

AAA PARENT COACHING SERVICES

EXCEPTIONAL PARENTING SOLUTIONS

Swing into Spring Newsletter

March 2009



Greetings,

I hope that things are going well for you and your family.

March has been typically hectic but rewarding. Spring is the season of Committee on Special Education Meetings, which have been keeping me extra busy. Writing, parenting classes, and seeing clients round out my weeks.



I look forward to hosting the Family Management Station at the Third Annual Autism Fair in April. This topic is very close to my heart, and I appreciate the chance to share tips and information with others whose lives have been touched by Autism.

I hope that your spirits are up, your worries are few, and that you can take a minute every day to count your blessings.

Wishing you all the best,

Liz



Tips for a Successful Committee on Special Education Meeting

I have attended numerous CSE meetings in various capacities. In general, I find that meetings are successful when parents are calm, prepared with a clear set of goals, and able to articulate their child's strengths and needs. I know how painful these meetings can be, and I sincerely hope that these suggestions are helpful:

- Two to three weeks before the CSE date, meet with your child's teachers and specialists in school. Get a good handle on how they understand the impact of your child's challenges on their school day. Take good notes for future reference.
- Speak with professionals working with your child outside of school.

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Please Visit Me April 26th from 11:00 to 3:00 at the Westchester County Center for the Third Annual Autism Information Fair

Request a brief letter explaining what they are treating your child for, what their goals are, and what therapeutic services, accommodations and supports they suggest for your child in school.

- Speak to your child. Ask what teachers could do in school to help them, and what they find most challenging.
- Summarize your information and assemble specific goals for the meeting. Know what you want to accomplish. Think about how each goal will benefit your child. Write notes that you can refer to during the meeting.
- Invite a friend or relative for advocacy help or moral support. Consider asking this person to take notes for you, or to make sure all of your goals are covered. CSE meetings are extremely stressful and draining for parents, and having someone to offer support can be invaluable.
- Consider inviting a professional who works with your child and can help clarify your child's needs. If you choose to do this, contact the District's Office of Special Education in advance and let them know who you will bring. You can also request that the professional join the meeting via conference call. In this case, when you contact the Office of Special Education, make sure that a telephone allowing conference calls will be made available to you.
- Bring along copies of the letters from your child's therapists, copies of report cards, state tests, and anecdotal information to support your goals. Try to paint a clear picture of your child and how their differences impact them in school, at home, and in life.
- During the meeting, **do not lose your cool**, no matter how difficult this may be. Try to speak in a calm, assertive tone, and do your very best to keep your emotions from preventing you from advocating effectively for your child.
- Ask members to slow down and explain themselves until you are clear on what is being said. You may respectfully disagree at any time. When it is your turn to speak, explain your concerns, your goals, and why they are necessary.
- Once a determination has been made regarding an IEP or 504 plan, you may state your disagreement with the plan. If you are asked to sign the IEP or 504 during the meeting, respectfully decline. Instead, politely request another meeting so that you can present additional information.
- If you agree with the plan, follow up with your school district for a final copy. Review the document carefully to ensure that it accurately reflects the decisions made at the meeting. Contact the office of Special Education regarding corrections until you have a complete and correct document. **This is a very important step.**
- File the document in a safe place, and get ready for the next step-making sure that the plan is followed.

Good Luck!

Stress Management for Today's Economy

In these times of economic uncertainty, anxiety and the sense of being overwhelmed can be particularly difficult for busy parents. To complicate matters further, our mood and attitude impact our family on many levels, and our children model our behavior and duplicate our style of managing emotions. Now more than ever, we parents need to do our best to maintain a positive outlook and to be kind to ourselves and our families no matter what is going on in our lives. Here are some of the habits that I found most helpful:

- **Change the channel:** If listening to the newest unemployment figures or the dropping Dow is increasing your feelings of anxiety or

Sponsored by Navigating the Spectrum and The Department of Community Mental Health, the fair will provide an excellent opportunity for parents and professionals to learn about supports, interventions and services for people of all ages with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and their families.

There will be over sixty information stations on such topics as Applied Behavior Analysis, Occupational Therapy & Sensory Integration Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Nutritional Therapy, Special Education Law & Advocacy, Social Skills Programs, Residential Options, Sibling Support, Floortime, Family Management, and Life Planning Services.

Admission is free. Child care is available, and bouncers, ballpits, and clowns will be on hand for entertainment.

Spring Cleaning with the Family



Spring Cleaning is a wonderful way for families to come together, curb the clutter, and treat themselves to a clean and organized home. Involving the entire family increases manpower and teaches children important habits that last a lifetime.

- **Go Team!** Divide the family into pairs of two to create a sense of teamwork. Everyone over the age of two should participate. This includes teenagers.
- **Have Fun!** Let the kids pick the

depression, turn the news off. You have the right to protect yourself from anything and everything that triggers unnecessary anxiety.

- **Stay in the moment:** As you feel yourself becoming agitated, focus all of your energy on the present moment. Notice the sights, sounds, scents, and sensations that surround you. Breathe deeply and remind yourself that at this particular moment in time, everything is as it should be in your world.
- **Recognize where you can take control and follow through:** Some things are within our control, like our clutter, children's behavior, exercise routine, diet, and the way we spend our time. Simple changes can reduce the sense of being overwhelmed, and help us to recognize that we do have some power to improve our situation.
- **Be relentless in your attitude of gratitude:** If you do nothing else, this one change can quickly restore your sense of well-being. *In every situation, at any moment, as long as we are alive, we can find something to appreciate.* Note your blessings in a journal and watch your transformation begin. Gratitude items don't have to be extraordinary. For example, as I am writing this I am grateful for the miracle of good health, my slow, steady computer, the sweet email from my husband this morning, the goodbye hugs from my children, the client who called to thank me, the friends who called to say hello, the kind text from my sister-in-law, the quick call from my parents, and the incredible opportunity to share with all of you via this newsletter. Without taking a moment for appreciation, I would find it all too easy to ignore the beauty of the moment and to cling to a negative mindset.
- **Let Go and Hope for the Best:** Remember the old saying, "We make plans and God laughs?" Sometimes, we just have to let go, surrender, and trust. Generally, our worst fears don't come true, and if they do, they are often a point of positive transformation and growth.

Talking With Children About the Economy

Between snippets of adult conversations, television news reports, and newspaper headlines, some children may be curious, or even anxious, about what is going on in the economy. If you choose to teach your child about the economic recession, I hope you will find these tips helpful:

- Use simple, age appropriate words that your child can understand.
- Keep your explanation brief and be prepared to stop if you observe your child's eyes glaze over.
- Try to understand what your child really wants to know, and tailor your response accordingly.
- Reassure your child that he or she has nothing to worry about. Encourage your child to express his or her fears and thoughts. **Even if you are worried about your family's financial well-being, I urge you not to share your fear with your children.** Explaining a change in the family budget to children can be an excellent opportunity to open up an honest dialogue about money, but this conversation does not have to include overtones of anxiety. Feel free to explain to your child that plans for the costly sleep-away camp will have to change, or advise how they can help the family conserve resources. Praise them for their effort, and help them to appreciate that what you truly value in life does not have a price tag.

Thank you so much for your support! I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

music and play it as loud as they like. Hold contests to reward the quickest team, the best cleaning team, or the team that can collect the most toys without dropping them. Play Beat the Clock. Get creative.

- **Coach the Team!** Channel Joe Torre, or whoever your favorite coach may be. Maintain a light, upbeat, positive attitude and motivate when you feel like barking orders or complaining.
- **Focus!** Before cleaning write up a list of specific tasks. Group tasks evenly and make sure they are appropriate for children's ages and abilities. Write tasks on an index card (use pictures for children who are too young to read) and give a card to each team.
- **When in Doubt, Give it Out!** As you clear the clutter, encourage everyone (spouses included) to consider when they last used a particular item. Anything that is no longer used or doesn't fit should be donated to a local homeless shelter or charity where it will bring pleasure to people who will appreciate it.
- **Appreciate and Reward Sincerely** recognize everyone's efforts, and let your

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family know how
much you
appreciate their
hard work and
generosity.

When your day of Spring
Cleaning has come to an
end, consider treating the
whole family to pizza, ice
cream, or a DVD selected
by the winning team.