

# big PLANS in print

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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## What are you doing for your children that they can do for themselves?

As quick and easy as it is to do things for our kids, the reality is that we need to teach our kids how to live out in the real world so that they will feel confident and capable to exist independently once they leave home. **What are you doing for your children that they could be doing for themselves?**

In Tim Urban's article, Why Generation Y Yuppies are Unhappy, he outlines clearly, and in an easily readable (and illustrated) way just how unrealistic expectations about life can lead to unhappiness. We've mentioned it for you here because if we raise our awareness of this problem, we stand a chance of changing it for our kids. Otherwise, we will be raising a second generation of adults who are disappointed in their lives and themselves.

There is nothing wrong with money and sharing nice things with our kids. The reality is that our parenting job is not to provide a lovely life for them. It is to prepare them for real life by teaching them how to make a bed, cook a meal, unplug a toilet, do the laundry, get somewhere on a bus and manage their hygiene and temper.

Parents often tell us, "My kids appreciate nothing!"

How can they possibly appreciate something if they have not had to work for it, earn it, save for it or wait for it? They cannot. If it is all just given to them, all of the toys, treats, holidays, special equipment is just expected.

It is through having conversations about this with our kids AND through teaching them the skills to earn, and delay gratification, that our kids will learn appreciation.

This week: Consider one thing that you are doing for your child that s/he could do for him/herself. Take the time to teach that life skill. Only choose one at a time or it could feel overwhelming for everyone. Do the task together with the child, breaking it down into manageable steps (writing them can be helpful). Then watch the child do it and help where needed.

Finally, allow the child to do it independently. Hold your child accountable for the task – if a child knows that the parent will do the task, there is no incentive to take responsibility. If you need help knowing what to expect of your child, please see our our lists of Age-appropriate tasks on the next page.

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Parents Learning About Needs and Skills

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# age appropriate CHORES

Each child develops at a different rate. It may take more time to accomplish tasks, but the outcome is that your child is learning to be independent and responsible.

ages  
2-3

- Pick up toys/put away
- Put books away
- Place napkins and cutlery on the table – may need help with the correct placement
- Help to clean up their messes after eating
- Learn to make simple choices by being given a choice of two foods for breakfast
- Take dishes to the counter after eating
- Co-operate with toilet training
- Undress/dress with assistance
- Put dirty clothes in hamper/laundry room
- Help put away groceries on lower shelves
- Pick up the newspaper
- Assist with feeding the pets
- Put recycling items in their containers
- Hang up coats and sweaters on low hooks /mittens and hats in basket/ shoes or boots neatly to the side

age  
4

- Set the table
- Put groceries away
- Help make a grocery list and assist with shopping by taking appropriate items off the shelf
- Feed pets
- Help with dusting
- Help fill the dishwasher
- Spread butter or peanut butter on sandwiches
- Prepare cold cereal
- Hold the hand mixer when baking
- Get the mail
- Put away toys or belongings after playing with them

## 10 Insights of Remarkable Parents from a Family Therapist

At any given time you'll find four or more parenting books on my Amazon wish list, a few by my night stand, and an email box chock full of insightful parenting theories and approaches.

Granted, child development is my career, but I speak with plenty of parents in my practice who find themselves in similar circumstances. With information around every corner and our culture projecting constant messages (many times contradictory) regarding how we should raise our kids, feeling like a confident and intentional parent can seem out of reach many days.

In my 12 years as a family therapist, I've seen many well-intentioned parents mistakenly employing strategies that aren't meeting the emotional or developmental needs of their children or families. I've also observed an increasing number of parents that are successfully mapping out new and healthier ways of raising children.

These insights, collected over time and gleaned from experience, parallel what we know from current brain and behavioral research about what kind of parenting is most likely to contribute to the healthy development of children.

### 1 | Know that kids will act like kids.

Often parents forget that the way a child's learning begins is by screwing up. Making mistakes.

Behaving immaturely. The 'magic' happens when a supportive caregiver then steps in to steer them in the right direction. We get frustrated and impatient, becoming annoyed with whininess and 'back talk' when really, this is how kids are wired.

The part of the brain responsible for reason, logic and impulse control is not fully developed until a person reaches their early 20's. Immature behavior is normal for immature human beings with immature brains. This is a scientific reality that helps us to be patient and supportive in order to guide our children when they struggle.

### 2 | Set limits with respect, not criticism.

Due to the fact that our kids need to learn literally everything about the world from us, they will require many limits throughout their day. Without proper limits in their environment, kids will feel anxious and out of control.

Limits can be delivered in the form of criticism and shaming, or they can be communicated in a firm but respectful way. Think about how you appreciate being spoken to at work and go from there.

### 3 | Be aware of developmental stages.

Have you ever questioned where your easy-going toddler disappeared to as he was suddenly screaming bloody murder while getting dropped off at day-care? Hello separation anxiety!

There are literally hundreds of very normal, very healthy transitions kids go through to become adults. Being aware of these puts their puzzling behaviors into context, and increases the odds of reacting to them accurately and with support.



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#### 4 | Know your child's temperament and personality.

It seems pretty obvious, but if we are in tune with the characteristics that make our child unique, we will have a better understanding of when they may need additional support, and when and where they will thrive.

Once you know the basics of what makes your child tick, many important areas become much easier to navigate, such as pinpointing the best environment for homework, or understanding why your daughter needs to come home from overnight summer camp.

#### 5 | Give your child plenty of unstructured play time.

Unless you studied play therapy in school, most adults will never fully understand and appreciate the power of play.

Play is how kids learn all the things and develop all the stuff. This means leaving time each day for straight-up unstructured, kid-controlled, exploration of the world kind of play.

#### 6 | Know when to talk and when to listen.

Kids learn to be pretty good problem solvers if we let them. Because we love the life out of them and want them to succeed, it's hard not to jump in and solve problems for them by virtue of lecture or criticism.

If parents more often held their tongues and waited it out, they'd be shocked at how often their children can successfully reach their own conclusions. Being heard is powerfully therapeutic, and it

allows us to think things through and reach a solution.

Kids want and need to be heard, and feel understood. Just like the rest of us.

#### 7 | Have an identity outside of your child.

Many of us often claim that our children are our world, and this is certainly true in our hearts. In terms of daily life however, parents need to have more. We need to nurture the friendships, passions and hobbies that make us who we are as individuals.

Doing this can feel like a battle, as our protective anxieties try to convince us our children can't be without us, and also that we can't be without them. But we can be, and need to be, in order to stay sane, and avoid saddling our kids with the task of meeting all of our emotional needs.

#### 8 | Understand that actions speak louder than words.

The way you interact with your child and live your life will be your child's greatest teacher. Kids are incredibly observant and way more intuitive than we give them credit for. They are always watching.

This can be slightly inconvenient for parents, but if we're able to keep it in mind, **knowing our children are watching our actions will not only teach them how to behave, but it will make us better people.**

**"...knowing our children are watching our actions will not only teach them how to behave, but it will make us better people."**

#### 9 | Recognize that connection, fun, and creativity are the best ways to promote positive behaviors and a cooperative attitude.

Fear and control aren't effective long-term teachers for our kids. While those dynamics may appear effective in the short-term, they won't equip our kids with a strong moral compass, or effective problem-solving skills. If our child feels valued as a person based on our interactions with them, they will naturally learn to value others and have the confidence to make good choices.

#### 10 | Set the overall goal to shape a child's heart and not just their behavior.

We often get the impression from the world

around us that the goal of parenting is to produce a compliant, well-behaved child. While these are certainly desirable qualities for most parents, they are not core qualities that contribute to a happy and healthy human.

Helping our children understand the importance of their thoughts and emotions gives them coping and relationship skills. Skills that will protect and guide them throughout their lives.

Changing our parenting habits and styles is never easy, but if it's truly in the best interest of our children, it'll always be worth it.

*Reprinted with permission by the author - Angela Pruess, LMFT. Angela is a Child and Family Therapist and special needs parent on a mission to support and empower parents of behaviorally challenging kids. When she's not supporting parents, or seeing kids in her private practice, she is at home being challenged (a lot) by her own three kids (and sometimes husband). Parentswithconfidence.com*

### Healthy Nut-Free Kid-Approved Snacks



photo: <http://mainlandcheese.com>

Are you looking for a nutrition-packed nut-free snack to send with your child to preschool? Try cheddar cheese on apple slices. Not only is this snack high in calcium and vitamin C, but it is also a good source of protein.

1. Remove the core and slice a washed apple. Sprinkle or brush with lemon juice to prevent browning.
2. Place a slice of cheddar cheese on each apple slice and use a toothpick to hold together. Or, send cheese cubes and apple slices in a container for your child.

# Make Your Own Puzzle

Creating your own personalized puzzle is sure to get your little one interested in piecing it back together, especially if the picture you choose includes their own little face!

1. Print out a photo or choose one from your album
2. Glue the photo onto a piece of cardboard, card stock or cutup cereal box. Trim to size.
3. Let dry then seal with two sheets of self-adhesive paper/packing tape (or laminate) and trim to size again.
4. Cut photos into several pieces, using different shapes: large pieces for young kids and small pieces for older ones.
5. Store puzzle pieces in a Ziplock bag.



## Free Education Sessions and MORE!

Did you know that you can attend a variety of FREE education sessions regarding your children, health and more? The Community Education Service (CES) provides parents/caregivers and other community members with opportunities to access free, evidence-informed education sessions and resource materials to address child, youth, and family health and mental health needs.

CES falls under Alberta Health Services' Child and Adolescent Addiction and Mental Health Programs (CAAMHP) and is housed in the Family and Community Resource Centre (FCRC) on the second floor of the Alberta Children's Hospital.

CES education sessions are hosted at the Alberta Children's Hospital and at various venues in Calgary and nearby communities. Many sessions are also available via telehealth/video-conference technology for those interested participants located within and outside of Calgary, and where telehealth/video-conference facilities are available.

In design and delivery of its education sessions, CES embraces the Family-Centred Care approach to building family and professional capacity by promoting families as active, fully-informed partners in the care of their children. CES also promotes the role of community partners as a vital support to children and families receiving care.

### Understanding your Child's Temperament

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

Discover the best ways of helping your child reach his/her potential, by matching your parenting methods with their individual temperament traits. In this workshop we discuss security, temperament traits, and individual personality differences.

*Session Time: 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm. Location: Family Connections Parent Link (Huntington Hills) 520-78th Ave., NW Calgary*

### Understanding Anger in Children

January 18, 2017

The author of Raise Your Kids Without Raising Your Voice will present realistic and sensible ways to lessen parenting stress and anger, strengthen parent-child relationships, increase a child's emotional intelligence, and reduce conflict and behavioural problems. She will offer stress-reducing strategies for gaining children's cooperation, thus eliminating the need for anger and criticism. Her communication tools foster love, acceptance and healthy boundaries.

Sign up for Sarah's free Daily Parenting Posts that help parents to focus daily on what's really important. [www.sarahchanaradcliffe.com](http://www.sarahchanaradcliffe.com) or at [www.dailyparentingposts.com](http://www.dailyparentingposts.com)

*Session Time: 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm Location: Alberta Children's Hospital - B2-200*

**FREE - Register by visiting <http://fcrc.albertahealthservices.ca/ces/login>**

**For a complete list of upcoming sessions (including ones listed above), visit [fcrc.albertahealthservices.ca/ces.php](http://fcrc.albertahealthservices.ca/ces.php)**

For more information: email [ces@ahs.ca](mailto:ces@ahs.ca) or call (403) 955-7420

# PUZZLES

Did you know that doing a puzzle together is a great example of hands-on interactive play? This is how our children learn. All sections of the brain are active as we "puzzle out" how to make sense of the picture or structure. While doing this, we are building important foundational skills.

Completing a puzzle also gives a sense of accomplishment, and repeating this success reinforces confidence in abilities. Completing gradually more difficult puzzles builds self-esteem, and self-esteem is needed to grow into happy and healthy adults.

## Puzzles Build Skills

**Memory:** recall information, long-term and short-term

**Logic and reasoning:** solve problems and draw conclusions

**Spatial:** organize visuals into patterns and think in images

**Motor:** pick up, pinch, grasp, turn over

**Hand-eye coordination:** learn connection between hands and eyes through trial and error

**Shape and colour:** recognition and sorting

**Goal-setting:** develop strategies to achieve small goals in order to work towards a larger goal

*Find out more about family literacy at [www.familit.ca](http://www.familit.ca), or call the Centre for Family Literacy at 780-421-7323 (Toll Free 1-866-421-7323).  
Funded by the Government of Alberta.*

