



Our mission is to empower families raising children with mood, behavioral and emotional disorders, by providing support, training and advocacy skills and collaborating with community partners to improve the system of care for children.

Don't Look Now....August is Coming!!!

Dianne Shaffer, Executive Director



I hope everyone is enjoying summer! I, for one, am not a huge fan of the hot and humid days in July and August, however; the kids sure do seem to love playing outside no matter what the temperature. In this issue of the ASK newsletter we are focusing on positive parenting as well as (I know you don't want to see these words) back to school preparation. Our staff and guest authors have put together some great articles on transitioning and summer survival strategies in dealing with positive behavior supports!

questions or concerns about our children. I am excited to report that a Children's Mental Health Summit was offered on May 30 to physicians and other primary care staff in Michigan. Over 60 providers attended this day-long training. The topics covered were anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and aggression in children and youth. The emphasis was on how physicians can diagnose, treat, and appropriately refer families dealing with these challenges.

ing Behaviors Summer Institute where they will learn practical techniques for working with youth with challenging behaviors. They can use these techniques themselves, and share them with families receiving services through ASK. Lastly, I am sad to share that our Program Manager, Gisela Lawson, will be leaving us in June; we wish her the best of luck!

We at ASK are continually looking to improve our services, and to that end, we've hired a Youth Involvement Coordinator Assistant to help with our youth programs. Meet Deondra on page 5 of this newsletter. All of our Family Support Partners have an opportunity this summer to participate in a Managing Challeng-

We are in the process of interviewing candidates for the Program Manager position and hope to have it filled before September. Please visit our website for more information.

Relax, enjoy your children and your summer, and if you need help, just ASK!

I am excited to announce that Kalamazoo continues to take major strides toward improving the system of care for children. Many of us go to our pediatrician or primary care physician when we first have

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10 Keys to Successful Parenting

1. Use Genuine Encounter Moments (GEMS)

Your child's self-esteem is greatly influenced by the quality of time you spend with him-not the amount of time that you spend. With our busy lives, we are often thinking about the next thing that we have to do, instead of putting 100% focused attention on what our child is saying to us. We often pretend to listen or ignore our child's attempts to communicate with us. If we don't give our child GEMS throughout the day, he will often start to misbehave. Negative attention in a

child's mind is better than being ignored.

2. Use Action, Not Words

Statistics say that we give our children over 2000 compliance requests a day! No wonder our children become "parent deaf!" Instead of nagging or yelling, ask yourself, "What action could I take?" For example, if you have nagged your child about unrolling his socks when he takes them off, then only wash socks that are unrolled. Action speaks louder than words.

3. Give Children Appropriate Ways to Feel Powerful

If you don't, they will find inap-

propriate ways to feel their power. Ways to help them feel powerful and valuable are to ask their advice, give them choices, and let them help. A two-year-old can wash plastic dishes, wash vegetables, or put silverware away. Often we do the job for them because we can do it with less hassle, but the result is that they feel unimportant.

4. Allow Natural Consequences

Ask yourself, 'what would happen if I didn't interfere in this situation?' If we interfere when we don't need to, we rob children of the chance to learn from the consequences of

Question: Elementary school has been tough for my child and he only has one teacher. How is he/she going to survive middle school with 7 different teachers and expectations? He can't even find his pencil now, how is he going to manage a locker? What can I do?

Answer: 5th grade was a tough year for my son. He couldn't find his paper, had lost his pencil, took too long in the bathroom, was the brunt of teasing for his tics and academically wasn't keeping up. When I think back I think that I would just consider 5th grade the year that wasn't. It wasn't successful, wasn't fun, wasn't a good experience. Middle school loomed large ahead and all I could think was, "How was Chris going to find his pencil amidst a locker, hallway and 7 classrooms when he couldn't maintain the pencil in one classroom?" His teachers were frustrated and thought that it sounded like a disaster in the making too and so pursuing Special Education services became not only my request, but their suggestion as well.

We had a transition IEP at the end of the school year in preparation for middle school. The middle school teachers and Principal came to the meeting and as the 5th grade teachers described the needs and challenges my son had, the eyes of the middle school staff got larger and larger. My son wasn't at this meeting and it looked to me like the new staff was envisioning my son to be a real monster! It was all I could do to

overcome this image in their minds. He was an 11 year old boy with challenges, yes, but he had positive traits too!



In order to help others to have a more positive, productive transition, I have considered some things that I could have done to feel more at ease at the meeting and to accomplish more. Hopefully they will help you too!

- If you have an IEP in place, then a transition meeting is in order and you could request that meeting in writing. Remember that the school has 30 school days to hold the meeting, so make sure that you request it with plenty of time for planning.
- Consider the top three things that you feel might be your child's biggest challenges. Schedule a visit to the school and take a tour. Sometimes just seeing how things could play out can make some fears vanish. Look over your list and reconsider it with your newfound knowledge.
- Call the Special Education teacher your child may have help from and simply introduce yourself in a friendly way. Try not to make this initial contact anything other than an introduction (save details for another day).
- Go to the meeting with a plan, which you have prepared in advance, of positive things about your child and some challenges that you think he/she might

face. Be open to the school's suggestion on how they might meet those challenges.

- Call ASK and ask for a Family Support Partner to help put together a plan if you feel overwhelmed or have questions. That is one of the reasons we are here. We've all walked this road and can help you to sort out the details

If your child does not currently have an IEP don't panic! If you have genuine fears about your child's ability for success in middle school, you could make an effort to talk to their homeroom teacher for the year and also, the counselor in charge of your child's grade. Middle school is an important time in a child's development on many levels. Encourage your child to do their best during the first marking period. Make sure he/she is getting enough rest, quiet time to complete homework, daily exercise and good nutrition. If after the first marking period your child is struggling, you could request that an IEP evaluation take place. Make sure that you submit all requests in writing. If you find that you have questions or need help deciding how to handle your situation, give us a call and we will walk with you through it.

Answer provided by Ginger Skidmore, ASK Family Support Partner

College: A Survival Manual for the Diagnosed

by Annie Eckrich

Culturally regarded as a rite of passage, as well as an indispensable commodity in this strange new world, college opens the door to everything. The increased freedom, however, provides ample opportunity for the development and advancement of *anything* in the DSM-IV. Therefore, action and awareness prove invaluable while traversing the minefield of adulthood.

Driven by unipolar depression and anxiety, I often, depressed and anxious, contemplate the effects of my diagnoses. "What happens if I lack the motivation to get out of bed? What happens if I lose pride in my work? What if I'm stuck with a Debbie Downer roommate? What if I'M the Debbie Downer?" As any therapist will attest, the energy spent worrying and wallowing can just as easily be spent on preparation.

First off, congratulations are long overdue. Education is the best gift the world gives. But with your gift, you do not want to mistreat it! Regard your education as something as valuable as yourself. After all, your brain—the most beautiful instrument, the CEO, the source and organizer of all that is life, humanity's greatest asset and greatest curse—IS yourself, and you deserve every opportunity to embody your ideal.

Remember that you control your education. Become your prefrontal cortex and organize, organize, organize. A sense of organization contributes to feelings of confidence, competence, and control—all remedies for mental illness' accomplice, low self-worth. While you may thrive on disorganization, harmony exists in discord. Go find it! Whenever you catch yourself thinking a "dangerous" thought (I'm ugly, I'm worthless, that person is stupid, et cetera), study. Always strive to meet your personal standards. (I'm typically a B student, but when I get to college? Nuh-uh, never again.) Organization gives YOU power.





July/August 2009

ASK provides refreshments and CHILDCARE during all ASK support groups, doors open at 6:15!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 ASK Closed	4 
5	6 ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm	7 PAG/CAY 6:00-7:30pm	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21 PAG/CAY 6:00-7:30pm	22	23 ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 AUGUST
2	3 ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm	4 PAG/CAY 6:00-7:30pm	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 PAG/CAY 6:00-7:30pm	19	20 ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 First Day Shoe Fund Distribution Day!!!	28	29
30	31	The goal of First Day Shoe Fund is to provide a free, brand new pair of shoes to each K-2 student in KPS, who qualify for free or reduced lunch.			SEE BACK SIDE for details regarding listed events. Post & Share this Calendar!!!	

ASK Parent Support Group with a general focus is held on the **1st Monday of each Month** at **Prince of Peace Lutheran Church** ~ 1747 W Milham Rd, Portage

Kalamazoo Wraps Parent Advisory Group (**PAG**) & Kalamazoo Wraps Calling All Youth (**CAY**) Meet the **1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month** at **Bronson Gilmore Education Center**, 7 Healthcare Plaza, Kalamazoo

ASK Parent Support Group focused on supporting families receiving Community Mental Health services is held on the **3rd Thursday of each Month** at **First Presbyterian Church** ~ 321 W. South Street, Kalamazoo

Please contact ASK at (269) 343-5896 with questions regarding updates, cancellations, or alterations to this schedule Or visit our website, www.askforkids.org

**College: A Survival Manual
Continued**

Communication matters the most. When you feel lost and afloat, there are dozens of people willing to help you. Maintain contact with advocates, therapists, and family members. If you don't understand something, set up an appointment with the instructor or stay after class. Be persistent and assertive. You are the one who will ensure your success. Remember, however, that success is not an end but a means. Success does not stop—a popular misconception. Success is a process of becoming your ideal self.

Examine your values. Many students cling to doubts as to what their studies. Do you like texting? Try journalism. Like to argue? Try philosophy as a lead-in to law. Do you often inquire as to why things are accepted? Try science. Sublimation works beautifully. Above all remember your personal values. It's very easy to lose yourself amongst all of this change, but remember your core. Though I know not my readership, I hold no doubts: all of you are wonderful people frustrated by your inability to see yourself as wonderful. The sufferings we endure are unique and make us *us*. Nobody deserves suffering, yet without it we'd have no place for compassion, diversity, triumph, happiness, and love. Amor fati—love fate.

In short: Plan ahead. Make a list of short-term goals and long-term goals and talk them over with someone you trust, to formulate an action plan. Respect YOUR self and see every misfire as a learning opportunity from which you may overcome. Maintain your health. Preventive mental health—such as taking medication and communicating openly with trusted individuals—is to be prioritized. Talk to professors. Apply your multitudinous talents to the world; cultivate the garden of your self. Center yourself and remember to find your golden mean.

This is YOUR time. Our youth renders us idealistic, yet what is life but a fantastic idea? The energy one spends on harmful thoughts is energy better spent elsewhere, for your benefit and that of others. At present you possess every capability known to man. Some call our consciousness a burden, but you decide whether it be! You deserve education—that beautiful opportunity, that beautiful trip through our labyrinth-brain! Education is not something you receive, it is something you make. Man is infinite.



10 Keys Continued their actions. For example, if your child forgets her lunch, don't take it to her. Allow her to find a solution and learn the importance of remembering.

5. Use Logical Consequences

Often natural consequences are too far in the future. When that is the case, logical consequences are effective. A consequence for the child must be logically related to the behavior in order for it to work. For example, if your child forgets to return his video and you ground him for a week, that punishment will only create resentment within your child. However, if you return the video for him and either deduct the amount from his allowance or allow him to work off the money owed, then your child can see the logic to your discipline.

6. Withdraw from Conflict

If your child is testing you through a temper tantrum, or being angry or speaking disrespectfully to you, it is best if you leave the room or tell the child you will be in the next room if he wants to "Try again." Do not leave in anger or defeat.

7. Separate the Deed from the Doer

Never tell a child that he is bad. That tears at his self-esteem. Help your child recognize that it isn't that you don't like him, but it is his behavior that you are unwilling to tolerate. In order for a child to have healthy self-esteem, he must know that he is loved unconditionally. Do not motivate your child by withdrawing your love from him. When in doubt, ask yourself, "did my discipline build my child's self-esteem?"

8. Be Kind and Firm at the Same Time

Suppose you have told your five-year-old child that if she isn't dressed by the time the timer goes off, you will pick her up and take her to the car. She has been told she can either get dressed in the car or at school. Make sure that you are loving when you pick her up, yet firm by picking her up as soon as the timer goes off without any more nagging. If in doubt, ask yourself, *did I motivate through love or fear?*

9. Parent with the End in Mind

Most of us parent with the mindset to get the situation under control as soon as possible. We are looking for the expedient solution. This often results in children who feel overpowered. But if we parent in a way that keeps in mind how we want our child to be as an adult, we will be more thoughtful in the way we parent. E.g. if we spank, our children may learn to use acts of aggression to get what they want when they grow up.

10. Be Consistent, Follow Through

If you have made an agreement that your child cannot buy candy when she gets to the store, do not give in to her pleas, tears, demands or pouting. Your child will learn to respect you more if you mean what you say.

Adapted June, 2009 from *Ten Keys to Positive Parenting*, a document produced by the International Network for Children and Families and the 350 instructors of the "Redirecting Children's Behavior" course, http://www.positiveparenting.com/resources/feature_article_001.html

CALLING ALL YOUTH!

Are you a young person between the ages of 11-17 who feels like life is happening around you?

Calling All Youth (CAY) is your chance to speak up and be heard by adults, teachers, government, therapists, counselors, juvenile justice, schools and all of the authority figures in your life.



IT'S TIME YOU HAD A VOICE!

For more information contact Mackenzie Hunter
At (269) 343-5896

Are you a parent or caregiver of a child with a mood, emotional, or behavioral challenge?

Are you passionate about improving the system of care for children's mental health?



**Consider joining Kalamazoo Wraps
Parent Advisory Group!**

Childcare and Refreshments are provided

For more information, contact Kathy Howard at (269) 343-5896

Funding by Greater Kalamazoo United Way, Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and contributions from members and friends.



Behavior Contracts Can Benefit the Entire Family (and perhaps save your summer!)

By Mary Beth Mapes

The primary purpose of a Home Rules Contract (HRC) is **for teens to be held accountable for their behavior** while allowing parents to maintain a reasonable amount of control. A Home Rules Contract will teach teens that there are consequences to breaking rules, hopefully a lesson that will carry over into all aspects of their lives. An HRC can only act as a basic agreement that will allow families to work toward resolutions for problem behaviors.

Who should be involved? *The Entire Family.*

Parent Figures: This could include: biological parents, step-parents, adoptive parents, custodial persons, non-custodial persons who are responsible for all or part of the teens for all or part of a day, and legal guardians. **It is very important for separated parents to put their differences aside** and come together for the purpose of creating a *unified* front for the child. An HRC can sometimes best be accomplished with the help of a third party, such as a qualified therapist.

Teens & Pre-Teens: In order to be effective, all children in the family need to see the HRC as fair. Therefore, it may not work to single out a child with bad behaviors, and exclude siblings. The offending child could view it as unfair and may refuse to follow it. Siblings who are already following the rules protest the HRC, remind them that success is a family effort and they are part of the family. By including all siblings, you are establishing the fact that you are a **FAMILY**, and

that getting the family to work as a functioning unit requires the input and cooperation of each family member.

Consequences: The rationale behind consequences should be primarily to offer a learning experience, so that the teen will learn to correct his or her-own behavior, and **not** repeat the offending action. Parents often overreact and try to enforce unreasonable consequences (e.g. Grounded for a month for 1 curfew violation). Try to fit the consequence to the offence (e.g. Teen comes home late, so the next week, he/she will need to come home twice as early as he/she was late.)

Home Rules Contract for the _____ Family
All family members, whose signatures are present on this document below, are in agreement with, and will follow the rules and consequences of this Home Rules Contract as listed:

Rule 1: _____

Consequence: _____

Privilege: _____

Signatures : _____

(contract must be signed by all family members involved in contract)

Things you could include: Curfew, chores, school behavior and grades, smoking, telephone use, computer use, use of the car, alcohol/drug use, expressions of anger or violence including swearing, conflict,

running away, medication issues, attendance at therapy sessions, or whatever ideas you or your children have.

Setting up the contract:

- 1) Identify not more than **five** of the most important issues in your family.
- 2) *Specifically identify* what is **expected** for each behavior
- 3) Specify what the **consequences** and the **privileges** will be.
- 4) *Set a date* to **renew** and **revise** the contract.
- 5) Consult with all other parental figures to make sure that all are in agreement and willing to enforce the contract as written.

Youth News and Updates

By Mackenzie Hunter

We will be facing many exciting new developments this summer as membership in Kalamazoo Wraps' Calling All Youth (CAY) advisory board has increased nearly three-fold! This exciting growth has brought about three promising changes for Calling All Youth; the employment of an additional staff member, the appointment of two youth leaders, and the development of a new pre-CAY preparatory group. CAY's new staff member, Deondra Magett, is a junior at Western Michigan University who is currently pursuing a degree in Social Work with minors in Non-Profit Organization Leadership and Business Management. We are thrilled to have her on board in our efforts to become and remain a youth-guided community of care; we can't wait to get things rolling! Justin Hartness and Damara Fifolt, our two newly appointed youth leaders, are both 17 year old members of CAY. They have demonstrated a huge capacity for leadership in our group, and are ready to step up and take on some new responsibilities. We are very excited to acknowledge their appointment as our new youth assistants! The pre-CAY prep group, soon to be led by MRC's Carol Wimmer, will provide younger, less experienced youth the opportunity to build the confidence and skills necessary for participation in the CAY advisory board. The curriculum will focus on topics like emotional intelligence and regulation, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and public speaking. The group is expected to launch in August, with more details to follow. We really could not be more pleased with this opportunity to partner with another youth-serving agency in our community and can't wait to see where this collaboration will take us!





advocacy services for kids
414 East Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Please visit us at www.askforkids.org for valuable information about our services, links to resources, and an archive of our newsletters.

You can also opt-in to join our electronic mailing list to receive updates about ASK and community events.

If you no longer wish to receive this publication, please email us at mail@askforkids.org

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