

## An Introduction To Collaborative Problem Solving

MPAC Co-Chair Stephanie Hunter is a behavior specialist and a parent of a child who experiences disability. Stephanie presented at an MPAC behavior workshop in May and she also offered to share a brief overview of Collaborative Problem Solving for the newsletter.

Collaborative problem solving (CPS) is from the book *The Explosive Child* by Dr. Ross Greene. This book is \$10 or less and is a highly recommended purchase. This is just a summary of some of the concepts in the book. This book is a good tool for all families and many schools are adopting CPS as their primary intervention method.

- The best time to use collaborative problem solving is when your child is in a space where he can listen. If he is really upset then it might not work.
- Be prepared to pick your battles and put some of your parenting goals on the backburner as you are getting practice using the techniques of CPS.
- Realize that most behavior can be predicted, and if you know what sets your child off, then you have the power to change your behavior and also teach him how to handle what is triggering the behavior.
- Before you start using CPS, spend a week writing down all of the problems that caused any level of frustration. Be aware that this list might include most parts of his day, but journal what the triggers were and rate your response on a 1-10 scale in intensity.
- One goal is to flip your intensity scale. For example: If you rate your response as an 8 in intensity to a challenging behavior, try to imagine giving your child an 8 for a positive behavior instead, and a 2 for a challenging behavior. Ignoring behaviors when it is safe to do so is a time-honored technique that works along with other positive strategies.

CPS is based on the idea that there are 3 ways to measure behavior and these are called plans A,B, and C.

- Plan A – This is health and safety. If your child is going to run in the road, his opinion does not really matter right now. You will do what it takes to keep him safe. A crisis level reaction on our part is what we call Plan A.
- Plan C – This is when there is behavior happening that no one is going to get hurt from but it is still difficult, annoying, disruptive, or possibly causing low level damage to property. It is inappropriate to react with a Plan A response, but you do feel the need to REACT in some way to address or stop this behavior. Plan C is about picking your battles and deciding to let it go for now, or just do your best to maintain your sanity to get through this moment until you can work out a Plan B. An example: There are cupcakes sitting out and you told your child he can have one cupcake. He goes for the second cupcake and whines and screams for another one which he already has in his hands at this point. Just let it go, put the rest of the cupcakes away, and then set aside time to come up with a plan for next time. Plan C is not to be confused with giving up or spoiling, it is only those things if you do not address it with a plan later.

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## Oregon Disability MegaConference 2009

The Oregon Disability MegaConference 2009 will be held Thursday through Saturday, June 25-27, at the Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel. This second annual statewide conference is put on by a coalition of disability organizations in order to empower people with disabilities, their families and those who support them. This year's keynote speakers are Norm Kunc and Chris Curry. Along with presentations from a variety of advocates, self-advocates, educators and professionals, the conference will also feature an exhibit hall, kids activities, socializing, networking and more.

Don't miss this opportunity to see Norm Kunc. He is engaging and humorous speaker who has great knowledge on how schools and communities can build a sense of belonging for all children. Norm was born with cerebral palsy and was segregated into a special school until he was 13. He then went on to a regular school, received a bachelors degree and a Master of Science degree in Family Therapy.

Chris Curry is the executive director of Families Together, a resource for families with a child or sibling experiencing disability. Chris uses her past experience teaching in preschool and elementary classrooms with students experiencing disability and as the director of the Center of Supportive Education at Washington State University in providing information and trainings to empower families.

For more information, visit [www.oregonmegaconference.org](http://www.oregonmegaconference.org), [www.normemma.com](http://www.normemma.com) and [www.familiesogether.org](http://www.familiesogether.org).

### Social Stories

Thanks to an MPAC grant, I was able to attend a conference by Carol Gray, the originator of Social Stories. Carol developed these personalized short stories to help teach social behavior to children experiencing autism, but parents and educators have also found them to be helpful in teaching concepts to children experiencing other disabilities and also to typically developing children.

Carol shared that 65 percent of our conversations are spent sharing stories, so using stories is a great way to teach concepts. Carol gave some tips at the workshop on how to approach these stories. These include :

- \* Keep the story between two and 12 pages for preschool aged children
- \* Use 1st or 3rd person perspective
- \* Repetition and rhyme, like the style of Dr. Seuss, is appealing to younger children and can help them remember and understand the ideas
- \* don't use should or ought in the stories
- \* keep the stories positive and never put a negative statement in the child's words

Carol has published a number of books on writing Social Stories and more information can be found at her website at [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org). You can also ask your service provider about using Social Stories with your child.

A sample story about circle time is located in the sidebar to the left.

-Lisa Harman, MPAC Newsletter Editor

### Social Story: Circle Time

1. At school we have circle time. We might read a book or sing songs.
2. I sit criss-cross applesauce on the carpet.
3. I will try to look and listen to my teacher and keep my hands to myself.
5. If I want to talk I can raise my hand and wait for the teacher to call my name.
6. My teacher likes it when I sit and listen at circle time. I can hear my teacher better when I look at her and listen quietly.

When the summer temperatures heat up, families looking to cool down have many options in the area. There are a number of fountains around Portland, like Jamison Square, Irvington Park and Blue Lake Park. You can also go swimming at local pools such as Portland Parks and Rec pools or Mt. Hood Community College. If you want to avoid the crowds, many indoor pools are often less crowded in the summertime compared to their outdoor counterparts so you can have plenty of space to splash around.



## Preparing For Preschool

Children who qualify for Early Intervention, which covers birth to three services, will be evaluated before they turn three to see if they are eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), which covers ages three to five. This process will begin at least 90 days before your child's third birthday and it's not a bad idea for parents to begin thinking about this transition sooner than that to allow more time for planning.

The team of service providers, parents, and anyone else who is involved, will meet to talk about the child's strengths and challenges and parents will sign permission to evaluate based on the concerns of the team. Parents do have the right to decide what testing they do or do not want. If the child is eligible for services, the team will develop a new IFSP for preschool. This is a good time for parents to learn to communicate about their child's strengths and concerns in preparation for their transition into Kindergarten.

MECP will offer your child a spot in one of their 28 preschools across the county where they accept up to eight typically developing neighborhood peers. Some MECP schools have a 50/50 ratio of students experiencing disabilities to peers, while others have a lower percentage of peers. If you choose a community preschool for your child, MECP will provide your child with services in that setting with visits from specialists to the preschool.

Your service provider may have suggestions on what to look for in a community preschool to best suit your child. Other parents can also be a great source for preschool recommendations and you can also contact the Multnomah County Childcare Resource and Referral (503.548.4400, [www.ccr-mc.org](http://www.ccr-mc.org)). The Inclusive Childcare Program (971.673.2286, [www.ocdd.org](http://www.ocdd.org)) does not give referrals for specific preschools, but they do offer information on childcare stipends and the laws surrounding students with disabilities. They also offer training and consultations for care providers.

Head start can be a good option for families because they do not charge tuition and they are mandated to have 10 percent of their students on IFSPs. If your family does not meet the income requirements, you may still qualify if the Head Start location needs to fulfill the 10 percent quota.

When you choose a preschool, you should think about your vision for your child in elementary school. If you would like your child to be in an inclusive setting for elementary school, a community preschool can be a great choice because it will give your child more opportunities to play and develop friendships with typical peers.

Whatever preschool you decide on, it is helpful to prepare your child for the transition. Have your child visit the school and meet with the teacher before he or she starts school. Also write down any questions you have for the teacher so you don't forget to ask them. Your service provider can put together a social story to prepare your child for what will happen on preschool days. The ideas included in the Tips For A Smooth Transition To Kindergarten article on page 6 can also be helpful for your child's journey to preschool.

Your child can enjoy fun activities while you have a little break with the Saturday Respite Program offered by the Arc of Multnomah-Clackamas. This once a month program is available for children ages 6 weeks to 18 years who experience a developmental disability. Respite providers will engage your child in age-appropriate activities such as arts and crafts, reading and other fun things. The next session will be held on June 16 from 10-2 pm at the YMCA Child Development Center, 1133 SW Market St, Portland. The cost is \$15 per child and scholarships are available. Pre-registration is required at least one week in advance. Contact Amber Lang at 503.935.5233 or [alang@thearcmult.org](mailto:alang@thearcmult.org). Dates for the July and August sessions were not available at press time, so please contact Amber if you are interested in attending in those months.



*Continued from page 1*

- Plan B – This is your plan. With your child you might be pre-teaching, role-playing, and giving reminders before doing something, and being as patient as you can as he learns. Plan B also recognizes that even the best plans fall apart, or the kid throws in a loophole you had not prepared for. With Plan B you have practiced and really thought through how you will teach your child what he needs to learn. You will have considered how much time and energy you will need to ride out this situation with him and identified what supports you might need.

Plan A and C are pretty straightforward but Plan B is where all of the work comes in. Plan B is your strategy to address and teach the skill you want your child to have, but it is also the way you will get the information you need from your child to learn why he is having problems. You have to wait until your child is calm to get the information you want from him. The best time to have a Plan B talk with him is going to be before he is faced with the task that usually causes a problem.

- Empathy – Here you will basically repeat the problem back to your child in an empathetic tone. The goal is to find out what his concern is instead of him dictating the solution.
- Empathy with reassurance – This is how you might respond in a situation where you know he will explode and need him to be calm to come up with a solution together.
- Define the problem – The goal is that you will have two concerns on the table; one is going to be your child's and the other will be yours.
- Invitation – Now that there are two concerns on the table you can work on a collaborative solution together and, as a plus, teach your child problem solving skills. You will be brainstorming with your child and inviting him to come up with solutions by saying something like, "Let's come up with a solution together" or "Let's figure this out together." Your child will get the first shot at coming up with something. Do not skip this step and come up with a solution before you invite him to come up with it. Remember you are teaching him a skill!

This really is just a very general overview of CPS and I highly recommend purchasing, reading, and re-reading this book; if you don't do it now you will definitely want a copy before adolescence hits!!!!

### **Potty Training Recap**

At our April monthly meeting, MECP nurses Jean Bogerd and Joanne Shrinsky and parent advocate Christy Reese presented tips and tricks for potty training. They stressed that every child is different when it comes to being ready to potty train, so parents should not feel that they've failed if their child is not trained by age 4.

Signs of readiness are when the child is aware of being wet or soiled, they can make the connection of the sensations involved and they can follow simple directions. Parents must also be ready to commit to training, so don't begin training if you will be going on a trip or you are expecting a new baby. Keep in mind that the later you start, the less time it will take and if the child is not ready, it's not going to happen.

Recommended books available at the Multnomah County Library include *The Potty Training Journey* by Judith Coucouvanis and *The No Cry Potty Training Solution* by Elizabeth Pantley. Meeting notes and handouts are available on the MPAC listserv. See page 5 for more information about the listserv.

Farmers' markets can be a fun outing for families, and there are many area markets to choose from, including:

Gresham- 8:30 am-2 pm on Saturdays at Miller and 3rd St

Hillsdale- 10 am-2 pm on Sundays at Wilson High parking lot

Hollywood- 8 am-1 pm on Saturdays at NE Hancock and 44th

Interstate- 3-7 pm on Wednesdays at N Fremont and Interstate

King- 10 am-2 pm on Sundays at NE Wygant and 7th

Lents- 9 am-2 pm on Sundays at SE 92nd and Foster

Montavilla- 10 am-2 pm on Sundays at SE Start and 76th

Parkrose- 8 am-2 pm on Saturdays at NE Shaver and 118th

Portland PSU- 8:30 am-2 pm on Saturdays at South Park Blocks

St Johns- 9 am-1 pm on Saturdays at St Johns Plaza

Troutdale- 10 am-2 pm on Saturdays at 551 E Historic Columbia River Hwy

## Join Us Online

MPAC invites you to join us online by subscribing to our Internet listserv. When you sign up for this online group, you will receive reminders for upcoming meetings, workshops and events hosted by MPAC. We also post other items of interest to our families.

We send out meeting notes for those who couldn't make it and for those who want to refresh their memories on what was covered. There is also resource information, copies of the newsletters and copies of handouts on the sidebar under *Files*. Under *Links* you'll find websites with useful information for families of children who experience disability. If you want to be among the first to read new issues of the newsletter, we'll send an announcement when the latest issue is posted in the *Files* section.

If you want to limit the number of emails that you receive, you can click on *Edit Membership* near the top of the page and choose *Daily Digest* under *Message Delivery*. If multiple messages are posted on the same day, you'll only receive one email containing all of those messages.

To join, please send an email with "subscribe" in the subject line to [ParentActionComm-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:ParentActionComm-subscribe@yahoo.com).

## Upcoming Events

**Oaks Park** offers **Preschool Rides Mornings** for children ages 6 and under. Children and their parents can enjoy kiddy rides and have a snack and story time with an Oregon Dairy Princess. The cost is \$6 per child and adults are free with a child's paid admission. These special mornings take place from 9:30 to 11:30 on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from June 16 through September 23. Call 503.233.5777 or visit [www.oakspark.com/chippersrides.html](http://www.oakspark.com/chippersrides.html).

The eight annual **Gresham Art Walk** offers work from close to 100 local artists, live music and free arts and crafts activities for children. The event takes place in historic downtown Gresham from 9 am to 5 pm on Saturday, July 18. Call 503.661.9255 or visit [www.greshamartwalk.com](http://www.greshamartwalk.com).

**The Tillamook Cheese 100th Anniversary Celebration** will be held on July 31 at Pioneer Courthouse Square in downtown Portland. Tillamook will celebrate 100 years of cheese making at this all day event, featuring ice cream cones for a penny, activities for the whole family and pictures with Tillie the cow. Visit [www.pioneercourhousesquare.org](http://www.pioneercourhousesquare.org).

**The Portland Festival Symphony** offers free classical music concerts in the parks. The concerts will be held at Cathedral Park on Saturday, August 1, Washington Park on Sunday, August 2, Grant Park on Saturday, August 8, Peninsula Park on Sunday, August 9 and Laurelhurst Park on Saturday, August 15. All concerts begin at 6 pm. Call 503.245.7878 or visit [www.portlandfestivalsymphony.org](http://www.portlandfestivalsymphony.org).

For more activities, visit the Disability Compass Calendar of Events at [www.disabilitycompass.org/calendar.php](http://www.disabilitycompass.org/calendar.php).



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## Tips For A Smooth Transition To Kindergarten

When your child starts attending a new school, it can be a time of excitement and it also can be worrisome, both for children and for parents.



We spent the summer before my daughter entered Kindergarten preparing for her transition. We talked a lot about what to expect at school and the fun times she would have there. We spent time at the school playground throughout the summer so that she would know her way around and feel comfortable when school started.

We made a book about the first day of Kindergarten with a simple story outlining what we would do to get ready for school and what would happen once she got to school. We took pictures at home, on the playground and in the classroom for the book.

We also practiced touching elbows and hooking our pinkies together to say good-bye. This always made my daughter giggle when we practiced it at home and it helped distract her from her worries when we said good-bye on that first day of school. This tip came from the Let's Explore Blog, which has a great post on Kindergarten prep at [lets-explore.net/blog/?p=109](http://lets-explore.net/blog/?p=109).

We read many picture books to prepare for Kindergarten and favorites were Countdown to Kindergarten by Alison McGhee, the Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn and My Kindergarten by Rosemary Wells.

I learned from our harried preschool mornings that it was best to allow plenty of time to get ready in the morning. We prepare some things the night before, like picking out clothes and packing lunch, which makes us feel less rushed in the morning and helps us continue to get off to a good start each day.

*-Lisa Harman, MPAC Newsletter Editor*

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