

# FAMILY!

A Publication of the NASAP Family Education Section

Fall 2009

Periodic Column

## “The Family Business”

Parent Educators Bring Value

by Dina Emser, MA, CPDA, CPPC

About ten years ago, I decided to quit my job as the principal of an Adlerian school in Bloomington, Illinois and set out on my own as an educational consultant, parent educator, and professional coach. Little did I know at the time that I would need all of these hats, at least in the beginning, to make a living that could compare to the salary I was used to.

When I began coaching business people, I learned a lot about being a business person. Whether they were solopreneurs with no

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Saying NO With Love

## Dear Addy...

Guest author is Jane Nelsen, EdD.

This is adapted from her blog at <http://PositiveDiscipline.ning.com>.

Dear Addy,

My daughter, Sally, had a temper tantrum because she wanted the toy her little brother had. I said, “I can see you are really angry.” Sally continued to scream that she wanted the toy. I tried to reason with her, “Maybe you could wait your turn or find a toy to trade.” Sally continued her tantrum. I continued to validate her feelings and tried to comfort her. This was not as effective as I’d hoped! What would Positive Discipline look like? -- Mom

*continues on page 3*

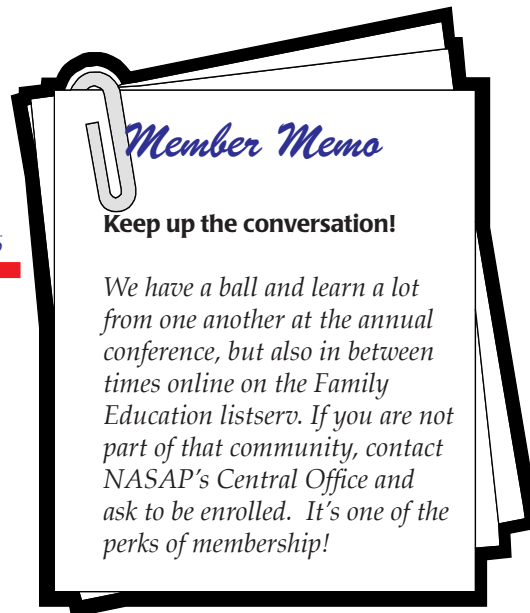
## Using Biology To Build Immunity to Stress

by Jody McVittie, MD

Why is it that when our children “lose it” we seem to join them so easily? Why does the misbehavior of our child (or our spouse) seem to invite us into the same murky pool?

It turns out that how our brains are wired has something to do with it. Understanding the biology of social connections is growing rapidly and can help us teach parents how to stay in their “better selves” when their children misbehave.

It is helpful for parents to understand how the brain responds to emotionally stressful situations. Daniel Siegel uses the “brain in the palm of the hand” model to help parents understand their own behavior and to help them self regulate while they are dealing with a child who has “lost it.”



### Member Memo

**Keep up the conversation!**

*We have a ball and learn a lot from one another at the annual conference, but also in between times online on the Family Education listserv. If you are not part of that community, contact NASAP’s Central Office and ask to be enrolled. It’s one of the perks of membership!*

You can play with it as you read. Hold your left arm so that it is bent at the elbow but extended from the wrist and fingers and palm forward (as if you were sending someone a “stop signal”). Imagine that your forearm represents your spinal cord. The base of your palm would then be your brain stem where your brain handles basic body functions (heart rate, alertness, breathing) and your freeze, fight or flight

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## FE Section Co-Chairs Report...

Dear Family Education Section Members,

We hope you enjoyed a spectacular fall – full of bright colors and warm sunshine – to keep you going as winter takes over. The Tucson conference in June feels like it was ages ago, but it was, as always, a wonderful experience. [See the photos Terry took on page 7.] It was a conference with many family educators presenting workshops, keynote speeches and even the Ansbacher lecture. Unfortunately, there weren't many family educators in attendance to enjoy those programs. The financial crisis prevented many folks from attending, and we really missed you. We're looking forward to 2010 and the Minneapolis-St. Paul conference with the hope that the financial situation improves by then.

Our Secretary-Treasurer, Amy Ellison, has agreed to continue in her role for the next year. We would like to send a special congratulations to her for completing her doctorate and getting married this past summer. She is now Dr. Amy Meyer!

As your representatives, we both attended some stimulating Council of Representatives/COR meetings in Hershey at the end of October. We were fed lots of yummy chocolate (Hershey lives up to its name) as well as lots of "food for thought."

We also had a chance to review conference proposals. Although only four were submitted this year, you will find them interesting and diverse. There were lots of session proposals submitted overall (to other Sections) so you should find an exciting line-up for Minneapolis. There will be more to come on the conference sessions in our next newsletter.

One of the things that we are interested in discovering is how people use technology in their work (e.g., websites, Twitter, Facebook, listserv, Adlerian based podcasts). Take a look at page 5 in this issue and please give us some feedback on your interests and concerns. Contact either of us via the email addresses on this page, or post your comments on the listserv.

We also discussed the fact that we have a wealth of information, knowledge, wisdom, and expertise floating around in people's heads in our Family Education Section/FES. We want to be able to capture this as much as possible so that it can be shared with present FES members as well as passed down to future Adlerians. We ask you to dig deep and think of stories, tidbits of information and musings of wisdom either about facilitating or about parenting that you could share with others. Each one of us has something to offer. Again we would invite you to share either through the listserv or the newsletter.

We hope in this upcoming busy holiday season that you take time to stop, reflect, think, and share with the rest of Family Education on the above. We are interested in what you have to say!

We look forward to hearing from you! ■

Warm Wishes for the Holidays,  
*Terry Lowe and Patti Cancellier*

## Adlerian Wisdom

### *Family Constellation*

*How the child sees and uses his position in the family constellation [birth order groupings] sets his pattern of movement and his characteristic traits as an adult.*

*...[B]rothers and sisters...[have] more effect [on one another] than that of even the parents or children's personalities.*

*Recognizing how a child sees and uses his position...can assist the parent in finding ways to stimulate and guide him....*

-- from **Parent Work Book** for use with **The Practical Parent** by Margaret K. Cater (1979)

## How to reach us

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*Biology...continued from page 1*

response. If you put your thumb across your palm that would be the midbrain where memories and emotions are processed and where you hold your “danger radar.” Then if you gently make a fist, covering your thumb with your fingers, you can imagine that the fingernails are the front most part of your brain. We’ll use them to represent the prefrontal cortex where our brains execute the important functions of: response flexibility, emotional regulation, mind sight (the ability to recognize what is going on for others), regulation of the body through the autonomic nervous system, regulation of interpersonal relationships, intuition, self awareness, letting go of fears, and morality. When we are stressed or “triggered,” this part of our brain largely goes “off line.” You can represent that in your hand by lifting your fingers, exposing your thumb again. This is a graphic way of showing what happens when we “flip our lid” or rely on our “reptile brain.” Do you recognize the behaviors that emerge when we are “flipped” or in “reptile brain?” Not so pretty. It might not surprise you to learn that the prefrontal cortex doesn’t fully develop until about age 25. No wonder children lose it more quickly than adults. Auto insurers figured this out statistically years ago.

There is another interesting set of neurons that make the invitation to “flip” a bit more compelling. We are equipped with what are known as “mirror neurons.” These are neurons that get our brains ready to copy what we see – both physically and emotionally. So if you watch someone drink a cup of tea, your brain (without your awareness) is getting you ready to do the same thing. If you hold an alert newborn, look at her and slowly stick your tongue out 3 times, she will respond by sticking her tongue out too. We are hardwired with these neurons.

Can you begin to see how this impacts our parenting behavior? When our children “lose it” (flip their lids) for whatever reason, our mirror neurons get triggered and our brain has a tendency to feel what they are feeling (distress) and respond as they are responding (not so pretty). When they flip their lids, we are likely to flip ours.

Aahh... but if we can see what is happening and think, “She flipped her lid” and WE can stay calm (consciously overriding our mirror neurons), then we can use our calmness to open space for our child’s own mirror system to engage and begin to self soothe. It doesn’t work instantly or every time – but even if your child doesn’t re-gather herself right away, you’ll feel better having stayed calm. Try it, you might like it! Try teaching it. Your class participants will enjoy it too.

When you start playing with this you might notice that “getting to calm” can be challenging. You are right! You can become more fluent at returning to calm by practicing it in many different situations. Experiment to find what works best for you. Some of the things that we know are effective for many people include: stepping away, breathing with special attention to the belly so that you take full breaths, large muscle movements (you can do this with a run, or walk or even just sitting in a chair pulling up on the seat of the chair forcefully with your arms and pushing down on the floor with your legs at the same time). It can also be helpful to remind yourself that as much as the particular situation feels like it is about you, the other person’s behavior is largely a statement about their own inability to handle stress. Do you really want to join in?

If this makes you curious for more, I recommend reading Daniel Siegel’s original version in his

book **Parenting from the Inside Out** and checking out the 14 minute video on mirror neurons on the web at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/3204/01.html>. ■

*Jody McVittie is a family practice physician and life coach who teaches Adlerian practices to parents and educators. She is grateful for the changes that Adler and Positive Discipline have brought to her own life. Contact her at <http://encouragingsolutions.net>.*

*Dear Addy...continued from page 1*

*Dear Mom,*  
Mom might say, “I can see you are really upset,” ONCE. Then she might say, while leaving the room, “I have faith in you that you can handle this.” I would like to add that the last statement is more for the benefit of the mother than the child. A huge part of being firm is for parents to stay “firm” in allowing children to experience their feelings instead of rescuing, fixing, and trying to make sure their children never suffer.

Parents need to have faith in their children to deal with the ups and downs of life and to know that this kind of “suffering” is good for their children. Children need to learn that they can’t always have what they want. What do they learn from this? That they are capable, that they can be resilient, that they can survive delayed gratification.

Being too kind can lead to demanding behavior in children – especially in a materialistic world. The answer is not to go to the other extreme of being too firm.

The answer is to follow the age-old advice of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs (and taught by **Positive Discipline**) to be both kind and firm at the same time. It is okay to say, “I love you, and the answer is, ‘No.’” ■

# Peak at PEEP!

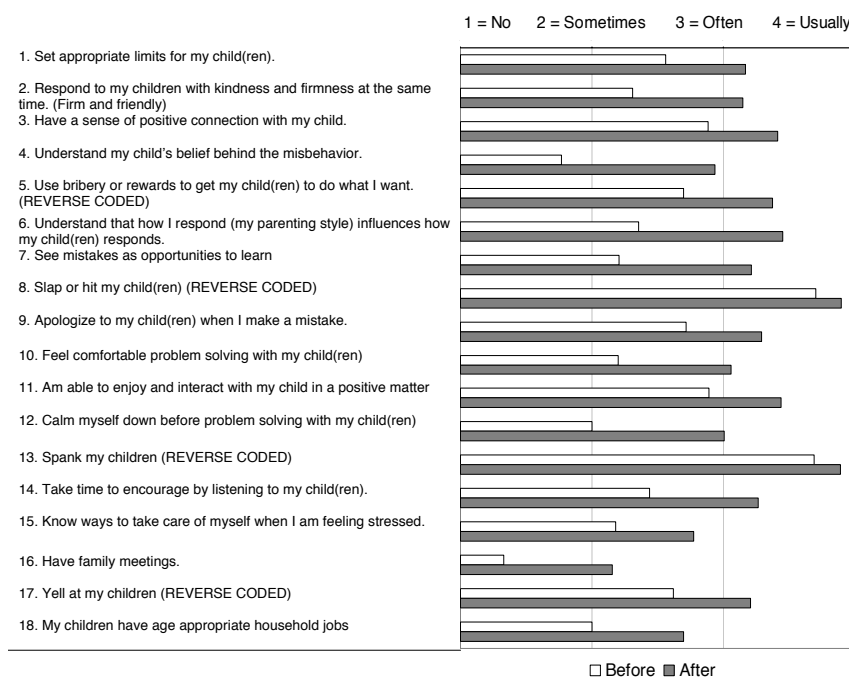
Stimulated by extensive discussion at the NASAP conference of 2001, members of the Family Education Section began exploring ways to measure the positive impact of our strategies in family education. Originally referred to as PEEP/Parent Education Evaluation Project, the formal research project was undertaken by FES member Jody McVittie, MD. Results of that discussion have just been published in the *Journal of Individual Psychology/JIP*. Congratulations, Jody!

Working with Al Best in the statistics department of the School of Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, McVittie headed up a collaborative study to show that parents report statistically significant changes in their behaviors following a 6-10 week parenting class. We asked her to provide a summary for our readers who may not receive NASAP's *JIP*.

The study, *The Impact of Adlerian-Based Parenting Classes on Self-Reported Parental Behavior*, was conducted over a 3-year period with the assistance of 69 parent educators across the US and Canada, utilizing data from 110 classes (1300 parents and care-givers). That is collaboration! Most of the courses were from the **Parent Encouragement Program** and **Positive Discipline** and had an experiential component in the teaching.

By the end of the class, parents reported that they were more able to set clear limits, more able to connect with their children in positive ways. They also were able to decrease hitting and yelling. Many of the respondents added comments at the end of the post class survey that indicated that they were pleased with the changes in their families. Typical comments included: "My own anger level and frustration has decreased." ... "I have a better relationship with my children." ... "There is less yelling now." ... "Fewer power struggles now." ... "We have more fun as a family." ... "I enjoy parenting more." ... "I'm better at problem solving." ...

Figure 2 Illustration from the article in *JIP* Fall 2009, 65(3), page 273



"I have more confidence in my parenting skills." ... "I calm myself down instead of reacting." ... "I'm remaining firm in my limits." ... "I have more hope for who my child will become." ... "I respect myself more and my children more."

Previous research documents the long term benefits of parenting that is both firm and caring. This kind of parenting which is promoted in all Adlerian based parenting classes, called "authoritative," has been shown to reduce many social risks for children (smoking, early sexual debut, drinking, violence) and has been shown to be helpful for academic and social success. This large new study provides an important missing link, showing that parents can change their parenting styles in ways that will be helpful to their children long term and that the parents were quite happy with the changes.

Further research will be useful to establish that the changes that the parents report are long term. ■

For more information, please contact:

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For copies of the Research:

McVittie, J. & Best, A., *The Impact of Adlerian-Based Parenting Classes on Self-Reported Parental Behavior*, *Journal of Individual Psychology*, Fall 2009, 65(3) 264-285.  
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## Membership Matters

### Section Meeting Report

*Meeting held June, 2009 in Tucson, AZ*

We had an intimate Family Education Section meeting in Tucson. **Patti Cancellier** was voted into a second three-year term as Co-Chair. **Terry Lowe** continues in the other Co-Chair position for another two years. We erred in not calling for nominations for Secretary-Treasurer as well, since that term was also up in June. Fortunately, Amy Ellison (now **Amy Meyer**) has agreed to fill in for one more year. We will be calling for nominations for the position of Secretary-Treasurer in Spring 2010. This is the perfect way to get your feet wet in Family Education Section governance. Please consider running for the position.

One thing that was voted on at the Tucson FES meeting was to allow the Co-Chairs attending COR meetings to pool the allowed \$225/person for travel and divide it as needed. [Patti writes that she didn't claim any travel money for the October 2009 meeting in Hershey, and Terry has a much more expensive travel outlay to fly across the continent to attend.]

### Treasury Update

We got an update on our finances at the October COR meeting.

10/1/08 we carried over \$448.81 from the previous year

10/1/08-9/30/09

Income was \$778.00

Expenses were \$465.41 (\$225 for travel to the 10/08 meeting; \$190.41 for the newsletter; \$50 for the wine & cheese at the Tucson meeting)

9/30/09 total in the treasury was \$761.40

\$450 will be subtracted from that \$761.40 for partial reimbursement of travel expenses.

So, as of 11/1/09 we have about \$311.40 remaining.

### Technology Questions: How Do YOU Make Use of Technology?

Our hope is that we can share with each other through both the listserv and this newsletter, ideas, challenges and successes. We invite your comments and your experiences in this area.

- In what ways do you presently receive information?
- Is there a way that would be easier or more efficient in receiving information than you are presently utilizing?
- What means of technology are you using to "spread the word"?
- Is there a difference in what type of technology works best depending on the generation we are trying to reach? (e.g. Do parents in their 20's access technology and information differently from parents in their 40's)?
- What successes have you had with your present means of communication?
- What challenges do you face with technology – both receiving and sending? (For example, a big challenge is a lack of knowledge in what the different means actually *are*, as well as how to use them.) ■

**NASAP...International Adlerian Leadership Since 1952**

## NASAP Conference News

### Watch for monthly CD Specials from NASAP 2009

From now until Dec. 31, NASAP will be featuring the CD of the Plenary Session which was: *Reclaiming Our Children: Transforming our Attitudes Toward Our Children*.

In this CD Peter Breggin, M.D. critically examines the use of psychiatric diagnoses and drugs in the treatment of children. This 2 hr. CD is regularly \$12 plus shipping, but during this month, the special price is \$10 and free shipping. To order please send your check and mailing info to: NASAP, 614 Old West Chocolate Ave., Hershey, PA 17033. You can also call in your credit card number to 717-579-8795.

### Meet Us In Minneapolis 2010

Scholarship Applications for the NASAP Conference to be held in Minneapolis June 10-13, 2010 are now available at <http://alfredadler.org>.

The deadline is March 1, 2010. ■

## Where's YOUR Contribution?



**Write to us!**

*Family Business...continued from page 1*

employees or corporate clients who supervised many, one thing they all shared was their awareness of the value of their product or service. This belief motivated them and made it possible for them to share their work.

If you want to make a living as a parent educator – and I believe that you deserve to – you must examine your beliefs about what you bring in the way of value. Begin to understand your fear of charging for your services. Stop yourself from apologizing either with your words or your tone of voice or facial expression when you share your fee structure. People appreciate the value of things they pay for. You may feel most comfortable starting small, but be sure to revisit your fee structure and move it up as you gain confidence. Keep checking in with the parents you serve, weekly even, to hear their perceived value of the service you provide. This can be as easy as making a request such as, “I’d like to hear from 3 of you tonight – what is something important you’re taking away from our time together?” or “Tell me what it means to you to be in a supportive learning community.”

Hearing these compliments will keep you encouraged and it will give you vital information about the things parents need and appreciate. As you more fully understand the value of what you provide for parents and experience payment for your services, you will begin to take yourself more seriously and feel excited about the time and commitment required for this work. You will do a better job of modeling mutual respect and you will naturally contribute more to your audience from this encouraged place.

*concludes top of next column*

## An Adlerian/Dreikursian Parenting Social Network

*by Jane Nelsen, author of Positive Discipline and many other Adlerian texts*

Social networks are popping up everywhere. There is Facebook, MySpace, Plaxo, LinkedIn, and more.

I was confused and wondered, “Who has time?” Frankly, most of these networks seemed “meaningless” to me. Okay, so I have a “superiority top card.” Still, I wondered, “Who cares if someone is watching the sunset, is in a good mood, is in love with Eric from *Trueblood*, or is off to the gym.” Still, I get invited to join – so I do.

Now there is a “meaningful” network that I would like to invite you to join. Positive Discipline Network at <http://positivediscipline.ning.com> provides a friendly community for people all over the world (27 countries represented as of this writing) to learn and support each other with Adlerian/ Dreikursian parenting concepts.

Following is a post from “B” in Johannesburg, South Africa who changed her parenting style in just three weeks of communicating with others on the Positive Discipline Network.

“[sic] I can’t be begin to tell you just what this network has done for me as a mother with no support structure. I’ve been trying my best up to now – but the past week has been the greatest week of mothering.

Parents of the world need us. Each of us has unique gifts to share. If lack of income is keeping you from offering more of your service to parents, please consider ways that you can expand your “menu” with a variety of classes and prices. Consider expanding your client list or offering classes in different venues to appeal to a more diverse audience. Do what you can to meet your own needs, and trust that what you bring is valuable beyond measure. ■

*For more information about Dina Emser, group coaching for parent educators, or her books, **Trusting the Fortune Within** and **Roadmap to Success**, email Dina at [dina@dinaemser.com](mailto:dina@dinaemser.com).*

*We’d love to hear YOUR Family Business story, too. Please let us report the results of your successes, even experiments that failed. Write to Editor <[ParentEd@comcast.net](mailto:ParentEd@comcast.net)>*

*Parenting Network....continued*

“I am less stressed (honestly) and find I am able to do more and spend some quality time with my daughter. I am remembering to stop what I am doing when she calls to share something with me. I am slowly learning to be firm instead of aggressive. I am using the hugs, loving and it’s working. My daughter is calmer and seems less edgy, she more vocal and demonstrative in her anger/frustration, and I find I somehow have the space within myself to acknowledge her right to this expression. We are bonding so well again. I am amazed that my screaming and shouting has drastically decreased and some days in this week I didn’t do either. And most importantly i like myself more each day and so does my daughter. The great thing about the very little of PD that have at my disposal, is that I don’t feel so desperate about doing the right thing any more, I find myself more thoughtful in my reactions and responses. The groups have definitely broken my isolation (I read what people write, and I don’t feel so alone in my parenting)

“Please I am not trying to say that I have flipped to a new me, au contrar,

*concludes on back page*

## Convention Tucson June, 2009



Ron Busche, Sonia Nicolucci, Mary Maguire, FES Co-Chairs Patti Cancellier & Terry Lowe, Secretary/Treasurer Amy Ellison, Sherrie Michaleshen, Linda Jessup



above:  
Linda Jessup and Eva Dreikurs Ferguson



at right:  
NASAP Executive Director  
Becky LaFountain and  
Patti Cancellier

*Parenting Network..cont. from page 6*  
 what is true, is that I am not same person / parent I was when I sent you my very first email. I haven't felt this relaxed in for a very long time. Your thoughtfulness around PD is making a huge difference in me and my daughter's lives."

Now that is meaningful. I hope all of you will join in at <http://positivediscipline.ning.com> and add your encouragement and contributions to people around the world who want to parent the Adlerian/Dreikursian way. ■

## An Adlerian 'App' for iPhones

The Ft. Wayne Adlerians at the Ivy Group have created the first Adlerian app (application) for the iPhone and iPod Touch. For those of you not familiar with apps, they are small programs that you can download to your iPhone/iPod Touch. There are 1000s of apps available for all sorts of services, games or information, from a search program that finds the closest public toilet to you (and rates it!) to a cowbell that rings when you shake your phone.

The Adlerian app is called "iMotive8 Adlerian Personality Assessment." It provides four scenarios for the user to read. An-

swering one question will tell the user what his "top card" or lifestyle priority is. So far the app is rated 3.5 stars out of 5.

If you have an iPhone or iPod Touch, you'll want to add this app (only \$.99) and rate it at the iTunes App Store.

--Patti Cancellier



The mission of the **North American Society of Adlerian Psychology** is to promote growth and understanding of Adlerian (Individual) Psychology, the work of Alfred Adler, and effective approaches to living based on his philosophy. NASAP membership includes educators, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, parents, business people, community organizations and other interested people. The **Family Education Section** applies Adlerian principles to the home. Members are professionals and nonprofessionals dedicated to understanding and improving family relationships between children and adults, with couples, and among individuals.

**Meet Us in  
 Minneapolis  
 NASAP 2010  
 June 10-13**

**Be there or be  
 square**

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