



## Fresh Thinking

At the beginning of a new year it's good to get out of the recycling business and do some creative reflective thinking. To avoid simply repeating your 2009 parenting experience again this new year, here are two questions to reflect on:

Letting go: What do I need to let go off that isn't working for me as a parent? What's the old stuff that ought to die?

Letting come: Where are the new opportunities for me to gain new aspects of myself as a parent? What new things do I need to welcome into my life?

Letting go of the stuff that no longer works and welcoming the new ideas will make 2010 a great parenting year. With every good wish for your parenting success this year.

*Ian McKean*  
Ian McKean

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### PARENTING

## How to prepare my child for a challenging new world

"I really want my child to be happy and to succeed," says Andrew, a dad of a 4 year of boy. "With all the challenges of being a parent these days what can I do to prevent my child from falling behind?" A lot of parents share Andrew's concern. They are anxious and uncertain about how to help their child thrive in a world where the rules have changed. With the global economy shaking (what career will be available when my child needs one), climate change (will there even be a planet for my child!), and social breakdown (drugs, alcohol abuse, violence) it's hard not to be a stressed out parent!

### Don't think a discipline technique will compensate for a poor relationship.

Several parenting approaches have tried to address this challenge. One has been to be a 'helicopter' parent. This describes parents who hover over their kids and make a lot of noise trying to rescue their child when a difficulty arises. Helicopter parents intensify their efforts by providing their child with every possible advantage – classes, activities and programs. The hope is, maybe some of the skills will stick thus giving the child a head start.

Another approach is parenting skills. It's reasoned, "If I can get enough relevant parenting skills it will make the difference for my child succeeding!" Sarah, a friend who is an accountant, asks me, "With so much parenting and family information available today, why do our family and social problems keep increasing?" While her observation disturbs me, it's one I have to admit is right! So what's the answer for anxious parents? What insight do they need to become competent and confident parents in a challenging world?

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## How to prepare my child for a challenging new world (Cont. from page 1)

Seeking to enhance our child's future through better plans and skills, while understandably appealing, might not be where the parenting pot of gold is found. That's because developmental science has unequivocally found that relationship and emotion are the two most important factors in a child's healthy development. While plans and skills obviously have their place, there is a danger that if they become the primary approach of a parent they become an end in themselves; the focus is on the skill and function, not the child. When children feel they aren't the central focus they feel controlled, or coerced, so they resist. That leads to more behavioural problems, not the desired less problems.

If plans and skills aren't of key importance what is? Relationship is all important, but it is something we are often not consciously aware of as parents. It's like driving a car. The relationship is like petrol to a car; it's the power that drives the car. We take it for granted that petrol gets squirted into the engine as we drive. But imagine owning a car and not bothering to fill it with petrol. Using a plan and skill approach is like realising the car is stopped, so you design plans and techniques and strategies for moving the car. But all the car needs is petrol. Children need relationship, like cars need petrol.

Understanding the parent-child relationship is supremely more important than any search for a parent action plan. When our child stops moving like we want them to move, we need a better approach than new plans and skills to try to get them moving properly. Only a relationship approach has the power to change a resisting child into a cooperative child. Here is a vital insight: We all want our children to be good – to cooperate and be obedient. I don't know any parent who claps their hands with joy saying "It's wonderful . . . my kid throws 5 temper tantrums everyday!" We want our child to be good. But what is of far more importance is that our child wants to be good. This intrinsic power of wanting to be good is only given to those whom the child feels connected to – relationship.



Here are the benefits that come from having a strong relationship with a child: they listen to us, they feel at home with us, they follow us, they like us, they look up to us, they seek our help, they like our company, they like to please us, and they trust us. If this doesn't describe your child, you don't need to fix the car (your child). You just need petrol. Dr. Gordon Neufeld, a Canadian developmental psychologist and best selling author advises parents: "It's not so much what we do as parents, but rather who we are to our child that really counts."

### Insights into building relationship:

**Don't try and do what nature has already done. Your child's DNA (genetics) is already programmed to help your child be their very best.** No parent can teach their child to be mature – that's the genes job. But you can provide your child with an enriched environment for it to occur. Creating an enriched environment doesn't include play stations, toys or other gadgets either! It describes the quality of your interactions with your child – that's what defines relationship. A consistent finding of neuroscience research is that warm emotional interactions, and not learning devices, create a smart child.

**Help your child to become their own unique, separate self.** Observe your child to see what makes them happy and contented, or frustrated and irritated. While they play, pay attention to what they do, how they like to do things and what they enjoy to do. By recognising and affirming their uniqueness you are helping their real self to emerge. To really know a child doesn't happen automatically. It takes intentional observation. Remember too, children must know who they are before they can like who they are.

**Don't think a discipline technique will compensate for a poor relationship.** It won't! Discovering who your child really is requires a relationship focus and not a technique approach. Techniques (like timeout, logical consequences) work okay if you have a good relationship. But if the relationship is weak the child will resist. If you find your child resisting your directives, don't be more persistent in using your discipline technique. Back off until the relationship is stronger.

**Building relationship includes:** how I listen to my child, how I play with my child, how I show my love to my child, how I speak to my child, how I communicate with my child.

Relationship building not only helps a child be more co-operative and to listen and attend to what you say, but equally important is that it lays a foundation of connection. A hidden benefit of this is when a child reaches the teenage years they avoid rebellion because when a child feels close to you they want to please you.

## Healthy diets need fibre

Fibre provides many health benefits, including such diverse things as relieving constipation to lowering your risk of heart disease. Fibre is the parts of plant food that our bodies can't digest or absorb. It therefore passes through the body and then out of the body. How could something the body doesn't digest be so beneficial?

### There are two categories of fibre:

**Insoluble fibre** promotes the movement of material through the body's digestive system. It is found in whole wheat flour, nuts, and many vegetables.

**Soluble fibre** which dissolves in water to form a gel-like material. It lowers blood cholesterol and glucose levels. This fibre is found in legumes (beans, lentils and peas), barley and oats, apples, citrus fruits, and carrots.

### To make sure your child gets plenty of fibre try the following:

- ◆ Provide a whole grain cereal in the morning – like Weet-bix.
- ◆ Choose wholegrain bread for sandwiches
- ◆ When baking, substitute whole grain flour for white flour, or use half and half
- ◆ Use more legumes – add beans to a soup or a fresh salad
- ◆ Provide lots of apples, bananas, oranges and berries – all great sources of fibre
- ◆ For snacks try fresh or dried fruit, raw vegetables, low fat popcorn, and whole grain crackers.

The American National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine recommends men have 38 grams of fibre a day and woman 25 grams. (Adapted from Mayo Clinic newsletter)

### Fibre and diabetes

A German study of 25,000 adults has found that by eating more cereal fibre it provides protection against type 2 diabetes. In the study conducted by the German Institute of Human Nutrition, the subjects who ate the most cereal fibre (on average 17 grams a day) had a 27 percent lower risk for type 2 diabetes than those who ate the least amount of cereal fibre (7 grams a day). (Archives of Internal Medicine Journal)

## Many Benefits of Vitamin D

Research is finding that vitamin D has many wide ranging benefits. Vitamin D is not just gained from sunlight, but from foods like eggs, fortified milk and fortified cereals. Here are the reported benefits:

### Living longer

Dr Sara Gandini's research (European Institute of Oncology) reports that the intake of ordinary doses of vitamin D supplements is associated with decreases in total mortality rates.

### Diabetes

Subjects with higher blood levels of vitamin D have a lower risk of diabetes.

### Fitness

Subjects with lower blood levels of vitamin D scored 5 to 10 percent lower on tests of grip strength, balance and walking speed compared to those who had higher levels. (Wake Forest University School of Medicine)

### Cancer

Rates of colon cancer can be correlated with blood levels of vitamin D: Higher vitamin D levels were associated with substantial reductions in colon cancer (Dr. Reinhold Vieth, University of Toronto).

### Periodontal disease

Patient's gums were 20 percent less likely to bleed if they had higher blood levels of vitamin D. Vitamin D strengthens oral health by decreasing inflammation. (Dr. Dawson-Hughes, Human Nutrition Research Center on Ageing at Tufts University).

## RESEARCH

# Why do children disobey?

Why is it that children like doing the opposite of what we ask them to do? Mum's "Hurry up and get ready for kindy" becomes the child's "I'll slow down and take my time, thank you very much!" Here are some scientific research insights into why.

### Research study one

The researchers put an attractive toy inside a small room that had a one way mirror. Using a group of preschoolers they divided them into different groups according to the amount of coercion they used to get the kids to play with the toy in the room. Some children were simply told not to play with the toy while others were told more coercively, "If you play with the toy you'll be really sorry! Guess what they found? They found as soon as they left the room and observed through the one way mirror, the more coercion they had used to get the child not to play with the toy, the more likely it was that they would play with it!

That's a negative approach; what would happen if you used a reward approach?

### Research study two

The researchers used a magic markers experiment. They placed a group of preschoolers (who love markers), into separate groups according to the amount of positive coercion they used to get the child to play with the markers. The positive coercion ranged from, "It would be really good if you played with the magic markers," to "If you play with the magic markers you'll get a big reward and a big prize." They then gave the preschoolers a two week break before bringing them back to do the task again. Here is what they surprisingly found: the greater the bribe or reward used to get the child to use the magic markers in the first exercise, the less likely they were after two weeks to play with them at all.

If your star chart, or reward chart, isn't working here is a good explanation: when a child perceives coercion – be it negative or positive – they resist.



what that little line is worth.  
For it matters not how much we own  
The cars, Our homes, Our possessions,  
Our achievements, Our cash  
What matters is how we live and love . . .  
And how we spend our dash!  
So think about this long and hard;  
Are there things you'd like to change?  
You never know how much time is left  
that can still be rearranged.  
If we could just slow down enough  
to consider what is true and real . . .  
And always try to understand  
the way other people feel.  
And be less quick to anger,  
and show appreciation more;  
And love the people in our lives . . .  
like we have never loved before.  
If we treat each other with respect  
and more often wear a smile . . .  
Remembering that this special dash  
might only last a little while.  
So when your eulogy is being read . . .  
With your life's actions to review . . .  
Would you be proud of the things they say . . .  
Of how you spent your dash.  
~ Linda Ellis

## INSPIRATION

### How you spent your dash!

On tombs there are two dates;  
The first one begins with the date of our birth.  
The last one signifies the date of our death.  
But the most significant is the dash between the two.  
For that dash represents all the time  
that we spent alive on earth.  
And now only those who love us know

# Avoiding innovation blocks

In a changing economic environment it's not good to be a dinosaur. Dinosaurs prove being big doesn't equal survival when the landscape is continually shifting. Being slow to adapt meant extinction, even if you were a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

In the December 2009 edition of the Harvard Business Review they ask, "How do I find innovative people for my organisation? And how can I become more innovative myself?" Good questions when surviving and thriving in a changing economic landscape takes creativity and innovation, things dinosaurs weren't good at. People have amazing creativity, but sadly it often remains hidden. Imagine if an organisation could tap the creative ideas of every worker what an adaptive, non-dinosaur environment would be created. The brain enhancement corporation, Herrmann International, suggest organisations need to eliminate these creativity killers for fresh ideas to bloom.

### Creativity killer #1

Encourage all new employees to adapt your organisations 'way of thinking.' It sounds logical enough, but if you are only rewarded to think what the organisation thinks, you'll never even touch the edges of creativity. "Hey, we are T-Rex's – don't try to change us" thinking means one day you'll become an archaeology curiosity piece.

### Creativity killer #2

Trying to keep every one happy and avoiding conflict. The thinking goes, "If people get upset it will be terrible because it will look like we aren't a team. So let's hide the differences for the sake of unity." Sounds reasonable to keep unity, but such an approach destroys team spirit because it prevents new life from emerging. Conflict is healthy and highly creative if you have a work culture that is respectful and kind.

### Creativity killer #3

Paying no attention to what is happening outside of your group. For creativity to happen you need people to make new connections. Fresh thinking occurs when we step outside of our ruts. Is it any surprise that Google is the leading search engine when they allow all employees to use 20 percent of their time on a project of their own choosing!

### Creativity killer #4

Solving a current problem by doing what you last did to solve a problem. If it worked in the past why find a new way now! Sounds reasonable again, but it keeps you locked in past thinking. Recycling old thinking patterns is dinosaur thinking.

### Creativity killer #5

Using planned and structured meetings to brainstorm new ideas. Most of us know from experience that the office brainstorming session seems to dumb people down! And there's a profound psychological reason why. Creative ideas are not found in planned meetings. The brain needs unstructured time to think creatively. That's why most great ideas are created in the shower, driving home from the brainstorming meeting, or lying in bed. In quietness the mind loves building new connections and those new connections is where creativity lives.



### Brain smarts

Your brain can do some amazing feats. So long as the first and last letters are in the right position the brain can make sense out of chaos. Here's proof:

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclyt yuesdnatnr d  
waht I was rdgnieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the  
hmuam mnid. Aocccdrnig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde  
Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the lttteers in  
a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and  
lsat lttteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl  
mse and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihis  
is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by  
istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig!



**DISCIPLINE**

# Parents need sleep too!

Children who won't go to bed, and then won't stay in bed, make exhausted parents. Most sleep solutions focus on only one cause of sleep problems: habit correction. When the other causes are ignored it's difficult to change this frustrating situation.

**Sleep difficulties fall into 3 broad categories:**

**1 Habits:** a child has a habitual 'going to sleep' routine where they are dependent on something external to help them go to sleep (a bottle, a cuddle, a song, Mum or Dad in bed with them). When a child wakes in the night, or comes into a natural 'light sleep' rhythm, they are unable to return to sleep without this sleep 'prop'. So they seek Mum or Dad, or bottle etc. to help them return to sleep.

**2 Fear:** a child might wake because of nightmares, or some other sleep disturbance - thunder storm, loud truck on the road etc. Because a child seeks closeness when afraid, they then wake Mum & Dad.

**3 A need for closeness:** Sometimes children who are away from Mum and Dad for long periods of the day (e.g. full time in childcare) need extra closeness. They seek proximity with those they love. Having been separated during the day they resist being again separated at night. This can result in an emotional battle between a tired, but connection hungry child and an exhausted parent. Other times they wake in the night and climb into bed quietly hoping Mum and Dad won't wake ... or something similar.

Understanding which one of the three is causing your child to resist bedtime is crucial, because your change approach must match the right cause. There is no use trying a habit correction technique if the child is seeking closeness (and vice versa). Most books and web sites offer sound advice on how to solve an habitual sleep problem, but there are very few that look at the most common cause of sleep hassles the Parents Partner encounters: a need for closeness. Reflect on the questions on the right to determine which category of sleep challenge you and your child are experiencing.

DESCRIPTION / STATEMENT	CIRCLE IF TRUE
My child attends daycare approximately 30 + hours a week	■
Sleep time used to be fun and easy	■
My child falls asleep with a bottle or other sleep prop	●
The sleep problem is getting worse	■
My child wakes up crying or shaking	◆
My child insists the light is on at night	◆
My child talks about scary dreams	◆
I have a muddled and unclear bed time routine	●
There is no real bed time, I'm very flexible	●
I get really frustrated or angry with my child at bed time	■
I feel so sorry for and protective of my child when they wake during the night	◆
My child is highly persistent in his / her sleep time demands	■
It can take over 1 hour to get my child to sleep most nights	■
My child repeatedly gets out of bed at night	■
My child is in the process of being toilet trained	●

**Write in your totals:**

■	◆	●
___ / 7	___ / 4	___ / 4

Most ●'s indicate:  
A habit sleep issue  
Most ◆'s indicate:  
A fear sleep problem  
Most ■'s indicate:  
A connection based sleep problem

In the next edition of our parent newsletter we'll describe what to do to change this frustrating (and exhausting) discipline problem.



## Kindy Patch Kids

The newsletter for Kindy Patch families

Your child's early years have a defining influence on the rest of their lives. That's why we want to be your partner in helping your child be their very best. If you are looking for a parenting solution visit our web site

[www.kindypatch.com.au](http://www.kindypatch.com.au)

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**WORDS OF WISDOM**

Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them and try to follow them. ~ Louisa May Alcott