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Parenting tips and information for every parent

Tippaper



No.1

> Triple P, Positive Parenting, Winter 2012

www.triplep-staypositive.net

Supporting parents

The Alberta government is committed to ensuring parents have access to programs, resources and support that help with the day-to-day challenges of raising healthy, well-adjusted children. One of these resources is the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program, which is being used in 23 different countries around the world, including right here in Alberta.

Triple P gives parents simple ideas and tips they can use to tackle the wide range of behaviours children can exhibit from the time they are newborns through to their adolescent years, and the best part is that 30 years of research on this program proves that they work well, and quickly!

Triple P resources are available through Alberta's Parent Link Centres, through the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Program and in 22 different school authorities.

Help that works

Raising kids can be fun, infuriating, frightening, wonderful, stressful, exhausting and sometimes, all those things in one day! So it's not surprising that parenting is often said to be the toughest job of them all.

Fortunately, the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program gives parents the skills they need to build better relationships with their children, solve problems and become a more confident parent.

And because Triple P is based on more than 30 years' ongoing research with families around the world, you can be sure it works.

Read more about Triple P on the website www.triplep-staypositive.net



Parents, stay positive!

You've seen them in public. *That family. The one with the toddler screaming in the aisles of the grocery store, or with the boy crying and pounding his fists on the ground. We watch their parents and think, "They should do something. I would never let my child act like that!" Then we look hesitantly at our own family, wondering if anyone has ever regarded us in the same way...*

Judgement and guilt were frequently felt by Fort Macleod parents Trish and Chris Hoskin from the moment their second daughter, Anna, was born. Trish says Anna was a very challenging baby, making it difficult for her parents to bond with her. "Because of this, I felt a lot of guilt and anguish about my parenting, or what I thought was a lack of parenting," says Trish.

Public outings were a nightmare. "We could not take Anna out to grocery shop until she was older. Kicking, screaming (and I mean screaming), crying, you name it. Over what? Anything - not wanting to

sit in a cart, not wanting to hold hands, not wanting to get buckled into her car seat."

So, when a colleague asked Trish if she'd like to be her "guinea pig" for a new parenting program, Trish felt she had nothing to lose. "I wanted to help her out, but didn't think I would actually gain anything from such a program."

Fortunately for Trish that program was the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program, considered one of the world's most effective parenting programs and used in 23 countries around the globe.

Triple P gives parents simple ideas and

tips they can use to tackle a wide range of family problems, from everyday issues such as tantrums and disobedience to more serious concerns such as fighting and aggression. Triple P can even help parents prevent problems occurring in the first place.

Triple P also offers parents a choice about how they get their parenting help and how much they need – with everything from quick private consultations to longer, more detailed group courses available.

Read how Trish used Triple P on page 2

Contact?

Check our website
triplep-staypositive.net

2 About Triple P



2000

Extra steps are taken every day by a child who plays outside after school.

www.activehealthykids.ca

50

Number of words in a child's vocabulary at 18 months. At 6 years: 14,000.

www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

206 vs 300

The number of bones there are in the adult body compared to a child's (some fuse together as we grow).

www.kidshealth.org



Continued from page 1 >

Parenting plan strategies lead to dramatic changes



When she started Triple P, there was one particular behaviour Trish Hoskin wanted to tackle – her daughter's growling.

"She would growl when she didn't get her way or if she didn't like what I said. She would also growl at other people in public. It was very embarrassing," says Trish.

Trish's Triple P practitioner Susan Simpson recommended two specific strategies for Trish to use. The first involved consistently using descriptive praise (very specific praise to encourage behaviour that is desirable). The second strategy involved using her voice effectively ("get close, stay calm and be firm").

Trish says, "The strategies were practical and concrete. There was no airy-fairy stuff that so many programs/books spew when they have no idea what it's really like to have a challenging child. Susan gave me two simple things to do; things I didn't have to think about, as soon as I saw the behaviour arise. I was amazed that by the end of my sessions with Susan, things had changed so dramatically."

Trish completed what is known as Primary Care Triple P, which are 15 to 30 minute sessions one-on-one with a practitioner.

Trish says, "I knew I had to trust Susan completely and give it 100 per cent. This

is the thing - if I can't be totally open and honest about everything that's going on with my kids, how can I possibly be the type of good parent I want to be? It was so painful and hard to admit, lots of guilt of course, fear and shame, but I think it's the only way I could get something from this program. I was ready for this program."

Trish saw Susan just four times to talk over her problems – the right number, she felt, for her needs. She also made good use of the tip sheets which were full of simple ideas to adapt to various situations. "When we first completed the program, Anna would hug me and say, 'This is the kind of mom I wanted,' and 'This is the kind of family I always wanted,' Trish says, (adding, "stab my heart!").

Today, Trish's perception of Anna has changed. "Anna is still the same, but happier. She is super-smart, funny, and outgoing... I couldn't really see that stuff before because I was so focused on what I didn't like about her. Now we can go on holidays, out for dinner – we can go anywhere."

Trish looks back at the progress she made



with Anna, who is now six years old, and marvels at the fact that she had originally done the program just to assist a colleague. "I did it to help Susan, but I think it was divine intervention. Now I recommend it to everyone!" ■

TRIPLE P TIP

Problem solving – a skill for life

Problems are a fact of life, but problem solving is a skill that doesn't come naturally. Triple P founder Professor Matt Sanders says we should remember that while children aren't born knowing how to problem solve, they do have the capacity to learn.

Good problem solving involves creative thinking, critical thinking, communication and a positive attitude. A great place to start to teach children these skills is with everyday play, where there is a lot of problem solving and opportunity for the child to show what they know and what they can do.

Parents should also be mindful not to step in and solve the problems for children, although it's fine to offer tips and suggestions as they nudge the child towards a solution. And children who see mom and dad do it, and who have parents who share their reasoning, thinking and problem solving, will grow up believing that problems have solutions.

– Professor Matt Sanders

Help for every parent



The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program doesn't assume 'one size fits all' when it comes to providing support for families. That's because Triple P knows that each family has its own special needs and concerns so it has a number of ways for parents to get their Triple P help.

In Alberta, Triple P is available for parents of children up to 12 years of age, with Teen Triple P for parents of adolescents up to age 16 years, and Stepping Stones Triple P for parents of a child with a disability.

Seminars

This is positive parenting in a 90-minute nutshell. These informal presentations tackle the most common issues for parents of children up to 12 years, with separate seminars for parents of adolescents 12 - 16 years. There are three different seminar topics in each age range and parents can do one, two or all three.

Primary Care

Primary Care is a brief and private way for parents of children and teenagers to get help tackling one or two specific problems. Parents meet with a practitioner on about four occasions for sessions of between 15 and 30 minutes.

Group

This is the way to get a more in-depth understanding of positive parenting and how to make it work. Groups of no more than 12 parents attend five sessions over a couple of months, with conveniently-timed phone calls providing support at home.

Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones is for parents of children with intellectual and physical disabilities who have disruptive behaviour. In Alberta, Stepping Stones is available in a number of ways. There's Primary Care – a few brief personal sessions. There's Standard Stepping Stones, which is recommended for families with significant problems and usually consists of around ten hour-long private sessions. And finally, there's Group Stepping Stones, which brings together small groups of parents for six sessions of about 2 ½ hours each over a couple of months.



Stepping Stones offers real solutions



Slave Lake mom, Jodi Gale, knew that the behavior of her youngest son, Joel, was his way of communicating his unhappiness. Jodi's arms were often covered in scratches and bites and she had accepted the wounds as a natural consequence of raising a child with a brain injury. But today, Jodi's arms are scratch and bite-free and Joel appears happy and content. And she attributes this to Triple P's Stepping Stones program, which gives positive parenting help to parents of a child with a disability.



Joel and Jodi Gale

For Jodi, having a child with a non-visible disability has been tough. "When he has a tantrum in a public place, everyone stares in judgment," says Jodi.

To strangers, with his bright blue eyes and kindly features, Joel appears a typical 10-year-old boy. However, he was born with a serious brain injury that remains undiagnosed.

Unable to speak, Joel would often resort to biting, scratching and pinching out of

frustration. Family life was stressful.

"My husband and I didn't agree on forms of discipline, so we weren't consistent. I was inclined to go soft on Joel, reasoning that his brain injury wasn't his fault," says Jodi.

But the inconsistency was especially difficult for Joel's older brother, Tyler. "If they were fighting over a toy, I would tell Tyler to give it to Joel because it was easier," says Jodi. "I would treat them

both differently for exhibiting the same behaviours, rationalizing to myself that Tyler knew better, but that Joel couldn't help it. Our version of sibling rivalry would often involve Joel chasing his brother on all fours and biting his calves."

Jodi was initially skeptical when her family's Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) worker recommended the Stepping Stones Group program. "I had tried other programs without much

success, but figured I had nothing to lose by giving this one a try."

The group Jodi joined included parents who could genuinely relate to her frustrations and concerns, so they quickly bonded. "The instructor, Patty, was a treasure!" says Jodi.

Faced with the daunting prospect of a three-week session break, Jodi wasn't sure she would cope. "It turns out the break was the best thing though - I discovered I had truly learned the skills I needed to modify Joel's behaviour."

Now Jodi has completed the Stepping Stones program and confidently uses the strategies to teach Joel to communicate calmly, without aggression. "Instead of letting the biting and scratching continue, my husband and I acted on it immediately. We used time-outs within the room so that he could see us. We encouraged clapping instead of biting - an easy skill that he wouldn't have to think about. We learned the importance of acting immediately and consistently to get the best results."

And the changes to their family life have been dramatic. She shows off her scratch-free arms and says with a grin, "There's no question in my mind that it works!" ■



Passion to help parents not lost in fires



Patty Stephen

Although Patty Stephen's office went up in flames when Slave Lake was ravaged by wildfires in May, her dedication to her work is unwavering. Patty, who is Program Lead for the Northern Links Parent Link Network, now operates out of a temporary base at the Native Friendship Parent Link Centre, organizing Triple P's Stepping Stones program for parents of Slave Lake, Athabasca and Wabasca. And she continues to be inspired by the changes she sees in the families she works with.

"I enjoy being in the preventative side of family issues and find it rewarding to teach parents of children with disabilities how to bring out their children's potential," says Patty. "That is what Stepping Stones is all about."

A background in the rehabilitation field, along with experience raising two boys and fostering several children, made Patty an ideal candidate to be trained in Stepping Stones - the positive parenting program specifically for parents of a child with a disability.

"What I especially like about Stepping Stones is that you are actually doing the techniques while learning them, which makes it concrete to the parents," says Patty. "Other programs involve simply teaching the theory, but with Stepping Stones, we give parents homework including tangible techniques. We then ask the parents to tell us how it is working for them at home so that we can adapt our programs to suit their needs."

"Their children can have a wide range of disabilities, but we

already know exactly which ones due to the pre-assessment, meaning we can tailor their program from the beginning. Those are the main differences compared to other programs I've used."

Patty explains how Stepping Stones helped a frazzled mom adapt a parenting strategy the parent had learned elsewhere.

"Her son has Asperger's, and she used a positive reinforcement chart and jar of marbles to reward him each time he put his clothes away. She did this for five years, even though he could now easily do this task without a reward. She genuinely believed she'd need to continue rewarding him forever, so our program taught her how to fade out rewards in a positive manner."

"Ultimately, that's what Stepping Stones is about; giving parents positive and practical techniques to use with their children every day at home." ■

4 Staying positive



Getty Images

Make positive parenting work for you



Most parents would agree the benefits of positive parenting sound very, very appealing. After all, who wouldn't want their child to calmly follow instructions, do well at school, make friends easily and feel good about themselves? Or to be one who's less likely to develop behavioural or emotional problems when they get older? And then there are the advantages for the parents themselves. Parents who use positive parenting say they feel more confident, less stressed and have less conflict with their spouse or partner over parenting issues.

Triple P's approach to positive parenting is based on some very simple ideas that have been proven to help make raising children easier. These are Triple P's five key steps to positive parenting:

1. Create a safe, interesting environment

Children need to play, explore and investigate their world to develop essential skills so it's important to create a safe home environment. With knives out of reach, chemicals and medicine locked away and kneepads around for bike or skateboard riding, parents won't be constantly on red alert.

Also, make sure there are lots of interesting things for a child to do. It does not need to be expensive toys. Coloured pencils and homemade playdough are great for keeping youngsters occupied, while old boxes, newspaper and twine can be used to create cities, costumes and play houses.

And of course there's an added bonus to all of this. Kids who are happily entertaining themselves are less likely to become bored and misbehave!

2. Have a positive learning environment

When your child comes to you for help, care or a chat, they're ready to learn. Give them positive attention,

even if only for a minute or so.

It also helps to be positive about things your child is doing. When you see them doing something you like, pay attention. Giving them some praise or showing them you like what they're doing increases the chance they'll do it again!

3. Use assertive discipline

Children do best in a predictable, stable environment, so set clear rules and boundaries and follow through with appropriate consequences. If rules are broken, stay calm and follow up with fair, age-appropriate consequences, such as taking away a toy for a few minutes or limiting computer time.

You also don't have to jump on every minor indiscretion. Ignore misbehaviour you think is merely an attempt to get attention. Don't make a fuss and it may go away. And remember to praise behaviour you like. Try to catch your child following rules and congratulate them for it – especially when they're learning something new. Praise them and they're more likely to do it again.

4. Have realistic expectations

Nobody's perfect – kids or adults – so don't expect your child to do more (or less) than they are capable of. If you expect your child will always be polite, tidy up, or always be happy and

co-operative, you're setting yourself up for disappointment, and for conflict, with your child.

And don't forget to go easy on yourself, too. You are human. You will make mistakes so don't get too frustrated or upset. Everyone learns through experience.

5. Take care of yourself as a parent

Raising children is a time-consuming job that can sometimes seem to take over your whole life. But you've got to look after your own needs too. Make sure you're getting some support, companionship, recreation and even a little time alone!

If you find ways to balance work and family, can call on assistance from friends and relatives and work as a team with your partner, you'll feel much better about being a parent. You won't get as stressed and it will make it much easier to be patient and calm when your child needs you.

To read more about Triple P's five key steps to positive parenting go to www.triplep-staypositive.net



TRIPLE P TIP

Changing beliefs

Sometimes parents' beliefs about raising children can make the task more difficult. Here are some common stumbling blocks to look out for.

It's just a phase

Don't dismiss a child's problem behaviour as being "normal for their age". For example, not all two-year-olds throw tantrums and those who do don't always grow out of it. Dealing with misbehaviour early will make life much easier for all of you later on.

It's all my fault

Some parents blame themselves for almost everything their child does. But self-blame is destructive, so you may not be able to make the routine changes that could help you manage the problem.

He (or she) is doing it deliberately just to annoy me

Most children simply don't know why they misbehave and all kids would have trouble putting their reasons into words. There may be something subtle in the way your family communicates that's sparking the problem, rather than your child having an in-built need to provoke you.

– Professor Matt Sanders





Ten minutes with... Susan Simpson

Triple P practitioner Susan Simpson is Co-ordinator for Fort Macleod Kids First Family Centre (a Parent Link Centre).

As a Triple P practitioner, what are the most common problems parents discuss with you?

The most common problems include children not listening, not following instructions, and throwing tantrums or pouting.

When parents are struggling with a child's behaviour, do you find they are comfortable asking for help or are they worried what others will think of them?

When we introduced Triple P to Fort Macleod, we did, and continue to do, everything in our power to "normalize" the process of reaching out for help. For example, we place posters, and brochures everywhere: in schools, day care centres, day homes, agencies around town and anywhere else that families commonly go. We have had ongoing interviews and articles with local media stressing that Triple P actually works best for 'ordinary' parents experiencing 'ordinary' problems with 'ordinary' children. I am sure some parents still harbour concerns about what others will think of them, but for the most part they don't seem embarrassed. Remember that by the time they come to us, they are often at the end of their own resources and very eager for help!

What do you like most about the Triple P program?

I really like that it is practical, easy, implemented with "baby steps", and that anybody can do it with some degree of success. As the promotional material says, "Small Changes – Big Differences!"

A few years ago, the Alberta Benchmark Study found that most parents couldn't recognize the emotional and social milestones young children are expected to reach. Why is it important to know these things?

More and more research is showing that in order for children to develop into healthy, well balanced adults, it is essential for parents to lay strong social and emotional foundations. We also know that social emotional well-being is promoted by positive early environments and nurturing relationships. Most parents come to us focused on their child's behaviour and have not taken into account the environmental factors that may be affecting the way they are acting. Triple P helps parents to understand the necessity of creating a safe, interesting, positive environment for their child or children. Very often, just the parents' shifting from negative to positive attention will result in developmentally-appropriate behaviour in their child.



Susan Simpson

How do you - or how does Triple P - help parents help their children to reach these milestones?

Parents' expectations of their child depend on what they consider 'normal' for children of different ages. Children need to be developmentally ready to learn new skills and it is important for parents to remember that they are individuals and develop at different rates. They often come to us expecting too much too soon. Children are not perfect and all children make mistakes. Triple P helps parents to learn what appropriate behaviour is for their child, and what is not. In addition, and perhaps even more pervasive, is the belief that parents should be perfect, which leads to frustration and feelings of inadequacy. Triple P helps dispel this myth

and encourages parents to accept that they too will make mistakes, while empowering them with tools to help them approach parenting in the most effective ways.

What would you say to someone who thinks they may need some parenting support and is considering a program such as Triple P?

I would suggest they come and meet with us, or, if they feel more comfortable, attend one of our seminars so they get an overview of what to expect from the Triple P Primary Care Sessions. I honestly am not aware of any parent anywhere that couldn't use a little help and Triple P has 30 years of evidence that indicates it works! ■

Parent Link Centres connect parents

Parents in all corners of the province have access to a wide range of resources to help them in raising their children. Parent Link Centres, a network of 46 family resource centres across Alberta, deliver effective parenting programs and services to more than 160 Alberta communities.



These centres of excellence provide parents and families with the help they need to make sure their children arrive at school ready to learn and parents have the support needed to help their children develop and fulfill their potential. Each centre is designed to meet the unique needs of families and offers a range of services, which include: play-based learning activities for children and parents; workshops and seminars on issues related to parenting and early childhood development; toy-lending and resource libraries; and information about other resources in the community.

Parent Link Centres are specifically designed for parents with young children by giving them a place to laugh, learn and play together during their early years.

Each Parent Link Centre provides the following five core services:

- parent education
- early childhood development and care
- family support
- information and referral; and
- developmental screening.

The programs delivered in these service areas may differ from centre-to-centre to meet the needs of the families in their community.

The Virtual Parent Link Centre is a website that brings together information for parents and caregivers to support them in promoting children's learning, development and health. Here you will find information

about becoming a parent, fostering a healthy pregnancy, locating and choosing child care, various health issues, communication, discipline, and our special section entitled Ages and Stages.

Content is regularly updated to reflect the concerns of Alberta parents. The Virtual Parent Link Centre offers valuable support to Alberta parents, especially to those who aren't able to go to a centre in their community. So, no matter where parents live, they can get helpful information simply by visiting the website at www.parentlinkalberta.ca





Aboriginal families use Triple P for positive change



Laura and Jacob Linklater



If you were to enter the Bent Arrow Aboriginal Parent Link Centre during a Triple P group session, you might detect the lingering aroma of smouldering sage. A traditional smudge ceremony commences the evening of learning new parenting strategies, allowing participants the opportunity to cleanse themselves with sage smoke.

Drawing the billowing smoke over their hands, head and heart allows families to prepare themselves to accept new knowledge and guidance. Although this ceremony is not compulsory, for many Aboriginal people, it is an important part of their tradition and culture which helps parents feel better and clear their minds to new ideas.

Happily, for those parents who choose to follow through with the Triple P strategies they learn at these sessions, culture does not pose a barrier and they achieve positive results with their children.

Laura Linklater is both a Triple P practitioner and parent. Despite having raised three children (now 28, 24 and 22) she still welcomed guidance for raising her youngest son, Jacob, who is now 11 and who presented her with different challenges. Being open-minded and hoping for positive change, Laura decided to apply some of the strategies she learned during her training to become a Triple P practitioner. "When I teach the Triple P Group Level 4, I actually use personal anecdotes about how Triple P has changed our lives," Laura says. "Jacob and I have such a positive relationship now." He smiles back at her as she says this, before giving her a big hug.

As a mom of Aboriginal background, Laura genuinely empathises with the unique challenges her clients of Aboriginal origin face. "I'm part Thaltan (from northern British Columbia) and part Gwitchen (from the Yukon Territory). I'm from the Wolf clan and my father is from the Crow clan." Despite being proud of her heritage, Laura was actually raised to "act white." She

explains, "My mother believed life would be tough for me as an Aboriginal person, and thought that if she raised me to act like a white person, things would be easier for me. But look at me – I'm clearly Aboriginal!" Laura laughs. "People are going to treat me as they see me. And if they choose to behave differently because I'm Aboriginal, acting white isn't going to help."

Laura's own mother's parenting strategy stems from the way she was raised. "Parenting wasn't modelled, and many were left unsure how to be parents because they weren't raised by parents themselves." The effects of this parenting gap have trickled down through the generations.

It is Laura's empathy and understanding of the additional challenges Aboriginal parents face that allows her to consider the needs of the people coming to the Bent Arrow Aboriginal Parent Link Centre in search of guidance.

Laura does not alter the Triple P program itself. "The strategies work in any culture. They have been used around the world and written about in peer-reviewed journals." With a degree in Native Studies, 10 years of working with families, and having used many of the strategies on her own son Jacob, Laura genuinely believes the program can help Aboriginal parents.

She's not finished with Jacob yet though. "I'm going to start looking through Triple P's materials for teens – soon, I'll be trying those strategies out on him too!" ■



TRIPLE P TIP: In praise of praise

Children who are constantly told "don't" or "no" soon learn this behaviour gets them the most attention. Instead, if you catch your child doing positive things, make your praise clear, specific and enthusiastic.

This tells them that what they've accomplished is positive and appreciated. It's praise a child can understand and

enjoy – and they're more likely to repeat the positive behaviour in the future. And as your child becomes more skilled at the task you're trying to encourage, phase out the praise by making it less predictable.

And if you do have to say "no" or "don't" to problematic behaviour, remember to follow up with a positive instruction. For example: "No, stop

grabbing the cat's tail" would be followed by, "pat the cat like this". A good rule of thumb is to try to deliver four positive comments to every negative comment such as "don't", "stop" or "no".

– Professor Matt Sanders

Plan ahead for stress-free outings

If you're setting out on an adventure with the kids, it's a good idea to plan ahead – being prepared can help you nip potential behaviour issues in the bud.

Think about what could go wrong before leaving and try to tackle the problems in advance. For example, pack snacks if you know your child gets irritable when they're hungry.

Talk about the rules of the outing before you head off. Chat in a relaxed manner and get your child involved in deciding the rules. Choose only a few and keep them simple, for example: "Keep your hands and feet to yourself" and "Stay close to Mom".

Plan interesting activities for those times when kids get bored and act out. You may need to take toys or games to occupy the youngsters in the car or on the bus. And if you're lining up with the kids, keep them focused – start a game of "I Spy" or question them about what they can see around them and they'll be less likely to get fidgety and act out.

You may also like to create a rewards system so your child can earn a treat by following the rules. Perhaps you want to carry a sticker chart with you to reward good behaviour as it happens. And remember to praise and encourage the good behaviour when you see it.

If your child breaks the rules, there should be consequences that are practical and immediate. If you're in a playground, for example, the consequence for pushing a little brother or sister could be to have the child sit quietly away from the swings for a few minutes. You should always talk about the consequences before you leave home though, so your child knows what to expect.

And when you're finally home, it helps to have a brief follow-up discussion. Praise your child for following the rules and, if necessary, point out one rule that may have been broken.

– Professor Matt Sanders





Free family winter fun: our top picks



We complain about it every year: the freezing cold snow and ice that blankets Alberta. Although these frosty crystals tend to outstay their welcome, winter is a time when children and parents alike delight in these white wonders sprinkling down. So dig out your warmest woollies, serve up steaming mugs of hot chocolate with marshmallows, and prepare for the best winter family fun Alberta has to offer, without blowing the budget!

Stories and more

On those weeks when the temperatures drop below -30C (or even -40C!) you may feel trapped at home. Fortunately, libraries throughout Alberta offer programs that are not only fun for kids, but may also inspire their imaginations. Puppet shows, book clubs, creative writing workshops, story time programs and many more are on offer!

Northern Lights

They're free and more spectacular than any holiday decorations on the planet. When you spot them, quickly have your kids put on their warmest clothing (plenty of layers), pack some hot drinks, and drive to a remote area far away from the glow of city lights. Winter is an ideal time to go Northern Lights spotting, as the sky is

darker for longer each day so the lights will appear brighter. The further north you head, the better your chance of seeing them.

Ice skating

The most beautiful lakes in the world freeze over in Alberta each year, forming picturesque and free skating rinks throughout the province! Bring some flasks of hot soup or stew and spend a day skating together with your family.

Fabulous festivals

Many Alberta communities offer residents and visitors opportunities to participate in unique festivals and special events geared towards family fun in the winter. Visit the Travel Alberta website at www.travelalberta.com for listings of events and activities taking place year round across the province.

Decorating snow

Fill water pistols and spray bottles with water, adding a few drops of food colouring to each. Brighten white snow with the colours of the rainbow!

Sledding

Zip down snowy hills on sheets of cardboard, plastic garbage bags, sleds, and anything else you can find that slides along snow!

Twirl maple taffy

The best time to make taffy is when the snow has recently fallen and is untouched. Rapid-boil pure maple syrup on a stove (stirring continuously while your children collect pans of fresh snow). Once the syrup starts to thicken, pull it off the heat, and gently sprinkle it over the snow. Have your family twirl it around popsicle sticks. Yummy!

Photograph the flakes

Generations of children have been told that "No two snowflakes are ever alike." The problem is – the flakes melt before we have a chance to match them up! Pull out your cameras and have fun teaching your child about photography while zooming in on these phenomenal flakes and later seeing if they match.



Albertans spend half the year in the snow and they embrace it to the fullest. For some, the preferred winter activity is watching the snow fall – through the window, in front of a crackling fire with a hot beverage. Any way you play it, winter is wondrous in Alberta.



Getting school right!



Sometimes a child's anticipation about starting school can be the easy bit. For many of the beginners, it's the thrill of being grown up and finally going off to join the big kids, while for the older children, it's the excitement of catching up with friends they may not have seen over the holidays. But what happens when the novelty wears off, and when going to school becomes a chore?

According to Triple P's Professor Matt Sanders the key to success and motivation at school is all about laying the groundwork. And he says there are many ways parents can help their children feel comfortable and happy at school.

"A child's social and emotional maturity are two vital factors when it comes to giving your child a successful start at school and continued capacity for learning," he says.

"Children need to be given their best chance to flourish and reach their potential. Academic learning at school is important but so is getting along with others, making friends and resolving conflict. If you can help your child achieve these skills they should continue to enjoy school and thrive."

Parents can also help prepare children for the classroom by encouraging a love of reading, says Professor Sanders. While reading is an important factor in a child's academic success, it also can impact on behaviour at school.

"If a child can't read and is struggling to keep up in the classroom, they may begin to misbehave as a way of seeking attention or simply because they feel excluded and bored. Reading to your child at home is also a learning experience. You're helping them acquire a valuable skill that they may continue to enjoy as they grow older."

Here are Professor Sanders' tips to help your child do well at school

- Encourage your child to show respect to others and be considerate of their needs. They are more likely to get on well with their teachers and friends if they are respectful towards them.
- Help your child to become a good communicator, develop social skills and develop healthy self-esteem.
- Encourage your child to become a good problem solver. Try not to jump in and solve their problems for them. Let them try and work them out for themselves.
- Promote independence by encouraging your child to take responsibility and do things for themselves.
- Praise your child when they do well or try hard and always show an interest in their work.



Stock Exchange



Schools to help moms and dads



How a child is raised can hugely affect the progress they make in school, and whether or not they even choose to continue or eventually drop out of school. So with that in mind, Alberta Education has enthusiastically joined forces with the Ministry of Human Services to provide positive parenting across the province.

Since January 2011, Alberta Education has overseen the Triple P training of 40 family resource workers and behaviour consultants employed by school authorities to support children and families. These 40 new Triple P practitioners come from a range of backgrounds including social work, psychology, counselling and teaching. Together, they are able to provide seminars, primary care and group programs to parents throughout Alberta, using both Triple P for parents of children up to 12 years and Stepping Stones Triple P, for parents of a child with a disability.

Triple P is free to parents, and the pilot currently being funded by Alberta Education is expected to continue for two years. First

priority is usually given to families who have children receiving Program Unit Funding (funding provided for severe disabilities and delays) and who are also wanting to participate in Family Oriented Programming (for families wanting to improve their parenting skills). However school authorities may choose how they offer Triple P.

Additionally, there are free seminars being offered by the school authorities to the school communities. These may be offered within the school itself, but they may also partner with Parent Link Centres to expand the program to the whole community. Any parents are welcome to participate in the seminars. ■



Stay in touch

If you'd like to stay up to date with positive parenting in Alberta, visit the Triple P "Stay Positive" website.

Go to www.triplep-staypositive.net for the latest news, stories and information. This site is dedicated to helping local parents find the support they need all day, every day.

Having an issue at home? Hop on the site and check out the simple tips; read stories from other parents; and check out how and why Triple P's many programs work so well for families around the world.

Click through to keep up to date with free seminars and groups for parents. And each week enjoy a fresh radio podcast from Triple P's Professor Matt Sanders. Settle back, click on the link, and listen to his suggestions for happier, more effective, parenting.

If you have friends who haven't yet seen a copy of the Triple P Tippaper, just tell them to check it out online.

www.triplep-staypositive.net

FIND YOUR PARENT LINK CENTRE



Region 1 - Southwest

Barons-Eureka-Warner Parent Link Centre
Barons-Eureka-Warner Family & Community Support Services
T: 403-345-3000

Family Centre Society of Southern Alberta
Parent Link Centre
T: 403-320-4232

Fort Macleod Kids First Family Centre
T: 403-553-5354

Pincher Creek Parent Link Centre
T: 403-627-5569

Region 2 - Southeast

The SPEC Association for Children and Families
T: 403-362-5056

McMan Parent Link Centre, McMan Youth, Family and Community Services
T: 403-504-0833

Region 3 - Calgary & Area

Community Links Parent Link Centre, Airdrie Family Services
T: 403-945-3900

Awo Taan Family Wellness Parent Link Centre, Awo Taan Native Women's Shelter Society
T: 403-531-1880

New Family Place Parent Link Centre, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
T: 403-266-6686

High River and District Parent Link Centre, Town of High River FCSS
T: 403-652-8633

Hand in Hand Parent Link Centre, Aspen Family and Community Network Society
T: 403-293-5467

Family Pride Parent Link Centre, Families Matter Society of Calgary
T: 403-288-1446

Aboriginal Parent Link Centre, Metis Calgary Family Services
T: 403-240-4642

Bow Valley Parent Link Centre - Town of Canmore FCSS
T: 403-678-7128

Western Rocky View Parent Link Centre Town of Cochrane
T: 403-851-2265

North Central Family Connections Parent Link Centre, Huntington Hills Community Association
T: 403-275-6668

Parent Link Corridor, YWCA of Calgary
T: 403-432-1582

Kidz 1st Network Parent Link Centre
Town of Chestermere
T: 403-207-7090

Region 4 - Central

Parkland Parent Link Centre, Lacombe and District FCSS
T: 403-782-4686

Village Gate Parent Link Centre - Red Deer
T: 403-343-6400

Golden Prairie Parent Link Centre
T: 403-443-8502

Mountain View Parent Link Centre
Greenwood Neighborhood Place
T: 403-638-1011

Rocky Mountain House, McMan Youth, Family & Community Service Association
T: 403-845-6301

Region 5 - East Central

Camrose Family Resource Centre - A Parent Link Centre, Camrose & District Support Services
T: 780-672-0141

Midwest Family Connections - Lloydminster
T: 306-825-5911

Vegreville and Area Parent Link Centre, Town of Vegreville & District Family & Community Support Services
T: 780-632-2912

Wainwright Parent Link Centre, Wainwright & District Family & Community Services
T: 780-842-2585

Region 6 - Edmonton & Area

Edmonton Southeast Parent Link Centre, Mill Woods Family Resource Centre
T: 780-413-4521

Strathcona Parent Link Centre, Strathcona County Family and Community Services
T: 780-416-6730

Aboriginal Parent Link Centre, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society
T: 780-474-2400

Northeast Edmonton Parent Link Centre, KARA Family Resource Centre
T: 780-478-5396

Aboriginal Parent Link Centre, Native Counselling Services of Alberta
T: 780-963-8749

Families First Fort Saskatchewan/Sturgeon County Parent Link Centre
T: 780-998-5595

West Edmonton Parent Link Centre, Jasper Place Child and Family Resource Society
T: 780-489-2243

Leduc Regional Parent Link Centre, Leduc County Family and Community Support Services
T: 780-979-2386

Parkland County Parent Link Centre, Alberta Parenting for the Future Association
T: 780-963-0549

Institut Guy Lacombe de la Famille
T: 780-468-6934

Region 7 - North Central
Lakeland Parent Link Network
T: 780-826-2120

Parent Link West Network
T: 780-865-6073

Northern Links Parent Link Network
T: 780-849-8025

Pembina Gateway Parent Link Network
T: 780-333-6310

Region 8 - Northwest

Early Childhood Resource Centre Parent Link Centre, Stepping Stones Day Care Society
T: 780-882-8679

High Level Parent Link Centre, High Level Toy Lending Library Society
T: 780-926-4668

Peace River Parent Link Centre
T: 780-624-0770

Region 9 - Northeast

THE HUB Family Resource Centre
T: 780-791-7110

Region 10 - Métis Settlements
Northeast

Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement
T: 780-689-2170

Elizabeth Métis Settlement
T: 780-594-5026

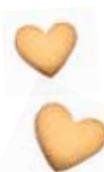
Fishing Lake Métis Settlement
T: 780-943-2777

Kikino Métis Settlement
T: 780-623-4131

Northwest

Paddle Métis Settlement
T: 780-981-2914

Peavine Métis Settlement
T: 780-523-5714



The Tippaper team

Editing: Alberta Human Services

Design: Triple P Communications

Production team: Lynnette Cassells,

Eva Meester

Writers: Adrienne Costin, Susan Fuller,

Kylie Degeling

Photography: Jaap Stahlie, Kylie Degeling,

Getty Images, Stock Exchange

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Government
of Alberta ■

