Parents’ Top Tips: Making Family Holiday Gatherings Work for You and Your Child by Linda Broatch, MA

As the parent of a child with learning or attention problems, you’ve likely spent many hours preparing your child and yourself for family holiday gatherings. SchwabLearning.org recently surveyed 139 parents of children with learning or attention problems, to get their best tips on how to make family gatherings enjoyable for their kids, other family members, and themselves. Here’s a “sampler” of their responses:

We hope you’ll find several new strategies to add to your repertoire!

What Parents Find Stressful about Family Gatherings

When asked to select from a list of their greatest concerns during family gatherings, here’s how parents responded:

• 39% of parents said they worry about how their families judge them and their child.
• More than one-third (35%) of parents said “how my family interacts with my child” is a concern.
• In addition to concerns that hit close to the heart, parents also worried about their kids having too much unstructured time, not having a normal daily routine, and being tired and cranky from over-scheduling social events. Interestingly, while parents reported worrying about many things during holiday gatherings, 80% of them said that their

Parent to Parent Offers Help for Families

“There is nothing like knowing without a moment’s hesitation that there is someone else who really understands what you are facing,” one parent reflects. It is important for families who have children with special needs to have a place to turn to when faced with serious challenges.

Parent to Parent FSN-HC:

- Provides information and support for families with a premature infant, a child with a disability or chronic illness, or a family who is grieving the death of their child.

- Can match a family one-to-one with a trained, volunteer support parent who has a child with special needs. These volunteer families provide emotional support and share the expertise of their own experiences.

- Supports professionals working with families caring for children with special needs.

- Sponsors workshops, trainings, and support groups.

- Promotes collaboration among parents, families, and service providers.

Happy Holidays!

From all of us at Parent to Parent Family Support Network

(con’t p. 2)
**Family Literacy Websites**

In addition to assistance with tax information we wanted to provide you with information about websites that can assist you in better financial understanding.

1. Western North Carolina Consumer Credit Counseling [www.debtstress.org](http://www.debtstress.org)
2. National Foundation for Credit Counseling [www.nfcc.org](http://www.nfcc.org)
3. A nation wide campaign to help Americans build wealth [www.americasaves.org](http://www.americasaves.org)
4. A financial literacy site sponsored by Community Action [www.managingmymoney.com](http://www.managingmymoney.com)
5. A National Campaign to encourage savings and debt-reduction [www.thebeehive.org](http://www.thebeehive.org)

**Parents’ Top Holiday Tips:** (con’t from p. 1)

Kids were “excited” about holiday events.

**4 Tips to Help Your Child Survive Family Holiday Gatherings**

1. Let your child know what to expect at the gathering — who’s coming, what the activities are, some topics he can talk about (con’t on page 2) with family members, and how you expect him to behave.
2. Make sure he has eaten well, is not overtired, and has time to “blow off steam” before the gathering.
3. Bring an activity that your child enjoys and can engage other family members in.
4. At the event, help your child identify a safe and comfortable space he can go to when he needs a break.

**4 Tips to Help You Survive Family Gatherings**

1. Set realistic expectations for you and your child — don’t go for perfection.
2. Remember that your child’s behavior is not a reflection of your parenting skills.
3. If someone says something negative about your child, smile, pause then say something positive about her.
4. Don’t be afraid to leave if the gathering is too stressful. Relax and enjoy as much as you can!

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**Tax Help for Families**

As a parent of a child with a disability, you may qualify for some of the following tax exemptions, deductions, and credits. For more detailed information, please take a look at the IRS publications & forms referenced.

**Dependents:** You may be able to claim your totally and permanently disabled child as an exemption, regardless of age, even if your child received income for work performed at a sheltered workshop.

*See IRS Publication 501*

**Adoption Credit:** You may be able to claim a tax credit for expenses paid to adopt a child. The credit may increase if the expenses are for the adoption of a child with special needs.

*See IRS Publication 968 & Form 8839*

**Medical Expenditures:** Special schooling for a child with a physical or mental disability or one needing psychiatric treatment may be deductible.

*See IRS Publication 502*

**Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC):** The EITC is a refundable tax credit for working parents with low to moderate earnings. The age limitation rules that apply in qualifying a child are waived if the child is permanently and totally disabled.

*See IRS Publication 596*

**Child or Dependent Care Credit:** If you pay someone to care for your dependent child you may able to claim a credit for those expenses. The age limitation is waived if the person is physically or mentally unable to care for him or herself.

*See IRS Publication 503*

**Free Tax Return Assistance**

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites offer free tax return preparation to individuals having low to moderate income. Call 1-800-829-1040 (TTY/TDD call 1-800-829-4059) for a site near you.
System of Care by Carolyn Greene

Statistics support that five (5) to nine (9) percent of children and youth between the ages of 9 and 17 have serious diagnosable mental illnesses.

In many cases, these children and families are receiving services and support from multiple child-serving agencies and community resources.

System of Care proposes that everyone supporting or providing services to a child and family comes together to form a team.

It is an approach to services that recognizes the importance of family, school and community, and seeks to promote the full potential of every child, youth and their family at home, in school, in the community and throughout life.

National data collected for more than a decade confirms the experiences of children, youth, and caregivers:

**Systems of care work!** Data from system of care related to children, youth and caregivers reflected the following:
- Children and youth improved on clinical outcomes after 6 months.
- Children and youth with suicide-related histories improved after 6 months.
- Children and youth improved or remained stable on school-related outcomes after 6 months.
- Children and youth with co-occurring disorders improved after 6 months.
- System of Care communities adopted a strength-based approach to planning services.
- Families/caregivers were satisfied with the cultural competence of service providers.

Recently, North Carolina’s General Assembly designated funds to support hiring a statewide System of Care Coordinator and one System of Care Coordinator for each of the Local Management Entities. The primary functions of the System of Care Coordinator include significantly increasing collaboration across local agencies, ensuring youth and family involvement, enhancing the child and family team process, supporting activities of the community collaborative(s) and promoting cultural competence throughout the system.

The System of Care Coordinator for the New River Behavioral Healthcare (con’t page 5)

PtoP Help for Families (con’t from p.1)

Parent to Parent FSN-HC is supported locally by Appalachian State University and the Children’s Developmental Services Agency of the Blue Ridge.


All services are free and confidential.

As one parent says, “Parent to Parent FSN-HC provides hope to parents who are overwhelmed, stressed, and struggling.”

If you would like more information, please contact Parent to Parent FSN-HC
Locally: 828-262-6089
Toll free: 1-866-812-3122 or look online at www.parent2parenthighcountry.org.

Hats Off!
Dancing for a Good Cause

Seventy-five ASU students danced for 24 hours at the Dance Marathon to raise $17,000 to be split between Western Youth Network and Parent to Parent Family Support Network of the High Country. Photo courtesy of WYN
Dealing with Your Child's Frustrating Behavior

Jan Baumel, M.S.,
Licensed Educational Psychologist
www.schwablearning.org

Are there times when your child seems to willfully defy you? Do you receive frequent notes or phone calls from school about those same behaviors? Out of frustration, do you find yourself raising your voice or saying things you later regret?

Understanding Your Child's Behavior

Behavior is a way of communicating with others. It can be aimed at getting something, such as your attention or a snack. Behavior may be designed to help him escape doing something that’s really hard or would keep him from having fun. You may have noticed this when you ask him to do his chores, but he'd rather play computer games. As a parent, you may think you understand what your child’s behavior is telling you. But even though you know him well, there will be times when the message isn’t clear.

Strategies for Managing Frustrating Behavior

1) Following Directions

If your child doesn’t follow directions, it’s easy to believe he’s being stubborn or ignoring you on purpose. But his behavior may be covering up problems remembering or understanding directions. Perhaps you’re talking too much — giving him more than he can handle verbally. Next time, see if these strategies help him:

- Get his attention and eye contact before giving directions.
- Show him what you want him to do.
- Make a picture chart or list to serve as a reminder. Ask him to explain directions or show you what he’s supposed to do before he gets started.

2) Tackling Homework

If your child doesn’t start homework until the last minute, you may think he’s being lazy or defiant. But maybe he doesn’t know how to get started. Perhaps he has problems with the concept of time or can’t decide when his work is good enough. Some kids think the “due date” is the day they’re supposed to "do" the project.

These ideas may help to make homework time a little less frustrating:

- Have him set a goal for quality and amount to do on an (con’t on page 5)

Final Regulations for IDEA released & New Website

…..Launched http://idea.ed.gov

On August 3, Secretary Spellings announced the release of the final regulations implementing Part B of IDEA 2004. In front of a large and diverse audience, the Secretary reiterated her mission to ensure that no child is left behind, including children with disabilities. OSEP is delighted to move beyond getting the regulations approved to implementing them!

To aid the education of parents, families, educators and administrators, the US Department of Education has launched a new website, http://idea.ed.gov

This site was created to provide a “one-stop shop” for resources related to IDEA and its implementing regulations, released on August 3, 2006.

It is a “living” website and will change and grow as resources and information become available. When fully implemented, the site will provide searchable versions of IDEA and the regulations, access to cross-referenced content from other laws (e.g. the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), etc.), video clips on selected topics, topic briefs on selected regulations, links to OSEP’s Technical Assistance and Dissemination (T&AD) Network and a Q & A Corner where you can submit questions, and a variety of other information sources. As items are completed and added to this site we invite you to grow and learn with us as we implement these regulations. Thanks to ECAC for this information. For more information go to: www.ecac-parentcenter.org
System of Care (con’t from p. 3)

Local Management Entity is Carolyn Greene.

Community Collaboratives

An important component of a successful and responsive system of care is the community collaborative. The community collaborative is a cross agency, family involved group that comes together for a common reason, goal or cause. The community collaborative is responsible for evaluation of the service needs and gaps in the community, to recommend ways to bridge these service gaps and to collaboratively share resources and decision making with the local agencies/providers to ensure an adequate continuum of appropriate services and supports are available in the community.

Local Collaboratives

Currently, there are active community collaboratives in Avery and Watauga counties.

- Avery’s Collaborative is called Avery RAPS, and it meets at 11:30 on the first Wednesday of each month in the County Commissioners’ conference room in the Avery Department of Social Services building.
- The Watauga County Community Collaborative meets quarterly at 9:00 in the Human Services conference room at 132 Poplar Grove Connector. The next meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2007.
- Alleghany County is re-establishing its collaborative and has scheduled its first meeting for January 18, 2007. The Collaborative will meet at 1:30 in the Alleghany Department of Social Services conference room immediately following the Child Protection Team meeting.
- Preliminary planning is in progress to re-establish the community collaborative in Wilkes and Ashe counties.

For more information about system of care or the community collaborative in your county, please contact the System of Care Coordinator at 828.263.5653.

Dealing with Your Child's Frustrating Behavior (from page 3)

assignment before he begins.
- Get him started on his homework to make sure he understands what’s expected.
- Set a timer for a certain amount of time to help him get a sense of how long things take.
- Teach him to use a daily, weekly, or monthly planner so he can plan assignments and their due dates.
- Help him break long term assignments into smaller parts so he has less to do at deadline time.

3) Sitting Still

If your child just can’t seem to sit still to get anything done, it’s easy to believe he’s just being difficult. But he may physically need to move more than his brothers or sisters because that’s who he is. Here are some ways to help:
- Make sure the chair and desk heights are right for him — feet flat on the floor and writing arm supported by the desk surface — when he’s doing homework.
- Be sure all necessary supplies are handy for him so he doesn’t have to jump up and down to get things he needs.
- Make sure he knows what he’s supposed to do and when he’s supposed to do it.
- Build in opportunities to move — get a drink of water between activities or show you the project when it’s finished.

4) Talking Together

Depending on what else is going on in your life, you may feel you can’t cope with your child’s frustrating behaviors another moment. But that’s when you most need to remain calm and avoid power struggles. Here are some tips for communicating:
- Set aside plenty of time to talk, and listen to him when he tells his side of the story.
- Ask him “What’s going on?” rather than “Why are you acting that way?”
- Mention the reward he’ll get when he finishes rather than what will happen to him if he doesn’t.

Try to keep feelings separate from problem-solving. If tempers get heated, agree to stop for awhile, but set another time to continue. By involving your child in this process, you’ll be teaching him or her skills that will help them in the future.
Please support our project so that we can continue to serve our parents and the community. Any help you can give would be very appreciated. Please include the information below and send any donations to Parent to Parent FSN-HC and help continue this much needed program. Thank you!

Name ____________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
____________________________________________________
City ___________________________ State ________________
Zip Code _______________________
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Thank you for this valuable contribution

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