

Issue No. 9

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Cameray Newsletter

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Kids in Control: When a Parent has Mental Illness

Kids in Control is a psycho educational group for children ages eight to thirteen. The eight-week group helps children understand their parents' mental illness and learn how to take care of themselves.

I have been facilitating this group for three years in various communities in the Fraser Valley. One child that I worked with has stayed in my mind for a long time. She was an eight-year old girl. I will call her Raven.

Raven had lived with just her mother since she was two, after her parents had divorced. Raven's mother experienced delusions and hallucinations and acted out in ways that were unusual and unexplainable to the child. But Raven believed in her mother, to whom she had a strong attachment; she had never had another caregiver. Raven didn't recognize that her mother had mental illness. The mother kept her illness hidden, and it was years before she received an accurate diagnosis and treatment.

At school, Raven began to exhibit behaviours that concerned her teachers. She shared her "special powers" with friends, but the friends began to withdraw from her, saying she was "strange" and "weird." They began to avoid her and make fun of the stories she told. Raven often played alone, and spoke intently to her imaginary friends, the only consistent friends she had ever had. Academically, she was struggling; her reading and writing levels were years behind. The other children noticed this as well, and it was another excuse to tease and belittle her. At times, the young girl was oblivious to the teasing and bullying; at other times she was very aware that she was being ostracized.

The school situation prompted an investigation by the Ministry for Children and Families, and Raven was removed from her mother's care.

Shortly after being placed in her father's care, Raven came into the Kids in Control Group. It became clear almost immediately that she had been affected by her mother's illness. She described unusual situations that she and her mother had experienced. She talked about special powers she

had, and how she could use her powers. She talked about being afraid of certain people and how the "bad men" were trying to hurt her and her mother. Many of the stories were of a disturbing nature, and were obviously a result of things her mother had said to her.

In an unusual twist of circumstances, I happened to be assigned to work with Raven in a family outreach program. My initial assessment of her concluded that she had experienced trauma while in her mother's care. She had normalized the incidents, and believed that all young people had the same experiences growing up.

One of the goals of Kids in Control is to help children recognize that they are not responsible for their parent's illness. Raven had, in effect, been her mother's caregiver since a very early age. She truly believed the frightening stories her mother had told her. Affected by the years of fear that had been instilled in her, Raven was afraid to meet or trust new people. And she had difficulty understanding that many of the things her mother had said to her were false, and the result of delusions. Somehow the two had survived, depending on one another, and not letting anyone into their lives.

Raven attended the Kids in Control program twice over two years. She gradually learned about mental illness, and finally came to her own conclusion that her mother had been in need of medical attention for a very long time. She came to recognize that much of what she had learned about the world from her mother was false.

I knew that the group had been a success for Raven when one of her teachers told me Raven was telling other kids at school that she was not responsible for her mother's illness. She was saying, "I can't cause it; I can't control it; but I can take care of myself." This is one of the phrases that the children in the group learn.

The Kids in Control group also allowed Raven to see that she was not alone in having to understand a mental illness. Although not all of the participants in the group have experienced

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trauma, they are all relieved to know that their situation is not unique, and that help is available. In a world where children feel powerless at times, they learn that they can have the power to take

care of themselves, and not feel ashamed of their parents' struggles with mental illness.

For more information about the Kids in Control program, please contact the BC Schizophrenia

Society at 604-270-7841 or 1-888-888-0029.

Kashmir K. Besla, MA
BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information, HereTo-Help.bc.ca



Summer Fun

Summer break is quickly approaching. By now you must be thinking about how your children will occupy their time during the summer months.

Summer camps are a great way to keep your children entertained. They provide social interaction in a safe and fun way and give them the opportunity to learn and explore new activities.

There are many different camps

offered throughout the Lower Mainland. Most organizations which offer activities to children during the school year also offer summer camps. While many camps are very expensive, there are a few local camp organizations which offer subsidy for low-income families:

- The Camping Bureau at Fraserside Community Services in New Westminster. Phone: 604-522-3722

(ext.114)

- The Camping Bureau at Burnaby Information and Community Services Society in Burnaby. Phone: 604-299-5778 (ext. 28).

For camp information across BC you may visit the BC Camping Association's Website at: www.bcccamping.org.



Discipline and Your Child

"How many times have I told you?"
"Can't you see I'm trying to...?"
"You are a real troublemaker!"
"That's enough—I've had it!"

Do any of these sound familiar? Guiding children to behave in appropriate and acceptable ways is challenging for many adults. There are no quick, easy answers because every child is unique. Differing temperaments, personalities, needs, growth patterns, home environment, and family settings affect children's lives. The following four points should be part of your general plan to guide children's behaviour.

Promote Positive Behaviour

Both parents and caregivers who use positive reinforcement find it a "self-fulfilling prophecy". Children become what we expect of them. Be very specific about the compliments and praise you give. This lets the child know exactly what behaviour, actions, and words you liked. For example, "I really like the cooperation I saw between you and June, in cleaning up the toys.." Or, "I really appreciate how well you listened to the directions for this activity. It helped things to run smoothly." The child is then more likely to repeat the positive behaviour.

Expect Children to Obey

Be very clear about rules and expectations. Give children an option whenever possible. Demonstrate

your confidence by using short, clear, positive statements. Use a tone that says you expect compliance.

Maintain Fairness and Consistency

Deal with challenges in a matter-of-fact, calm manner. Consider the child's age and "normal" behavior for this age range. Learn about developmental stages of children and their accompanying physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs. For example, it is unrealistic to expect a child who is 18 months old to do much sharing, since toddlers, by their nature, are very self-centered.

Communicate rules and their consequences in words that children understand. When a child breaks a rule, follow through with a fair, appropriate, and meaningful consequence right away. When you are fair and consistent in your response to misbehaviour, the child's sense of security and knowledge of right from wrong will be reinforced.

Allow the Expression of Feelings

Allowing a child to express his or her feelings does not mean allowing such inappropriate expressions as hitting or hurting others. Sometimes, providing quiet time along with a favorite toy or blanket will help a child to relax and calm down. Some children express anger by pounding with a hammer on a pegboard, punching an old pillow, kicking a soccer ball in the backyard, creating

a picture, or using self-talk with their stuffed animals. Offer to take a walk with the child or to read a story together. These activities may help diffuse strong feeling of anger. It is important to provide a range of acceptable avenues for children to release these strong, yet natural emotions.

Guiding children's behaviour is a major commitment. Progress may seem slow at times. Regression and setbacks are likely to occur. Through it all, keep your sense of humor, and remind yourself of your successes and of the important role you play in caring for children.

*www.nncc.org, Elaine Goodwin, Ed.D. Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Goodwin, E. (1994). Five tips for guiding children's behavior. In Todd, C.M.(Ed.), *Day care center connections*, 3(6), pp. 1-2. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.*

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Corner

Black Bean and Corn Salad

Summer is a time for salads! Who wants to cook over a hot stove. Here's a quick, easy recipe that is both nutritious and tasty.

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper (optional)
- 2 cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 1/2 cups frozen corn kernels
- 1 avocado — peeled, pitted

and diced

- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Directions:

Place lime juice, olive oil, garlic, salt, and cayenne pepper (if using) in a small jar. Cover with lid, and shake until ingredients are well mixed.

In a salad bowl, combine beans, corn, avocado, bell pepper, tomatoes, green onions, and cilantro. Shake lime dressing, and pour it over the salad. Stir salad to coat vegetables and beans with dressing,

and serve.

Prep time: 25 minutes

Yields: 6 servings

Allrecipes.com



What's New at Cameray.....

Health & Safety Day

Cameray Child and Family Services held its sixth annual Health and Safety Day on May 1st, 2007. This event is presented by the Health and Safety Committee and is attended by all staff.

This year's theme was "Emergency Preparedness". The agenda for the morning included:

- a review of the Health and Safety Manual
- a group activity, the "Amazing Race" Emergency Preparedness Game
- A discussion on "Emergency Preparedness in the Workplace"

Thank-you to the Health and Safety Committee for a well-organized and fun event!

Cameray welcomes new staff....

Silvana Vettorel, practicum

student at the Burnaby Office

Bianca Buteri, Child and Youth Counsellor at the Burnaby Office

Roxane Veltkamp, Administrative Assistant at the Administrative Office

Gabriela Ionita, practicum student who will be returning as a volunteer in the New Westminster Office

Cameray says good-bye to....

Suzanne Vardy, Counsellor in the Burnaby Office. We are sad to see her go, but wish her well in her new position.

Accreditation

As part of re-accreditation, Cameray is preparing for our site visit. Peer reviewers will be in our offices on June 4th and 5th.

Child & Youth Outreach Program

Cameray is pleased to announce that funding has been approved by the Vancouver Foundation for the Child & Youth Outreach Program. This program provides support to children and youth in the Metrotown area.

Parenting Support Groups

Cameray is now offering parenting support groups, open to all Burnaby and New Westminster residents. These groups cover various parenting issues, and help parents feel better about their parenting abilities. Pre-registration is required. There is child care available. Please call Lyndsay Sieger at 604-436-9449 (local 26) for more information.



Cameray staff at our annual Health and Safety day, May 1, 2007.



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WEB-SITE: CAMERAY.CA

MISSION STATEMENT:

Cameray Child & Family Services is a community-based agency committed to the strengthening of individuals and families through a spectrum of services including counselling, education, outreach, and advocacy.

FUNDED BY:

*Ministry of Child & Family Development
Fraser Health
Ministry of Public Safety & So-
General*

United Way
Success by 6 *licitor*

United Way - Success By Six

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The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation
The Steve Nash Foundation*

We are a non-profit agency serving Burnaby and New Westminister residents since 1972.

ART ON THE HORIZON

We are currently underway preparing for our second annual Art on the Horizon Fundraiser. This year the event will be September 20, 2007 at Horizons Restaurant on Burnaby Mountain. It will be another wonderful event. Supporting artists have already donated 32 pieces and we are not stopping there. We are also looking for silent auction items, so if you are able to donate something, please call Susan at 604-291-7422.

Some of the fundraised dollars have been used for program supplies for both our ACTS homework clubs and our Metrotown Outreach program. These two very successful programs work with approximately 230 children weekly and go a long way toward building a healthy community.

DONOR HIGHLIGHT The Steve Nash Foundation

The Steve Nash Foundation has supported our ACTS program by funding the purchase of school and cooking supplies for the homework clubs in Burnaby elementary schools, as well as sports equipment. These supplies have been so appreciated by the children in the Programs, as well as JJ who cooks the dinners!

Cameray Child and Family Services is immensely grateful to the Steve Nash Foundation, which has directly impacted the lives of many children in our community.