtesy of Childhaven



Editor's Note: The following article was provided by Ejkfnjcxgp."c"Ugcvmg"dcugf"pqprtqLv00"Ukpeg"3;2;."Ejknf-haven has been a safe and caring place for babies, toddlers cpf"rtguejqngtu0"Vqfc{."vlg"Ugcvmg/dcugf"pqprtqLv"qti c-nization has four King County branches and is a community leader, statewide advocate and national model in the vtgcvo gpv"cpf"rtgxgpvkqp"qh"ejknf"cdwug"cpf"pgingev0"Hqt"oqtg"kphtocvkqp."iq"vq"y y0ejknfjcxgp0qti0"

Young children experience the same fierce emotions that adults do, but unlike adults, they often can't identify, much less appropriately express, their anger, grief, sadness, fear, frustration, jealousy and disappointment.

Young children need to be taught through patient coaching and positive adult role modeling how to manage these often overwhelming feelings and get along in the world. This critical life skill sets them up to adapt to new people and situations, do well in school and on the job, and become effective parents to their own children some day.

We start out in life vulnerable. We have little to no self control. A baby will cry until Mom or Dad picks her up, holds and comforts her and gives her what she needs. That dynamic and very powerful action-reaction helps babies feel safe, builds trust and lays down the foundation for all their future relationships.

6th Yha Yh Yn Jhc XY ccXW] XYb UYUgfh] h Yf]bXY

pendence. "No!" becomes a favorite response and tempers flare into tantrums as toddlers test their limits.

This can be a frustrating and turbulent time, both for you and your W]X'Gi hiri Wb\Ydmai f`]hYcbZY'a cY]b Wbfc`VnGU]g-ing daily routines, giving him choices where appropriate, and putting words to his actions and feelings – while staying calm yourself:

i` I=Wb_gYHUmri NUb[frM h\]H]b[]gbchc_Uh; j Ymi fW]X kcfXgic i gy` QjzB \Ybmi N]XcbZ=X`]YUhi fbN`

i` I=_bck mi N]Y Yrni dgYUci hfUUb_L`=N`kUj h\YfYk]h`mi` while you calm down.

Here's where it comes in handy to have an established "cool-down corner" or box filled with things your child finds soothing. Once they've calmed down, you can talk to them about what happened and give them some words to use for the next time they feel that way.

Also, lead by example. How we, as parents, handle our own emotions UxHfYUch Yfg]gh YVgh YggbcZU`Zfci fW]XYb`H`ei cHY Dorothy Law Nolte's famous poem, Children Learn What They Live: "If children live with hostility, they learn to fight... If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect."

6Y]b[U]ccXYa ch]cbU'fc`Ya cXY`Ug`a YUghU]b[]ha YZf'mi fgYZ when you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed. You'll be teaching your child a valuable lesson in self-control when you acknowledge your emotions and take your own "time out" when needed.

Here are some other tips to help you both through the rough spots:

Children with autism spectrum disorders often struggle with social interactions. Your local public library can guide you to age-appropriate books for whatever you may be struggling with, from every-day frustrations to a death in the family. Reading together is comforting.

Children with autism spectrum disorders often struggle with social interactions. Make sure your child knows that it's okay to feel and express strong emotions. How we express them is key to our health and well-being. Try using a pillow or pounding bread dough.

Children with autism spectrum disorders often struggle with social interactions. Try using a pillow or pounding bread dough.

Children with autism spectrum disorders often struggle with social interactions. Practice by role playing different scenarios.

Children with autism spectrum disorders often struggle with social interactions. Last beyond a few weeks or are seriously affecting school and family life, you may need to speak to someone right away, call the Crisis Clinic's 24-hour line at 761-667-6677 (761-667-6677).

Children with autism spectrum disorders often struggle with social interactions. Try using a pillow or pounding bread dough.

Overcoming Social Difficulties

Much of our children's lives center around social situations. There are some children who naturally blend in and thrive in these situations and others who struggle.

Some children struggle with social interactions. Individuals offer very subtle cues when they are getting bored with a conversation, such as looking off in another direction, shifting their body weight from side to side. Children with autism spectrum disorders often struggle with these social cues, and as a result are left feeling lonely and confused.

Other children may struggle because they may have had a bad social experience in the past and social situations cause a lot of anxiety. Their nervousness may inhibit their ability to relax in social settings.

Some children are slower to warm up in social situations. Whatever the reason for your children's difficulties in social situations, parents can take some steps to help their children blend in better.



- Accept your children for who they are. Point out that people have different temperaments and different strengths and there is nothing wrong with that. Encourage your child to be kind and respectful to everyone, even those with disabilities that make social situations more difficult.
- Practice at home. Use puppets, dolls or acting out different social scenarios.
- Be a good example. Model good communication habits, including how to carry on a conversation and how to handle social situations, such as meeting people, introducing people, asking for another person's opinion, and so on. Point out the natural give and take in conversations and how one person doesn't monopolize the conversation. Talk about the natural flow of a conversation and when it is appropriate to join in to make a comment. For example, when there is a natural pause in the conversation, it is appropriate to join in, but not when someone else is speaking. Point out that people politely listen when another person talks, even if they would rather be the one talking.
- **60-90-30-15** If your children are slow to warm up in social situations,

allow them to watch the interactions before they join in.

- Talk about personal space. Challenge your child to imagine that there is an invisible bubble around everyone that people don't step into.
- Play games with your children to help guess what a person is feeling based on facial expressions and gestures without saying anything.
- Read books with your children on topics related to friendships and how to make friend and keep them. Discuss what you have learned from the book afterward. Help your child come up with some ideas of what he can do based on what he's learned.
- Use teachable moments. Discuss any relevant issues after watching a television show or movie.
- Seek medical help from a pediatrician if you suspect there may be medical reasons for your child's social difficulties.
- **60-90-30-15** If your child is slow to warm up in social situations, make an appointment with your child's pediatrician to discuss the social difficulties offered at school to help in this area.

