

I WAS A PERFECT PARENT, UNTIL I HAD CHILDREN.

Introduction by Frances Geiger Pelles.

When we hold our children in our arms for the first time our hearts are filled with love. But those moments often dissolve into angst, when we consider the responsibilities of parenthood. What kind of parents will we be? Will we follow the advice and example of our own parents or resolve never to treat our children the way we have been treated?

There's no doubt, no matter how angelic children are they are a challenge from the minute they arrive. Throughout our relationships with our children we frequently question ourselves on the best approach. How do we get our children to focus on listening and understanding so that they stay safe and respond to our requests? Are our children 'seen and heard?' Is the child's day filled with, "DON'T DO THAT" or "DO IT NOW" and maybe "NOT NOW I'M BUSY..."

Dawn Read, mother of two, recently found out the techniques of good parenting when she took part in the "Learning P.E.A.C.E.™ in the Family" (Learning Personal Empowerment And Conflict Expertise) course.

"I enrolled for Learning P.E.A.C.E.™ offered at the International School my children attend in order to try to better equip myself for the challenging teenage years ahead. I aim to be able to maintain a good, supportive and communicative relationship with my daughters as they face the prospect of puberty.

My expectations of the course were greatly exceeded as each week the subjects intertwined and proved very relevant to our day to day lives. The first relationship dealt with during each topic was the one we hold with ourselves. Until we understand the reason for our reaction to everyday situations we are unable to change our behaviour. The results of looking at our own reactions and beliefs are very positive and empowering. I have gained through the discussions, role plays and homework a much better understanding of myself and my children. I still face the same challenges every parent has to deal with, but now feel better equipped to deal with them positively and in a way that teaches my children to take responsibility for their own actions. It has been the end to the action/punishment cycle and the beginning of an understanding of their needs as well as my own. I would encourage any parent who has the opportunity to take part in this course."

Introducing Lisa Steindorf, trainer for Learning P.E.A.C.E.™ (Personal Empowerment And Conflict Expertise)



Lisa, how did you first become involved with this method of teaching?

"A number of years ago I was asked to substitute teach some 1-3rd graders at a local grade school my son was attending. I was prepared for some challenges, since a substitute is always a change in routine for the kids. I was not, however, prepared for my shock at the amount of aggression and potential for violence amongst these little ones. Clearly things had changed drastically in the classroom since I had last been in one.

That experience motivated me to go on an in depth search for a concept or program which would help young people, not only learn how to stop being aggressive but preferably how to develop their social skills and natural tendency toward harmonious relationships. And that is how I found Shirley Everett in Halifax Nova Scotia and the program she developed over the years as a grade school teacher which was called, at the time, On the Road to a Peaceful School. Shirley's approach and ideas were music to my ears.

I won my son's school staff for the idea of being trained in this concept for the betterment of all, including teachers who would like to have less to do with behavioural problems and more to do with teaching. That training gained a lot of public interest here in Germany. I continued to train with Shirley for a few years, being organiser, translator and assistant at other trainings. From the beginning learning from and working with Shirley was a joy and I am honoured to now be in partnership with her in teaching Learning P.E.A.C.E.™ to parents and teachers internationally. We were then asked by Cornelsen Publishing to write a book about the concept in order to spread the word about our work. After the book was published we decided that we would like to assist the many parents who had approached us over the years and asked "What can we do at home to have a more peaceful family?". And so "Learning P.E.A.C.E.™ in the Family" was born of our Learning P.E.A.C.E.™ Educator's Training."

Can you explain a little about the concept of Learning P.E.A.C.E.™

"We spend most of our younger years acquiring skills and tools with which we can deal more effectively with the daily tasks in life, and to prepare us for the work force and earning an income. However, most of us did not learn specific and useful tools to deal with the most pervasive and influential area of our lives, namely relationships. Yet we still need to deal with relationships, whether they be with our siblings, parents, co-workers or children. And, of course, being in relationship with others, or even with a group of people, brings friction and diversity of interests. Now

we have the added component of conflict to our dealing with relationships, for which we also most likely didn't receive any training or specific tools. By offering the comprehensive approach (the five building blocks mentioned below) of exploring all facets of our humanness, strengths and weaknesses and the magnificent challenge of personal interactions on a daily basis we literally learn to discover our own power and develop the expertise of dealing with relationships and conflicts as well.

Each of us, children and adults alike, has the desire to be heard, understood and believed. That is truly universal. We all wish to express our desires and feel we have power to act in our world and choose our reactions to the events which we experience. In Learning P.E.A.C.E.TM courses, we give the participants the opportunity to clarify their intentions, hone skills to achieve their goals and practice the tools to ask for their wants, understand the position of others, and find ways to work together, including conflict situations.

Since we teach in a process oriented manner (as opposed to a "do exercises 1,2 and 3 and then you will be doing it right" approach), people experience deeply that they indeed can choose how they are in their world so that it fits their design and wishes for their own life. Our desire in Learning P.E.A.C.E.TM is to empower each person to be more of who they are and bring that more to expression and enjoyment. Our children are the best teachers for helping us sculpt ourselves and the most accurate mirrors to see where we could chip a bit more away or polish a corner or two; for they see us most clearly and with most love. Hence, they also show us where we shine and are smooth and glorious.

In **Lessons on Living** we explore attitude, friendships, teamwork, goals, gratefulness . . .

In **Building Self-Esteem** we define our strengths and weaknesses, and feelings. We learn strategies to improve and maintain self-esteem in ourselves and our children.

In **The Art of Discipline** we get very concrete about rules, rights and responsibility, the difference between punishment and consequences and what authority indeed means.

In **Conflict Resolution** we dissect the causes and pattern of most conflicts. We train specific communication tools to deal with conflict without fear from an empowered place within ourselves.

In **Dealing with Bullying** we identify bullying and being a victim as well as work with strategies to stand up to bullying or knowing how to and when it is appropriate to get help.

All in all the course is very practical with an emphasis on the process instead of the result. In addition we have a whole lot of fun!"

Is there a 'right' way to parent?

For every single person who is a parent there is most certainly a right way, yet only he or she knows what their personal right way looks like, feels like and is defined as. There is also definitely commonality of desires among all parents; the biggest one of which is to have and nurture a trusting, supportive, respectful and loving relationship with our children. However, the reality of day to day life seems to 'rob' us of the fulfilment of that desire and in its place often leaves us feeling like managers, ogres and unappreciated worker bees. We all seek an effective and practical way to get to that 'right' way of parenting which leaves us fully satisfied with the clarity of our intentions and a congruency between our intentions and our behaviour."

Why do we end up doing exactly what our parents did with us, even though we swore we never would...

"Just as neither math nor English are learned magically, so it is also with our behaviour. Everything we do every day has been acquired through an investment of time and training on our part, from brushing our teeth, to reading a book, to driving a car. Our behaviour in certain situations, especially in parenting, is also learned behaviour which we have spent time and energy training over the years. And where did we receive our training? If you think about it, we were saturated with the 'how to' part of parenting by being on the receiving end, being the observing student—being the kid. Daily we saw how to parent by watching our own parents do it their way. Our parents did the absolute best job they could, given their beliefs and abilities at the time. Hopefully, that meant a supportive and educational upbringing, which prepared us well for life's challenges. For many of us, however, the parenting we received and learned from may have been less than supportive. Maybe we experienced a combination of both. And that is exactly what we have to draw from. So, it is not surprising if we end up parenting in a very similar manner to how our parents did the job. Like our parents we are doing the best we can given the beliefs we hold and our current abilities. However, as opposed to our parents, we do, gratefully, have many more opportunities to educate ourselves in this area and gain insight and tools to create relationships with our children which serve us all well."

"Talk with me and I know that it is important to you. Share with me and I will understand. Show me and I will learn."

New courses will be starting in the Autumn in the Frankfurt/Wiesbaden area in both English and German. To find out more click onto www.LifeSkillsMastery.com or contact Lisa C. Steindorf LisaC.Steindorf@web.de