



Helping Hand

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Techno Tips for Keeping in Touch

Parents burdened by a divorce or heavy workload find it increasingly difficult to stay in touch with their children and each other. Visitation rights might state that a parent only gets to see a child every other weekend, or perhaps the parent returns home from the office so late each night that his/her children are already asleep. Additionally, children themselves are becoming busier and busier—extra academic studies after school, practice with a sports team—which further reduces the contact between parent and child. Whatever the reason, a communication chasm is appearing between many parents and their children.

Community advocate Sheila Butler found that—like the parents in many of the 40 million other “broken” families across America—daily communication with her spouse about their children became next to impossible following her divorce two years ago.

“There were times when communication with my ex was difficult at best,” recalls Sheila. “The question I kept asking myself was, ‘How are we both ever going to keep up with what’s going on in our kids’ lives?’ but there was no solution available.”

This mother of two set out to find her own solution, and in so doing developed the “Kids in Motion Planner” (www.kidsinmotionplanner.com) to help her and the millions like her stay in touch with their current or ex-spouses concerning their children. Here are some of her tips for staying connected:

- Keep an ongoing involvement in children’s lives.
- Try to have a “window of information” into children’s everyday schedules and developments.
- Keep an open line of communication, not just between the child and parent, but also the two parents themselves.
- Give children an added “security blanket” by letting them see that Mom and Dad are cooperating and interested in their development.
- Enhance the safety nets—parents must stay in contact regarding important changes in their child’s life, such as a change in medication.
- Give children a sense of purpose. Knowing that there are expectations on their parents, as well as themselves, gives children purpose and an increased feeling of success when objectives are reached.

“From my own experience and the feedback I’ve received from others, the ‘Kids in Motion Planner’ has proven to be a highly successful tool for families, says Ms. Butler.

Although being a divorced or overworked parent is never easy, a little extra communication between parents and their children and some simple organizational tools can help families enjoy closer, more loving, and healthier relationships—no matter what life throws at them.

What's in *Your* Candy Bowl?

A product currently on the market may make parents double-check their candy bowls. It is marijuana-flavored candy, and it could be in stores near you. It may look like a normal lollipop or candy bar, but it tastes like pot. The treats have drug-inspired names like Kronic Kandy and Pot Suckers.

Manufacturers have said that there is no THC—the illegal substance in pot—in the candy. The candy is, however, made with hemp essential oil, which gives it the taste of marijuana (but is legal and doesn't make the user intoxicated).

The candies' slogans may lead children to think that they are buying something that will have pot-like effects. Children may want to see if the candy makes them feel different—or even high. The marketers argue that the pot-flavored sweets are a harmless novelty, and that they advise retailers to sell only to customers 18 and over.

Unfortunately, it is easier than one might think for young people to get their hands on pot-flavored candy. A child can get the candy at a store or online. If someone offers your child a piece of this candy, he may not realize what he is getting.

Parents can talk to the administrators and counselors at their child's school about the rules against marijuana-flavored candy. Many adults may not have heard of it, so be prepared to help them learn more.

Despite the fact that marijuana-flavored candy does not contain illegal THC, some young people may begin to think that pot is acceptable or become accustomed to its taste. Tell your child that pot in any form is harmful. As you monitor your child's activities, remember to watch the candy he/she is eating, too.

For more information, visit:

www.family.samhsa.gov/set/flavcandy.aspx

Going 'Green' on Game Night

Now you can have an eco-friendly family game night with three new DVD board games. Planet Earth, SeaLife and WildLife DVD board games capture the beauty of our planet while educating players on the hidden treasures that lie within its seas, plains, mountains, and jungles. All three games have a recommended player age of 8+ and are by Imagination Games.

With the Planet Earth DVD board game, parents and children can explore our amazing planet and work together to answer a range of trivia questions based on the award-winning television series. Packaging for the Planet Earth game is made out of 100% recycled materials.

Sea Life will take players on the ultimate diving adventure while exploring the oceans' treasures with Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of world-famous ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau.

Wild Life takes players on a thrill seeking safari to the African Serengeti. The game includes stunning film footage of wild animals.

Is Your Young Child Smoking/ Drinking?

Parents are less likely to be aware of a younger child's cigarette and alcohol use than that of an older child, according to analysis of multiyear data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).

Less than half of mothers knew that their 12- to 14-year-old child had used cigarettes (42%) or alcohol (33%) in the past year, compared to 57% and 61%, respectively, of mothers of 15- to 17-year-olds.

In contrast, age made no difference for the mothers' awareness of marijuana use—less than half (41%) of parents of both younger and older children were aware of their child's marijuana use. Similar results were found for fathers.

These findings illustrate the need for parent-oriented substance abuse prevention programs, with a particular need for alcohol and tobacco education for parents of middle school age youth.

For more information, visit:

www.jointogether.org/news/research/summaries/2008/parents-awareness.html?print=t

Elmo Says 'Goodbye'

Elmo and his father are teaching young military children and their caregivers how best to handle a parent's deployment in a program called *Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families Cope With Military Deployment*.

The bilingual DVD is part of a package of complimentary materials that is available to military families. Sesame Workshop, the makers of Sesame Street, will launch the program as a DVD kit, which will not air on television but will be distributed free to schools, child care programs and family support centers.

"We were looking for ways to meet an unmet need," said Mia Masten, Wal-Mart's northeast US director for community relations. She says that when Sesame Workshop approached Wal-Mart, the retail giant gave \$892,540 to produce the project, noting also that many of the company's employees are Reserve and National Guard members.

Retired Marine Maj. Gen. Charles Bolden and several military members met with educators during a conference in January and connected Sesame Workshop with the Military Child

Education Coalition, which helped support the focus group research prior to taping.

According to Bolden, everyone on the panel agreed that a significant portion of their time should be devoted to the unique problems of Guard and Reserve families. “For people in the Guard and, to some extent, the Reserve, this is kind of foreign to them, and deployments are not something they ordinarily did prior to now,” he said.

For more information, visit: <http://www.defenselink.mil/>

Hard Heads—Getting Children to Wear Bike Helmets

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (www.nhtsa.dot.gov), bicycle helmets offer the best protection from head injuries resulting from bicycle crashes.

- In 2006, 773 bicyclists were killed and an additional 44,000 were injured in traffic crashes. Children 14 and younger accounted for 98 of those fatalities (13%), making this one of the most frequent causes of injury-related death for young children.
- Of those cyclists killed in 2006, 13% were 15 to 24 years old.
- In 2006, 88% of bicyclists killed and 82% of those injured were males. In 2005, an estimated 494,712 of all bicycle-related injuries were treated in US hospital emergency rooms. Approximately 53% of these were under the age of 15.
- In 2006, 25% of injured bicyclists were 15 to 24 years old.
- Bicycle helmets are 85 to 88% effective in mitigating head and brain injuries, making the use of helmets the single most

effective way to reduce head injuries and fatalities resulting from bicycle crashes.

- Despite the fact that nearly 70% of all fatal bicycle crashes involve head injuries, only about 20 to 25% of all bicyclists wear bicycle helmets.
- Universal bicycle helmet use by children 4 to 15 would prevent 39,000 to 45,000 head injuries, and 18,000 to 55,000 scalp and face injuries, annually.

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