



# FAMILY!

A Publication of the NASAP Family Education Section

Winter 2009

## Book Review

by Jan Thomas, EdD

### **Honey, I Wrecked the Kids: When Yelling, Screaming, Threats, Bribes, Time-outs, Sticker Charts and Removing Privileges All Don't Work**

by Alyson Schäfer. Published by Wiley, 2009. viii+247 pp. Paperback \$16.95

We Adlerians are phenomenologists – that is, we all experience things in our own unique way. I have to admit that, for me, reading Alyson Schafer's *Honey, I Wrecked the Kids* was a little frustrating. Don't get me wrong, because it's a fantastic, delightful book, and I can recommend it without reservation to every parent and parent educator. You just have to read this book. But still, with my own private logic, there were times I felt frustrated.

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### **Parenting Teens With QTips**

#### **Dear Addy...**

Guest author is Mary Hughes, past FES Co-Chair, Certified Positive Discipline Associate and Lead Trainer; Enrich-Abilities, inc.; [enrich3726@cox.net](mailto:enrich3726@cox.net)

Dear Addy,

I can't believe it! My 15 year old, who used to love to go to his grandparents' house just announced, "I'm not going to Grandma's with you this weekend. I'm done with that, and you can't make me go." I felt SO disrespected – I never thought Alex would talk like that to me, let alone refuse to go to his grandparents. His words just stabbed me in the heart. I let him stay home this time, but not before I started crying and yelling at him stuff like "How can you do that to

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## Who Owns The Problem: Parent or Child?

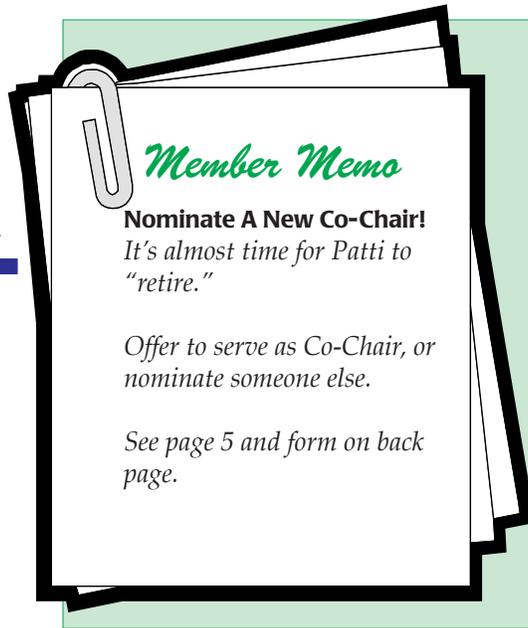
by Bill Corbett, author of the parenting class "Love, Limits, and Lessons," and the founder and president of Cooperative Kids.

Picture this scene... a child walks into the room where the parent is and exclaims, "I'm bored!" with full exasperation. After a few moments with no response, the child repeats the phrase a bit louder. (You may have never experienced this before so you might have to imagine this scene.) I offer this scenario to the parents in my parenting class and ask the question, "Who's problem is it that the child is bored?" Amazingly, most answer "it's the child's problem" with a sense of confidence in their voice. But when I ask the group what they might say in response if their child made this statement, many reveal that they would offer their child options or make suggestions of things for them to do. This, in essence, is the parent solving a child's problem and not appropriate at all.

options or make suggestions of things for them to do. This, in essence, is the parent solving a child's problem and not appropriate at all.

All problems have owners. When a parent takes ownership of problems the child owns, the parent teaches the child that they are not capable and the child grows more needy and dependent on the adult. The child may even grow more demanding if the adult doesn't continue to do things for the child when they want them done. Not sure what it looks like? Just watch any episode of the reality television

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## Also in this issue

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**Interesting Commentary .....Pages 5, 8**

*from Cheryl Erwin and Frank Walton*

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*Meet us for the height of Adlerian camaraderie*

## FE Section Co-Chairs Report...

Dear Family Education Section Members,

Spring has sprung in my area of the U.S. and with it comes the usual changes of color and increased sunlight. We can look forward to some changes in the Family Education Section as well. (I can hear the groans across North America at that clumsy segue.) My term as Co-Chair of the Section comes to an end at the annual meeting in Tucson, Arizona. Terry Lowe will continue in the other Co-Chair position for another two years. We are hoping that you will consider stepping up to run for the seat I vacate.

### Elect A New Co-Chair

The Co-Chair position does not require a lot of time. You will attend two meetings—the Council of Representatives meeting in Hershey in October and the annual conference. You will participate in the writing of three to four newsletters per year. Finally, you will plan and Co-Chair the Family Education Section meeting at the annual conference. The best part of the job is getting to know the other officers you will work with and the members of the Section. If you are interested in the position or you know of a good candidate within our ranks, be sure to read the Job Description on page 10 which describes the requirements of the position. Of course, you should feel free to contact Terry or me with your questions.

### NASAP Conference

You should have received your NASAP annual conference catalogue in the mail by now. I hope you have made your reservations to attend. As you can see, Family Ed is offering some exciting new programs and some popular returning programs. In the “new” category, in addition to the programs highlighted in the Fall 2009 issue of *FAMILY!*, is a program by **Kim Allen** and **Kelly Warzinik** from the University of Missouri Extension on *Connecting for Children: Healthy Relationship Education for Low-Income Parents*, and a program by **Mim Pew** and **Deborah Owen-Sohocki** on teaching children to deal with grief and loss. (It is great to see long-time family educator and former Section Co-Chair, Deb Owen-Sohocki, back on the NASAP conference schedule.)

The returning topics that we can't hear enough of are *No More Logical Consequences—At Least Hardly Ever* by **Jane Nelsen** and **Lois Ingber's** take on *Rewards and Punishments: 'Doing To' vs. 'Doing With.'*

A highlight of the Tucson conference will be the *Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher Lecture* given by Drs. **Gary** and **Joyce McKay**. Gary and Joyce are major contributors to the field of Adlerian family education. They have co-authored *Calming the Family Storm, Raising Respectful Children in a Rude World*, and several books in the internationally known parenting education program, *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)*. They will be speaking on *The Power of Encouragement*.

I hope to see you in Tucson! ■

Warm wishes from your Co-Chair,  
Patti Cancellier, along with Terry Lowe

## Adlerian Wisdom: Dreikursisms

- *The fundamental desire of every human being is to belong, to have status in the group of which he is a part.*
- *A child needs encouragement like a plant needs water.*
- *A bruised knee will mend; bruised courage may last a lifetime.*
- *You should never feel sorry for a child. To do so gives him justification to feel sorry for himself, and no one is as unhappy as someone who feels sorry for himself.*

--Rudolf Dreikurs

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*Book Review...continued from Page 1*

For one thing, Alyson's ability to keep the writing lively by injecting her own personal stories can be a little embarrassing. I had taken the book along to a doctor's appointment and found myself the center of attention in the waiting room when I laughed out loud at Alyson's examples of previous "good ideas" that failed to live up to their promises. Throughout the book, humor gets the message through, and Alyson's way with words (this is her second book) make for fun reading, but be careful if you're reading it in a crowd.

Another frustration – I've been an Adlerian for four decades, and have taught parenting classes on and off since the beginning. That means I'm older than many parents, so I found the print just a little smaller than I wanted it to be.

Worse, it was frustrating for me, as a parent educator, to find so many great ideas that I want to incorporate into my next class. This book will definitely be the text for my next parenting group, and the parents will benefit a great deal, but for me it means revising my lecture notes, reordering presentations, and keying in new overheads. Frustrating!

Seriously, though, Alyson has hit the ball out of the park with this new book. Her personal Adlerian résumé includes not only parents who led parenting classes in her living room while she was growing up, but also grandparents who were active in NASAP after being inspired by Rudolf Dreikurs' lectures. She draws from the brilliant work of such well known names as Dr. Betty Lou Bettner and Dr. Richard Royal Kopp, but even when Alyson states the same parenting principles and techniques that Adlerians have known for years, she says them in a fresh new way.

The premise of the title, *Honey, I wrecked the kids!*, is that we, as parents, have tried so many techniques, from so many "experts", that we have evolved our children to become "discipline resistant," in much the same way that over-prescription of antibiotics has bred "super bugs" resistant to medicine. Alyson provides a way out from this malaise with treatment that actually works.

To make this treatment individual (because every family is different), Alyson turns parents into diagnosticians, helping them understand and diagnose the purpose of their children's misbehavior. This isn't done in an abstract, general way – Alyson not only connects the 4 Crucial C's to the four goals of misbehavior, helping the reader to thoroughly understand the child's purpose for misbehaving, but then she goes on to devote an entire chapter to each of the four goals, replete with examples and great advice on what to do and what not to do in each case.

Alyson uses a dance metaphor to clarify how children choose to misbehave. The key insight is that for each of the four goals, the dance is not a solo act by the child but a *pas de deux*, with the parents acting as dance partners in full support of each footstep. Alyson's book helps parents quiet the music, get out of the dance, and stop the child's need to misbehave.

This realization is not discouraging, either. While Alyson acknowledges that parents have made errors in the past, she continually reassures them that they can change as they learn new techniques – things will work out!

The book has too many strong points to mention in a brief review (another frustration!), but a couple demand attention. Alyson's coverage of power struggles in the family is eye opening. Her copi-

ous examples convince beyond any doubt why punishment is ineffective, whether dispensed by "yelling, screaming, threats, bribes, time-outs, sticker charts, or removing privileges." She replaces the malpractice of punishment with logical consequences, which are recommended by many popular "child experts" nowadays, but then takes the next important step of showing how, all too often, what we think of as "logical consequences" are actually just punishments in disguise.

What does work then, if punishment and misapplied logical consequences don't? Alyson returns to the Adlerian roots of respect and encouragement to recommend joint problem solving, and provides a plethora of examples of why this works and how to accomplish it. To extend her medical metaphor, using joint problem solving allows the child's own creativity to attack the misbehavior problem, just as a child's own immune system can attack an infection. This not only solves the misbehavior problem, but also inoculates the family against evolving a discipline-resistant child.

Another high point of the book was Alyson's chapter on family meetings. In my early days as an Adlerian parent wannabe, I tried out family meetings on my two adolescent sons, with disastrous results. Alyson's comprehensive description uses a three-stage approach, and will undoubtedly allow families to have more satisfying experiences with the process.

One last frustration: *Honey, I Wrecked the Kids* is the owner's manual that all parents should receive when they bring their first baby home from the hospital. Where was mine? ■

*Dr. Janet Thomas, who resides in Boise, Idaho, is a longtime contributing member of NASAP's Family Education Section.*

*Who Owns Problem...cont from Page 1* show Nanny 911. A four-year-old demands that his mother put on his socks so he can go out to play. The nanny coaches the mother to stop doing too much for her child so the mother tells the child he can do it himself. He then proceeds to throw a fit and falls on the floor in an uncontrollable rage. The mother can't stand the noise and commotion and breaks down to put the socks on for him.

Back in my parenting class I take the participants through a little exercise called "Guess Who Owns the Problem." The parents are presented with a list of simple situations and have to guess who owns each of the problems presented. The one that causes the greatest challenge is the one that reads: 'the child throws a fit in the grocery store; whose problem is it?' Conversation triggered by this question reveals that parents want to stop the tantrum because it may bring attention to them or it may disturb other customers. The bottom line is that the fit belongs to the child and some tantrums occur purposely to get the parent to come and stop them.

Identifying and turning a problem over to the child can be a tough change for some parents. They want to make things all better, take action so things will go smoothly, or fix things because it helps them feel wanted and valuable. But the sooner an adult stops solving a child's problems, the sooner the child learns to become accountable and more capable. In my class, I emphasize the fact that we were each individually made to carry only our own burdens. When we take on the burdens (problems) of another, it overburdens us and weakens the individual the problem belongs to. This concept is often understood more easily by fathers. Mothers find it incredibly

difficult to let go and build capable children.

One day when my children were school aged, I decided that I was tired of getting phone calls at my office from them, announcing that they had left a school project or their lunch money at home. I told them that I would no longer run things to school they had forgotten, and that starting immediately, it was their responsibility to remember things on their own. All three accepted this new change until one day when my middle child left her school project on the dining room table and called me at my office. She begged me to bring it to school "just this once," and she promised to remember from now on. I choked up and felt my eyes well up with tears as I stood firm against her pleas to fetch her project, and wished her a good rest of the day. From that day forward she learned to remember for herself.

The next time your child expresses frustration or emotion in response to a problem they own, I suggest you use this simple, 3-step response.

#### **Tell Them What You See**

When approached by your child and having determined that she owns the problem she is presenting, use your best parent detective skills to determine what emotion she is feeling at the moment. Then tell her what you see by saying, "It looks like you're sad," or "It looks like you're disappointed." This simple step begins to help the child accept that the feelings she is experiencing are normal and acceptable. For younger children, this step is crucial for them to learn how to identify what they are feeling.

#### **Ask Them What They Can Do To Solve Their Problem**

Sometimes all it takes is to coach them to solve their problems. Listen closely to determine what

the root cause of their problem is and help them come up with a solution without doing it for them. If the children are bored, ask them, "what do you think you could do on your own so that you would feel busy?" If they respond by saying "I don't know," say to them, "make believe you know." Granting them permission to use their imagination sometimes works wonders.

#### **Offer To Help If Appropriate**

Finally, once they have come up with a solution to their problem, offer to help, and don't do it for them. If they brought you a minor boo-boo to see and they come up with the solution of a bandage, offer to open the package but let them put it on. The more often you allow your child to solve their own problems, the more capable they become. We must commit to helping our children develop their problem solving skills. We are not always going to be around to do it for them. ■

*Bill Corbett has three grown children, two grandchildren, and lives with his wife Elizabeth near Hartford, Connecticut. Send him your questions via email to [bill@CooperativeKids.com](mailto:bill@CooperativeKids.com).*

## Cheryl Erwin on Discipline

### What *Is* Appropriate Discipline, Anyway?

by Cheryl L. Erwin, MA, MFT

I'm going to send John Rosemond a fruit basket one of these days. For those of you who don't know, Rosemond is a parenting expert who tends to take a hard line when it comes to discipline. His column runs regularly in the *Reno Gazette-Journal* and I always find his opinions interesting—even when I don't agree. Take the column that ran on Sunday, December 14th, for example. Rosemond shares a story from the Scottsbluff, Nebraska, *Star-Herald*, which apparently featured a photograph of two boys, ages 12 and 15, standing on the sidewalk in the cold outside a Dollar General store and wearing bright orange placards reading "My name is XXX. I was caught shoplifting at Dollar General. I will never shoplift again. Stealing and lying is WRONG." The boys also had to write a letter of apology to the store and were deprived of the use of any and all electronics for a month. Both said they had learned a lesson and that they wouldn't steal again because you "get in big trouble."

This punishment was not handed down by a judge, but by the boys' father – and Rosemond was absolutely gleeful that these boys had not been coddled or rescued from the consequences of their crime spree by their dad, who obviously, according to Rosemond, knows the difference between being his sons' friend and being their father.

You won't be surprised to learn that I have a few thoughts on this subject – although perhaps not the thoughts you might expect. I agree with Rosemond that too many parents try to be their children's pals, pampering and rescuing them in an effort to bolster their self-esteem or win their love. Parents need to be parents, which sometimes isn't much fun. But I don't agree that public humiliation is the only right way to teach a valuable lesson about honesty. In fact, the very idea of shaming two youngsters in public in this way is painful to me, and I can't conceive of an occasion where this sort of "discipline" would be helpful. To say this sort of public humiliation is "inappropriate" is a gross understatement.

It's worth noting, by the way, that most children lie and steal at some point in their lives. I did, too; I once stole a tin of hard candies from the grocery store when I was hanging out after middle school with the popular kids. But I got only halfway home with my ill-gotten loot before my conscience kicked in – not to mention the thought of my dad's reaction should he learn of my pilfering. So I returned to the store and put the candy back on the shelf. I was obviously not cut out for a life of crime.

The story of the two placard-wearing boys reminded me of a former client who, at age 11, also stole from a store. He, too, had to return the item, apologize to the store manager, and have a conversation with the police. But in his case, the consequence was ineffective; by his mid-teens, he was dealing marijuana and was extremely skilled at evading the law. Would it have been different if he had been forced to stand outside the store wearing a placard?

Stealing isn't the issue here, by the way; everyone agrees that stealing is wrong and that kids need to learn honesty and responsibility. The big

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## Nominate A New Co-Chair!

When we gather at the Annual Meeting in Tucson, members will finalize a vote conducted via newsletter (this one) and email, for a new Co-Chair.

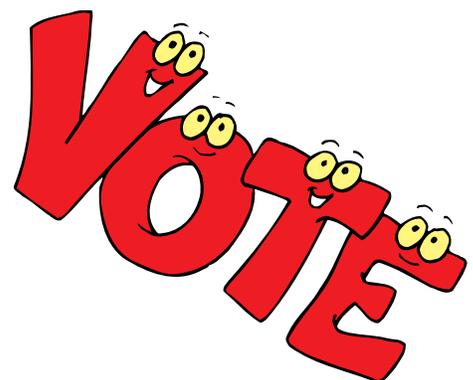
Ideally, the Section will be served by a new Co-Chair from the USA, since continuing Co-Chair Terry Lowe is from Canada. This is a tradition of the Section, not a requirement.

Nominate yourself if you are interested in serving! Don't be shy!!!

As "retiring" Co-Chair Patti Cancellier points out in her message, this is a wonderful opportunity to meet some terrific people who care as much as you do about Adlerian parent education. Don't think you're too young or too old. Just think "contribution."

Use this form to let us know you're interested in being nominated.

The election will take place by mail and finalized at the Family Education Section Meeting in Tucson on Friday, June 26.



See further information and a "form" printed on the last page of this issue.

Participate! ■

*Dear Addy...continued from page 1*  
me? You know this is something we do as a family ... ." I made an excuse to my parents about how busy Alex was, but what do I do next month when we go to my parents again?

All my friends say I should force him to go. After all, they say, "YOU ARE THE PARENT! ACT LIKE ONE!" I don't want to get into World War II over family, but Alex is becoming such a curmudgeon when it comes to doing things with family, and family-time is really important to his Dad and me. And worse yet...what do I tell his grandparents the next time?

--*Taking This Personally*

*Dear Taking It Personally,*  
Being the parent of a teen is hard work! With so much at stake in a situation like this, it can be hard to remember that parenting is a long-term relationship, rather than a short-term power struggle! It's also a difficult time for many parents who forget that a large part of the teen years are spent finding a way OUT of the family nest! When teens start individuating it can look an awful lot like rebellion. It sounds as though you're ready to **Quit Taking It Personally(Q-TIP)**.

Your son's announcement is 'proof positive' that he has entered the great race toward leaving home. And that's what parents really want to have happen too; but sometimes the road to adulthood takes a few rough passes and bumps. So, now that you know Alex's behavior is totally normal, how can you work with him, instead of against him?

Instead of a major power struggle, you can learn how to Q-TIP. First realize that you can't make him DO or SAY anything – in reality you never could, even when he was a little boy. You can, however, decide to restock your parenting tool box with actions and words

that empower your teen toward become a contributing member of society. Tools based on mutual respect, cooperation, power 'with' rather than 'over', and democracy are real power tools for the teen years.

You can learn what you want to say "no" to, how to express and honor your own limits, how to listen without fixing or judging, how to ask for help, how to give up manipulation and guilt (two tools many parents look to when handling similar situations as your own!)

**1. Decide what you will do:** refuse to dance the 'mischief shuffle' and let your son own his decision. Without revenge or a punishing attitude on your part, find a way so your son has power to make his decision respectfully without disrespecting you. One way you could handle this is to say, "If you don't want to go to your grandma and grandpa's house, I'm not willing to explain this to them. That will be between you and them, and I have faith that you will find a respectful way to let them know about this new decision."

**2. Be aware of your fear** of what your parents might think: You may be afraid that your teen's decision will affect the relationship between you and your parents. You could wait until your teen lets your parents know about his decision and then take time to let your parents know that your son is trying out his wings before he leaves the comfort of your nest. Assuring your parents not to "take it personally" will really help them to see that this is about Alex's need to grow up rather than a reflection of how he feels about them. Knowing this isn't a permanent stage of development is sure to help them find other ways they can keep the relationship open.

**3. Anger or power struggles** may be so unpleasant for you that you try to avoid those feelings like

the plague: Feelings are like road signs, giving us a window to the heart. I'll bet Alex knows that the visits to grandparents are important to you, and he may be trying to hide behind the brick wall of anger. Learning to understand that anger is normal can help you focus on how you can use the energy of the emotion without losing it's value for teaching! Rather than react to the angry outburst, listen to it and say something like, "Sounds as though you resent the family's decision to visit your grandparents once a month. Please talk with me about this; I am ready to listen." Or talk at another time if you are feeling less confident with dealing with Alex at the time. A short 'time-away,' with the promise of settling the issue later on, can help you both cultivate an attitude of cooperation rather than 'entitlement.' ("Let's talk about your decision when we're both more calm. When could you take the time later today to do that, Alex? Would it work for us to talk around 7:00pm?")

**4. Share what you are feeling** and wanting without expecting your teenager to give you what you want! At a time when leaving for your parents isn't eminent, try talking very calmly to your son about how you feel about his decision. "I wasn't prepared for you to decide not to go to Mom's and Dad's. That has been something we've all really enjoyed together. I'm going to miss you. Even though I'm disappointed in your decision, I respect the fact that you are growing up and have other important things right now that take up a lot of your time and energy."

**5. Be aware of the ghosts** of your own unresolved teen issues. They may be haunting you: By any chance, was 'Going to Grandma's House' an expectation for you when you were a teenager? Do you remember going through a time when you hated this lovely family

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*Dear Addy...continued from page 6*

tradition and really wanted to say something but you didn't because you didn't want to appear "selfish"? Maybe I haven't guessed correctly what you might be thinking; if there IS a ghost lurking in your adult mind's attic, then take it on and disclose this to your son: "Alex, I can remember not telling Mom and Dad how much I hated going to see my grandparents EVERY darn month once they went into the nursing home. I never had the courage to stand on my own and ask for something different. I just realized I was listening to my old feelings instead of listening to yours Saturday afternoon."

**6. Look behind his disrespectful words** and see what he is telling you about his thoughts and feelings: Alex is navigating the path toward becoming an adult. Part of that journey is learning from his mistakes, without your fixing or controlling them. He can learn to make decisions on his own while taking the consequences of his own decisions when you stop taking an announcement like this personally! Looking at what the real message of his behavior is telling you will help you figure how Alex is finding belonging and significance during this often tumultuous period of life. Right now, having the power to influence his life is very important. Making mistakes while he is still connected to the nest will offer him some safe ground to fall into. Helping Alex see that each decision has consequences can help the "mistakes" be the real teachers, rather than his having to experience your "I told you this would happen."

The purpose of asking some open-ended questions is to help Alex think through the situation and consequences of his choice, rather than to bring him around to what you want him to do. Avoid "Why did you... Don't you know that..."

type of questions. Curiosity Questions that begin with "What, How, When," etc. help a teenager explore a situation without condemnation on the parent's part. (If you don't feel curious, don't ask the questions – your nonverbal communication or attitude will tell Alex a different story!) This approach might go something like this: "Alex, it sounds as though you'd like to quit coming with us on our family visits to your grandparents. Can you share with me some information about your decision? What's bothering you about the visits?"

**7. See if you can resolve** the issue with a "Give and Take." This is an effort to jointly solve a problem with both of you giving a bit without sacrificing all of what is important to you both. Approach Alex at a time

work things through.

Here's how that sounds: "I can understand you don't want to visit Gram and Gramps in the nursing home. It sure changes the way we interact, and I'm glad you've shared how uncomfortable you are there. It's important to me and your Dad to have you with us for some of our family visits. Would you be willing to go sometimes if I quit taking for granted that you HAVE to go with us?" or "I appreciate your sharing how you feel about visiting grandma and grandpa. I know how hard it is to work everything into your life right now with your new job and getting toward the end of the school year. It's still important to me that you come with us sometimes. I'd like for us to work together and make a plan; I'll stop harping on you to al-

ways get in the car and come with us if I know that you'll make it a priority sometimes."

One of these solutions may help you to *Quit Taking It Personally* by remembering how much you value

## SAS Infant Class "Nurturing with Rhymes: The Parent - Child Program"

The Saskatoon Adlerian Society has been offering a class in the mornings and one evening, from mid-January to mid-March 2009 and we thought you'd be interested. This free program is designed for parents/caregivers and their little ones to come together and learn rhymes, songs and stories in a setting that will encourage parents to have fun and bond with their young children. <sask.adlerian@sasktel.net>

### The Benefits:

- Parents and children will enjoy each other and have a shared repertoire of rhymes, songs and stories.
- Parents will feel less isolated and families will benefit from connecting with other families.
- The children will develop a stronger language base.

Location: at various schools around the city

The Infant Programs are for parents with children from birth to 18 months, maximum enrollment is 15 children.

when both of you are calm. This approach can follow a time of listening with empathy how Alex feels about the visits, or come out of any of the other approaches we've already discussed. A "give and take" solution forms out of the desire to peacefully

your relationship with Alex today, as well as tomorrow! I can tell you appreciate who he's becoming. Working WITH him rather than against him can bring a sense of harmony into any family. ■

*Erwin on Discipline...cont from page 4*  
question is how do you teach your child these essential lessons in character and accountability? Is it necessary to shame and humiliate a child in public? If so, why did the mere thought of my dad send me scurrying back to the store with my stolen candy? Why did my young client not learn the same lesson when he had to apologize and deal with the police?

The answer is that all children – like all adults – are different. And despite John Rosemond's delight in his "happy ending," all kids don't learn valuable lessons in the same way. This is why parenting is such a challenge: you have to decide what you want your child to learn, and then figure out the best way to teach that particular child these important life lessons. There is no such thing as one-size-fits-all discipline.

If your child steals something, what should you do? Well, that depends on the child. For some kids, a serious conversation about theft and its consequences is actually adequate discipline; for others, there needs to be a consequence that pinches a bit to drive home the lesson. I would love to check in with the Dollar General gang in a few months or years to see what they really learned – about life, about their dad, and about themselves. Because that's what determines effective discipline, and effective parenting: what are your children really learning? Are they learning responsibility, compassion, hard work, honesty, and generosity? Or are they learning that they can and should have everything they want and that rules were made to be broken?

No one can answer these questions for your children except you – not me, and not even John Rosemond. At the end of the day, each parent needs to decide what is most  
*next column, bottom*

## Frank Walton: Revisit Dreikurs

### A Call For Broader Applications of Adlerian Theory: Rudolf Dreikurs Revisited

by Francis X. Walton, Ph.D.

Rudolf Dreikurs, or "Dr. D" as he was so fondly referred to by many of his students and colleagues, was 71 years of age when I met him. Meeting Dr. D was clearly one of the more important and formative experiences of my life. I often have given thanks that he did not retire from professional work at 65 or 70. Dr. D did some of his most influential work between the years of 70 and his death at age 75, when he might have been living a life of leisure. Students, colleagues, and other professionals were continually touched by his ability to turn theory into practice before our eyes, as we watched him help people improve their lives. His enthusiasm for spreading the knowledge and use of Adlerian theory and technique was infectious.

The American Society of Adlerian Psychology (as NASAP was known when Dr. D was alive) enjoyed its greatest growth from about 1967 until a few years after his death in 1972. It was during these last five years of his life, while he was retired from practice, that he was most active as a teacher and consultant across North American and internationally. I recall that for some years after his death many Adlerians had difficulty getting through a presentation or demonstration without mentioning his name several times as in "Dr. D used to say," or, "Dreikurs often emphasized...." We commonly referred to Dr. Dreikurs more often than we referred to Adler, although his students and colleagues clearly recognized we were indebted to both these geniuses.

It was when our esteemed colleague, the clarifier and purifier of Adlerian theory, Heinz Ansbacher, finally watched Dreikurs provide a family counseling demonstration, that Ansbacher wrote to Dreikurs how much he enjoyed the experience and how it allowed him "to learn what cannot be learned otherwise." (Terner and Pew, 1978)

In 1975 Kurt Adler acknowledged, "The main trend today seems to be toward prevention. Adlerian psychology...has always been in the forefront in this area. Many years ago in Vienna, Adler adopted the motto 'teach the teachers'.' ... In this country, however, Dreikurs demonstrated that the parents themselves could be trained, and the tremendous impetus he gave...has already made an enormous impact, occupying the major efforts of many Adlerian groups and Societies." (Terner and Pew, 1978)

A point that I wish to emphasize by sharing these thoughts and memories with you is that the very Adlerian theoretical constructs that so many watched Dr. D use to help change people's lives, continue to provide the foundation mental health workers need to use more broadly today.

[\*continues on page 9\*](#)

important, know their child well enough to understand how she learns, and follow through with kindness and firmness, respect and dignity. ■

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*Walton on Dreikurs...cont from page 8*  
Occasionally one of us adds an innovative technique, but the theory is as alive and well in 2009 as it was in 1967. One of the keys to the continued spread of the knowledge and use of Individual Psychology is to keep "Dr. D's" work alive in our minds, to refer to his books, articles, and videotapes, and finally, but very importantly, help mental health workers, parents and teachers learn how to apply our theory and techniques to the emerging problems of our times. No school of psychological thought is better prepared to understand and treat the majority of children who have been diagnosed as having the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and no school of psychological thought is better prepared to understand and treat the burgeoning number of children caught up in the pseudo-epidemic of autism. No school of psychological thought is better prepared to provide a frame of reference to help prison inmates make life enhancing changes while learning the life skills necessary to function outside of correctional institutions, no school of psychological thought is better prepared to provide families with the insight and techniques to raise responsible and cooperative children, and none is better prepared to provide the framework that will enable children in our schools to become more responsible citizens who have truly learned to care about fellow human beings

I do not want to under emphasize the opportunity available to introduce Adlerian/Dreikursian principles and techniques in pre-school education. It is always worth repeating how Adler reminded us the most important role of a mother is to spread the interest of a child from the child, to the mother, to father, to other members of the family, and then out to other members of society. (Ansbacher

and Ansbacher, 1956) It is critical to the welfare of young people that child care administrators and teachers accept the importance of their role in helping to increase the level of social interest in pre-school children during this time in history when a very significant portion of the role of "mothering" has become the responsibility of the child care provider.

There is no shortage of challenging social and psychological problems where we can continue to apply, or strengthen our applications, or create applications of Adlerian theory. Earlier I mentioned autism, a mental health condition for which the diagnostic manual criteria has been broadened so in the last half dozen years that most children we see today carrying the diagnosis bear little resemblance to such children we might treat in previous years. Over twenty years ago when the diagnosis was much more narrowly defined, an administrator for the state psychiatric institute in Columbia called our Adlerian Child Centers office to explain that the institute's outpatient program would be closed for six weeks around Christmas and he needed to place an autistic child in care for that period. Our center had been recommended and he wished to know if we would take the child. We did. The Adlerian Child Care Center director asked the teacher and children to treat the child as any other in our center, inviting him into the full range of activities, applying the same techniques we would with others, and in addition, to pay no attention to his frequently unusual and occasionally bizarre behavior. When the boy returned to the psychiatric institute, the director of the Child Care Center received a phone call from the administrator wanting to know what we had done that had brought about such changes that the boy no longer met the criteria for the diagnosis of autism. Addi-

tionally he requested that his staff members be permitted to come to observe the practices in our center.

Much more recently, after attending a conference on autism, I happened to leave a book on parenting of autistic children on a restaurant table. Our waitress came hurrying to return it to me. She wanted to tell me she had a grandson with autism. She told how difficult he was to handle, and that the family could not even erect a Christmas tree prior to Christmas day, because the child would have a terrible temper tantrum if a tree were erected and there were no gifts for him. Well friends, I think most of us could handle that one. I want you to know the book on parenting of autistic children that she returned to me was archaic by Adlerian standards in so far as the techniques that were recommended. It was supposed to be state of the art, and yet reflected no thorough understanding of the purposive nature of behavior, the detrimental influence of reward and punishment, or the powerful influence of underdeveloped social interest in such children. Friends, you and I can help in this area.

If we are willing to broadly apply the powerful guiding principles and creative techniques available to us, collectively we, along with those with whom we share this knowledge, can help provide solutions to social problems many have thought unsolvable. As Dr. D used to say "Adlerian psychology is fifty years ahead of its time." Well, if that was true fifty years ago, undoubtedly, this is its time. ■

#### References

- Ansbacher, H., and Ansbacher, R. (1956). *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*. New York, Harper and Row.
- Terner, J. and Pew, W.L. (1978). *The Courage to be Imperfect*. New York, Hawthorn Books, Inc.

**Members are invited to submit nominations for a new Co-Chair of the Family Education Section**

First, find out if the person you wish to nominate is willing to serve. Are YOU interested? Nominate yourself!

Please submit your printed nomination ballot by May 1, 2009, either to NASAP Central Office or our Co-Chairs, by email (see page 2) so that nominees will have ample time to prepare and submit statements to be printed in our next issue of *FAMILY!* due out before the convention in June. Thank you!

**Job Description from our by-laws and traditions**

A Co-Chair will:

- be a full member in good standing of NASAP and the FE Section, willing to serve as an unpaid officer on the FE Section Leadership Council
- be the Section liaison to COR/

NASAP Board/General Membership and the Leadership Council

- attend the Annual Convention and Annual Section Meeting at the Convention
- represent the interests of the Section rather than their own individual views on any given topic being addressed by the NASAP Board, the COR, or the FE Section.
- both Co-Chairs attend the two annual COR meetings (Fall and before Annual Convention); if attendance is not possible for a meeting will send either the Secretary-Treasurer or Newsletter Editor in her/his place
- serve on a NASAP committee
- oversee the preparation of an annual budget and oversee the creation of the financial reports for the Section by each of the COR meetings

- oversee the operation of the FES newsletter; the mini-newsletter page for the July-August NASAP newsletter; and help solicit Resource Page material from the membership list for the July-August NASAP newsletter, TNN
- solicit and select programs for the Annual Convention, following the Selection Guidelines outlined in the Section notebook
- make decisions for the Section business, as needed
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**Official Ballot for Family Education Section Officer Nomination:**

Office of Co-Chair, 3 year term commencing at NASAP 09 Convention June, 2009

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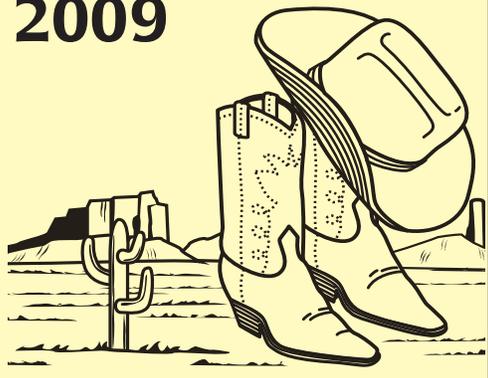
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