



A Program of Conley Outreach Community Services  
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## Community Care Team News January/February 2005

### In This Issue

This issue is dedicated to parenting and is based on the work of psychologists John and Linda Friel. It contains the seven things good, well-meaning parents often do wrong. Please pass this newsletter along to others who may need this information.

### Stop Drooling!

The Friels' primary advice to parents—stop drooling over your children. By this they don't mean to stop loving them or guiding them. In fact guiding and directing is exactly what parents should be doing, instead of catering to their children's every whim. They urge parents to take control of their families, including making a conscious effort to spend time together. "There should be at least three nights a week...where the TV is off and everyone is expected to be at dinner and talk with each other". There is no quick way to create family closeness. It happens only by spending time together.

Well meaning parents tend to make seven common mistakes.

### Mistake 1: Put Your Marriage Last

Too many parents are so busy caring for their children and their jobs, that they neglect their marriage. They lack the time (or energy) and often have grown apart, with nothing in common but the

children. To counteract this tendency, parents need to make time together without the children a priority. Take 15 minutes at the end or beginning of the day to talk and share with your spouse (Mom and Dad's time). Set up a "date" at least twice a month without the kids. This can be a simple walk to the ice cream shop. The Friels also suggest an annual overnight alone. This time together is critical not just to you as a couple, but to the children as well. **A secure marriage produces secure children.** Yours is the model upon which their idea of marriage is based.

### Mistake 2: Baby Your Child

Babying your child robs him or her of the most important gifts you can give—self esteem and competence. In this child-centered culture, parents are busy trying to protect their kids from the natural emotional bumps and bruises of growing up. But instead of developing a child's self-esteem, this behavior promotes dependency and helplessness. These children cannot cope with failure, being told "no" and ultimately have difficulty socially. Similarly, over-praising your child is also detrimental. Fried says, "We get high self-esteem by being competent. But how can you be competent if you don't know when to feel good and when to feel bad and how to deal with it? Some warning signs that you may be babying your child:

- doing things for kids that they could/should do for themselves;
- simultaneously resenting and pitying your child;
- not being able to see your child struggle or unhappy;
- not making your child take responsibility for his/her actions.

### Mistake 3: Push Your Child Into Too Many Activities

There is a critical difference between providing opportunities for your child and overwhelming him or her. Warning signs include a child who has no “down time” for friends or family, who might be depressed or gets physically sick. “When you get off the treadmill, a lot of good stuff starts to happen. People start to feel their feelings again, to actually talk to each other,” says Friel. Give your child some good options and let him/her choose.

### Mistake 4: Ignore Your Own Spiritual or Emotional Life

People need, says Friel, “places where they can be real, can share what is really going on”. Spend time with friends and family talking about the things that really matter in life. Create a home that is really a haven for you and your family...not just a place to throw your coat. Do what you need to do to recharge your batteries—read, garden, play the piano, shoot baskets, scrapbook, go for a walk. Rediscover what makes you happy.

### Mistake 5: Be Your Own Child’s Best Friend

There is a difference between becoming your child’s best pal and being what the Friels term “a warm parent”. A “warm parent” is one who can stay in charge.

“When push comes to shove, you have the final say if the TV is off or if your child can go with his buddies” says Friel. A flexible boundary should exist between parent and children. The adults, Friel says, “are still the leaders. When all is said and done, parents are the parents, and the kids are the kids.”

A terrible violation of that flexible boundary is if one spouse shares personal, adult-to-adult information with a child, or leans on a child instead of another adult for social support. “Respect your partner and other adults and respect your children. Don’t rob your children of their childhood”.

### Mistake 6: Fail to Give Your Child Structure

External structure helps children, no matter what their age, feel secure. A regular schedule helps kids know what to expect, and gives them a mechanism for ordering their world. As they grow, it is important to have a few rules that are consistently enforced, rather than too many rules with nagging and stress or no rules or responsibility at all.

### Mistake 7: Expect Your Child to Fulfill Your Dream

This sometimes goes hand in hand with over-scheduling. Your role as parent is to guide your child through life while they are young, to provide limits and structure—and support and enthusiasm. Help them discover and develop their gifts and talents and give them the foundation they need to grow up to be responsible, independent adults.

## Parenting Resources

- Baby FAST (family support for teen moms) Kane County Health Department. For more information call 232-5829
- Family Nurturing Program For more information contact Breaking Free at 897-1003, Conley Outreach at 365-2880 or TriCity Family Services at 232-1070.
- Positive Parenting (Parent Support Group) For more information call 815/748-2010.
- Women in Need (Postpartum Depression Support Group) TriCity Family Services. For more information call 232-1070.
- Single Mother Support Group TriCity Family Services. Call 232-1070 for more information.
- Mothers First Support Group Delnor Community Hospital. Call 208-3999 for more information.
- FAST (Family and Schools Together) call Conley Outreach (365-2880), TriCity Family Services (232-1070), Breaking Free (897-1003) or Communities in Schools (906-9220).
- Support Group for Parents of Teens/Pre-Teens For more information call TriCity Family Services at 232-1070.
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (support group) For more information call TriCity Family Services at 232-1070.
- Parenting Sessions (individual or group) stresses communication, problem solving and developmental appropriateness. For more information call Family Counseling Service of Aurora at 844-2662.
- STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) Ben Gordon Center. For more information call 815/756-4875 x 208.