



Preventing Mental Illness Starts in Childhood

The headline in a recent bulletin of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development posed the question, "Prevention of Mental Illness: Why not start at the beginning?" The question is pressing since, according to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, 70% of adults suffering from a mental health disorder experienced the onset in their childhood or teen years.

Protective factors

Although certain risk factors for mental illness are inherited, studies now clearly show that the environment, both prenatally and in early childhood, can influence whether these factors are activated in children. In other words, early

experiences can protect children from the expression of genes that might otherwise lead to serious mental health problems later in life.

Family support

Family resource programs are well placed to provide support to families in the crucial periods of childhood, starting in pregnancy. Practitioners take a preventive and holistic approach which welcomes all families and considers the overall well-being of participants, both adults and children.

This issue of *Play and Parenting* highlights resources for use by both practitioners and parents to support children's mental health. You will find books, booklets, DVDs, tool-kits, websites and courses. They

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include resources to support the mental health of parents, strong parent-child relationships and the reinforcing of positive attitudes and skills in children, from infancy through school age. □

FRP Canada National Conference in April

Supporting Parents to Increase Natural Learning Environments for Children

Carl Dunst, PhD, is a long-time proponent of family-centred practice in the field of early childhood intervention. His research and practice as founder and codirector of the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute in Morganton, North Carolina, have focussed on studying how parents can be actively involved in taking advantage of what he calls "natural learning environments."

Everyday learning

On April 29, Dunst will be the final speaker at FRP Canada's national conference in Montreal. He will present evidence that he and his colleagues have accumulated over 20 years about how everyday family and community settings provide opportunities for children to learn the life skills that they need.

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Researcher and keynote speaker, Carl Dunst





For the last two years, **Kim Hetherington** has been an important member of the FRP Canada team, first as Project Coordinator for the *Welcome Here* project and most recently with a new project which looks at how family resource centres support social inclusion. She will be leaving us in April to take up her new duties as **Executive Director of the Petawawa Military Family Resource Centre**. All the best in your new position, Kim!



Early Learning, and a whole lot more! April 26–28

Consult the detailed program at
www.frp.ca/program2011

Register now at
www.onlineregistrations.ca/FRP_conference.

Call for Nominations FRP Canada Board of Directors, 2011–2013

Current vacancies are in British Columbia, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Members of FRP Canada with an interest in serving on its Board are invited to download a Nominations Kit at

www.frp.ca/Nominations

Completed applications must be received by **May 24, 2011**.

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Carl Dunst, continued from page 1

In particular, he will discuss how these early informal experiences contribute to children's later success in school, supplemented by more formal learning opportunities. His talk will also touch on the characteristics of informal experiences that are associated with positive outcomes.

Parent involvement

An important aspect of Dunst's research is the emphasis that it places on the role of parents in fostering learning in everyday contexts. Most of the activities he is referring to do not require much structure, planning or expenditures. They may require parents to look at their daily routines—the places they go and the things that they do—in a new light. His work focusses on capacity building and family strengthening interventions. The link between academic

success and parent involvement is well established. By showing parents their role when children are young, they can be engaged early in their children's learning.

A respected researcher

You will find ordering information for related publications, including videos of "The Power of the Ordinary," at www.wbpress.com. Dunst and co-author Carol Trivette have also published an article in the online Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development at www.child-encyclopedia.com/pages/PDF/Trivette-DunstANGxp.pdf.

Participants in the FRP Canada national conference will have a rare opportunity to hear a respected researcher in the field of family support and to ask their questions in person. □

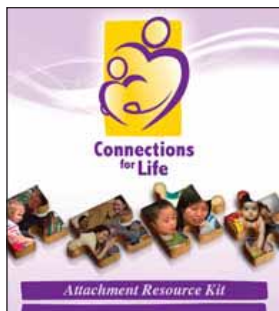


FRP Canada has produced a CD containing over 30 excerpts from works for family support practitioners, plus three complete publications:

- *Case Studies of Canadian Family Resource Programs*
- *Finding Our Way: A Participatory Evaluation Method for Family Resource Programs*
- *What Works for Whom?: Promising Practices in Parenting Education.*

Cost: \$40; \$35 for members. Order form at www.frp.ca. □

Fostering Attachment



The **Connections for Life** Resource Kit provides evidence-based information for family support practitioners on what attachment is, why it is important, what influences it, and what we can do to help promote healthy, secure attachment relationships. How parents respond to their child's attachment needs can influence how the child learns to feel, think and behave. This affects children's social and emotional health throughout life, helping them

develop trust, confidence, empathy, the ability to deal with stress and difficulties, and the ability to relate well to others.

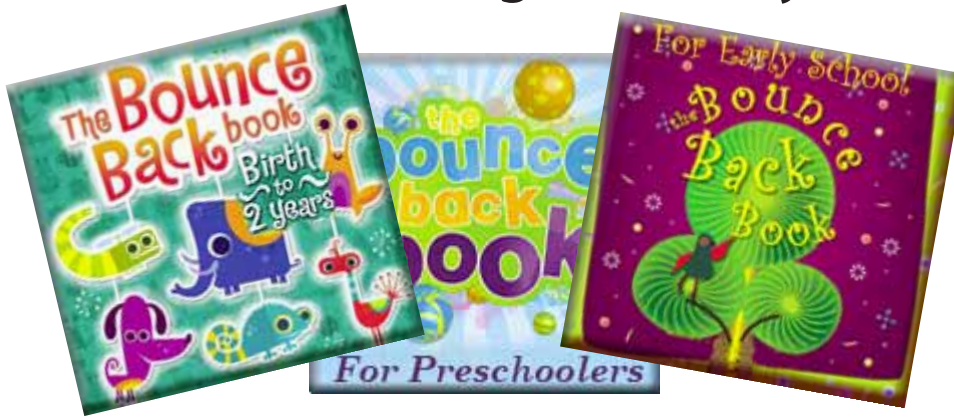
The resource kit includes "Attachment Activities," simple activities that parents and other caregivers can enjoy with children and that promote secure attachment. It also provides a guide on how to introduce the activities to parent groups in a strength-based way, using adult education techniques, and handouts for parents that briefly describe the activities.

All of the materials are available in both English and French. The entire bilingual kit can be ordered for \$80 plus shipping. Alternatively, the Guide and Attachment Activities can be downloaded for free as individual items from the website of the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute at www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca/early-childhood-mental-health/resources and the educational DVD can be ordered for \$10 plus shipping. □



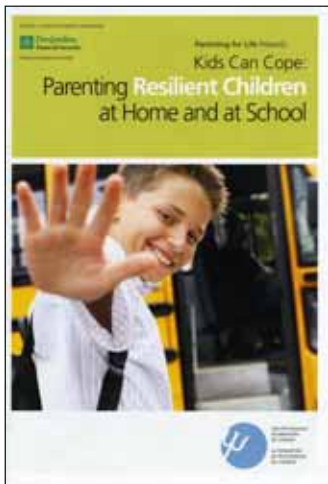
The Attachment Network of Manitoba has produced a 14-minute DVD called *Listening to Baby* that provides an overview of attachment and emphasizes the importance of parents noticing babies' cues. Parents demonstrate real-life experiences with their baby and there are also short vignettes to be used as a teaching tool. A doctor and therapist present attachment theory and intervention options. Cost: \$39.95. Order online from <http://attachmentnetwork.ca>. □

Building Resiliency in Children



For more information and to download, go to www.albertahealthservices.ca/1652.asp

Alberta Health Services publishes three booklets to help parents and caregivers nurture young children to be strong and resilient, to “bounce back” from setbacks and cope with adversity. The booklets apply to three age groups. All suggest fun, engaging and hands-on activities for adults and children to share. They focus on four core areas known to increase resilience: self-confidence, emotional regulation, problem solving and empathy. □



For more information and to download or order, go to www.psychologyfoundation.org

Kids Can Cope is a 30-page booklet, the sixth in the Psychology Foundation of Canada's Parenting for Life education program. It is designed to help parents understand what resiliency is and what parents can do to help build resiliency in children. The focus is on children **aged 6 through 12** and on activities that are easily incorporated into daily family life.

Information in this resource is based on evidence from research into resiliency. A chart explains how resiliency develops in children in the four areas of relationships and reaching out; emotional skills; competence; and optimism. For instance, it suggests that six to eight year olds are ready to develop more independent

relationships with relatives, teachers and other children and that they might need help understanding other people's behaviour and feelings. Another section summarizes how different temperamental traits may influence the path to resiliency. For instance, children whose mood tends to be negative may need more coaching to learn the kind of optimistic thinking that supports resiliency.

The final section of the booklet points out that resiliency is important for parents too. It helps them face the problems they encounter and also provide a model to their children, the most important teaching tool they have. □



For more information, go to www.friendsrt.com

Dr. Paula Barrett, a clinical child psychologist in Australia, has developed two group programs that help children develop resiliency skills. Both are rooted in cognitive behavioural therapy techniques.

Fun Friends is a play-based program for ages 4 to 6 that aims to increase social-emotional skills, coping skills and resilience to prevent the onset of emotional and behavioural disorders in later life. Parents are also involved in the program so they can sustain the skills at home.

Friends for Life is designed to help children and youth cope with fear, worry and depression. An evidence-based program, it is being used in schools and clinics around the world. In Canada, Military Family Resource Centres have used this program to support children whose parents are deployed. Children gain self-confidence in dealing with difficult or anxiety-provoking situations by learning awareness of their feelings, relaxation skills, problem-solving skills and positive thinking skills. Training to facilitate this program will be offered in Sudbury, Ottawa and Toronto this spring. □

Supporting Parents in the Postpartum Period



Carla O'Reilly, Elita Paterson and Tania Bird created *The Smiling Mask*, first a book and now a documentary DVD, to increase awareness, acceptance and assistance for those suffering with postpartum illnesses. They share their own experiences to illuminate the realities that many mothers and fathers and their families face when their lives are affected by postpartum disorders, whether

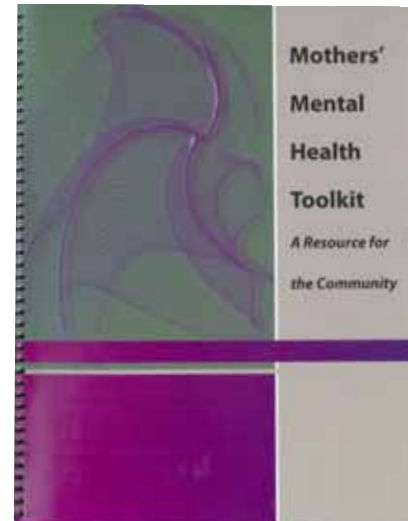
after giving birth, miscarrying or adopting.

In their book, the three authors each tell their story and share their knowledge in order to help others going through similar experiences. Their husbands also get a chapter to give their perspective. In addition, the book provides information about potential warning signs and guides on “what to do,” both for those suffering the symptoms and for their family and friends.

To order *The Smiling Mask* book, DVD and the upcoming workbook, go to www.thesmilingmask.com where you will also find related links and a blog. □

Authors at the FRP Canada National Conference

Carla O'Reilly, Elita Paterson and Tania Bird will present a workshop called “Destroy the Mask of Post Partum Depression — Destroy the Myths of Parenthood!” at FRP Canada’s national conference in Montreal in April. They will talk about their book and DVD *The Smiling Mask: Truths about Postpartum Depression and Parenthood*, as well as about the Saskatchewan Maternal Mental Health Implementation Committee. In 2010, this committee helped change provincial policy to provide guidance and to universally screen and treat all pregnant and postpartum mothers. The *Smiling Mask* video will be shown at the conference during the lunch break and in the late afternoon on Thursday, April 28 and will be for sale.



Studies clearly show that maternal depression is a risk factor for a child’s physical, intellectual and emotional well-being. The condition can have a negative effect on the attachment process and may even lead to a higher rate of neglect and abuse. Intervention to support mothers is therefore especially important during the postpartum period when as many as one woman in five suffers from a mood disorder.

The *Mothers' Mental Health Tool Kit* is designed to increase support and intervention with women, their friends and family, and community service providers (particularly CAPC and CPNP workers). Its 80 pages include sections aimed at practitioners. Interventions and treatments are simply explained. Materials are suitable for creating presentations that could be delivered in prenatal classes or for a group of new parents. However, this is not a manual for treatment or diagnosis. Its purpose is to provide a community starting point for encouraging women to seek assessment and care if necessary.

Other parts of the “tool kit” are intended to be used by parents themselves. For example, there are questionnaires to which the woman and her partner respond in order to take stock of their situation.

The *Mothers' Mental Health Tool Kit* is available in both English and French. For more information, e-mail Donna Malone, Program Consultant, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Atlantic Region at donna.malone@phac-aspc.gc.ca. □

Recognizing Five Pioneers of the Certification Program for Family Educators in Canada

FRP Canada is proud to be the home of the certification program for Family Educators in Canada. The roots of the program go back over forty years.

Early associations

The Ontario Association of Family Life Educators was founded in 1969, followed by the Quebec Association of Family Life Educators (AFLEQ) in 1973, in part to respond to a concern for quality and standards in what was then called “family life education.” Both these organizations were modelled on the National Council of Family Relations (NCFR) in the USA, an organization that defined family life education and the wide range of practice and resources available to support families over the lifespan.

Certification

In 1985, NCFR began to certify candidates in the field of Family Life Education. About this same time, parent educators across Canada were talking about the need to connect and share information, perhaps through a national clearinghouse for family education. Discussions continued for several years about the needs of the field, and in 1991, Family Service Canada formally set up a National Committee on Family Life Education. This committee met regularly to discuss the importance of consistency and credibility for family educators and the need to connect across the country. A certification process was developed and accepted in 1993 to recognize family educators who meet clear standards, adhere to a code of ethics and are committed to continuous learning. With certification, Certified Canadian Family Educators

(CCFEs) also benefit from opportunities to network with colleagues. In 2007, FRP Canada accepted an invitation from Family Service Canada to take on administration of the certification program. For more information on certification, go to www.parentsmatter.ca/ccfe.

Emeritus category

The CCFE certification committee recently created the designation “Certified Canadian Family Educator (emeritus)” to honour individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of family life education in Canada over many years. Five early pioneers of the CCFE program have been awarded the emeritus designation in recognition of their accomplishments and their commitment to raising the standards in the field. Not only were they all active in the early days of the National Committee on Family Education with Family Service Canada, they also have worked for decades both to support families and to train and mentor other family educators.

Congratulations to the following recipients of this honour.

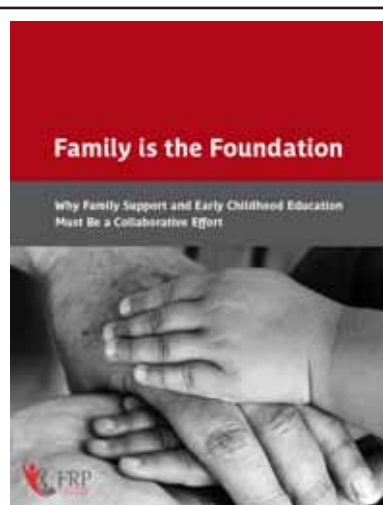
Gus Fraser, MSW, CCFE, formerly manager of family life education and a parent educator with Family Service Ottawa, now retired

Carol Matusicky, PhD, CCFE, formerly Executive Director of the BC Council for Families, currently Vice-Chair of Board Voice and an active member of the *BC Healthy Child Development Alliance*

Judy McCann Beranger, MA, CCFE, Certified Comprehensive Mediator, Certified Elder Mediator, Employee Assistance Program Coordinator for the Newfoundland Teachers' Association

Rosemary Reilly, PhD, CCFE, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Human Sciences, Concordia University

Rheta Rosen, PhD, CCFE, Associate Member Family Mediation Canada, Adjunct and Emeritus Professor, School of Nutrition, Ryerson University □



Download at
www.frp.ca/policypapers

Reorganizing Early Childhood Services: FRP Canada's Response

In many jurisdictions, responsibility for the care and education of young children is being integrated within the education sector through all-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs. This position paper highlights the need to complement school-based programs with a broad spectrum of supports for families and young children such as those offered by family resource programs and other community-based services. You are encouraged to see how its recommendations can contribute to conversations in your community.

May 2011, Canada's Next Census

Early in May, yellow census packages will be delivered to every dwelling in Canada, providing residents with the information they need to complete the census online or on paper. Completed questionnaires will provide valuable information that will be used to make decisions about your neighbourhood and community.

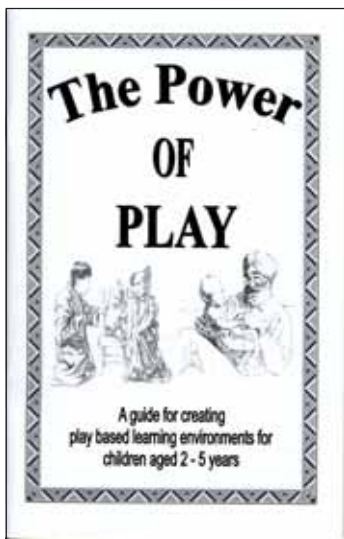


In addition to the 2011 Census, one in three households will be asked to participate in the new National Household Survey (NHS). The NHS will collect information that will give policy makers the data they need to plan and support family services, housing, roads and public transportation, and skills training for employment.

Encourage all your participants to complete and submit their forms.

TAKE A LOOK!

Learning Through Play



The Hincks -Dellcrest Centre is a children's mental health centre located in Toronto which provides treatment, prevention and early intervention services to infants, children, youth and their families. **Learning Through Play** is one of its prevention projects, aimed at informing parents about the healthy growth and development of children up to age six and teaching them how to use play activities that enhance overall development. In addition, the project promotes attachment through active parental involvement in their child's development.

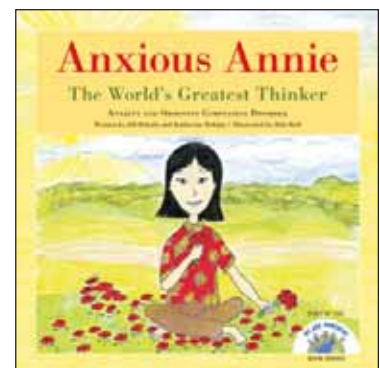
Learning Through Play materials have lots of illustrations and are suitable for use with parents with low literacy skills. The descriptive texts which accompany pictures of developmental stages and appropriate play activities

are available in 11 languages and are culturally adapted. They have been used in parent education groups and home visiting programs throughout Canada, as well as in 11 countries, including with disadvantaged rural populations in developing countries.

"Power of Play" is a one of the documents in the *Learning Through Play* program. The 55-page booklet is designed to be used by staff and parents who provide interactive early learning programs for children aged 2 to 5 years. It outlines program elements and describes the adult's role and the materials required. If parents question the importance of play in children's development, the booklet provides information for program organizers to share about what each activity can contribute to children's learning.

Project materials may be ordered at very reasonable cost from www.hincksdellcrest.org/Store.aspx. □

Children's Storybook



Wildberry Productions publishes books for children aged 4 to 12 in which the main characters have special needs that may not be obvious at first glance. In this book, Annie worries a lot about things other kids her age don't even think about. Young readers will learn about living with anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder. Cost: \$16.95. Get more information and order online at www.wildberryproductions.ca. □

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

The sites listed below contain resources that you can download for free and use in your programs, either for staff development or for distribution to participants. If you have come across similar useful resources on the Internet, share them with your colleagues by letting us know at info@frp.ca. We will publish the information in future issues of *Play and Parenting*.

www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca/early-childhood-mental-health

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute website includes a section devoted to **Early Childhood Mental Health**. Practitioners and parents will find information about influencing factors, early childhood mental illness and its early indicators, resilience and the role of families and communities in prevention and promotion.

Many **fact sheets** can be downloaded free from the resources section, including the following titles: "Helping Children Cope with Stress: Developing Resiliency" and "Caregiver Mental Health and Young Children."

Information cards with shorter text, written in plain language, cover topics such as "Domestic Violence and Young Children" and "Early Childhood Mental Health."

www.fishfulthinking.com



Fishful Thinking is a program designed by Positive Psychology leader Dr. Karen Reivich to help parents raise children who have a positive attitude and who can confidently tackle life's challenges.

The website includes book suggestions, fun quizzes and activities, as well as articles about **optimism, resilience, hope, empowerment and emotional awareness**. There are also articles on many related topics, such as relaxation techniques, stress and temperament.

Much of the information on the site is delivered through **videos**, making it accessible to those with literacy challenges. By the way, those fish illustrations are a clue: the site is sponsored by Goldfish crackers.

www.anxietybc.com

The website of the Anxiety Disorders Association of BC provides a wealth of information about anxiety and related disorders, in both adults and children. A special section is directed to parents and caregivers to explain **anxiety in childhood and youth** and to suggest ways that adults can help children deal with their problems.

The focus is on **cognitive-behavioural techniques** to cope with anxiety which interferes with children's lives. You can download **information sheets** that describe different varieties of anxiety and how they appear at different ages. Many of these documents are also available in **Punjabi, Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese**. In addition, there are video interviews with mental health experts answering questions about the treatment and prevention of anxiety in children.

TRAINING

April 26, three **one-day training workshops** for family support practitioners and administrators offered preceding FRP Canada's national conference in Montreal. www.frp.ca/program2011

April and May, one-day facilitator training workshops for the **Friends for Life** program for the prevention and treatment of anxiety and depression in children. Held in Toronto, Sudbury and Ottawa. www.friendsrt.com

May 12–13, facilitator training workshop for the six-week program for parents of children aged 7 to 12 years, **My Tween and Me**. Training held in Vancouver, sponsored by the BC Council for Families, www.bccf.ca.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 14–15, "Expanding Horizons for the Early Years: Making Relationships Work for Infants & Toddlers," Toronto, Ontario. Infant Mental Health Promotion, Hospital for Sick Children. www.sickkids.ca/imp

April 26–29, "Early Learning and a Whole Lot More!", Montreal, Quebec. Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs. www.frp.ca

May 26–28, "Valuing Children: A Canadian Conversation," Saint John, New Brunswick. Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick. www.eccenb-sepenb.com

September 21–23, "Prevention Matters Conference: Supporting Children's Well-Being," Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Prevention Institute. www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca

November 16–18, "Be Visible: Connecting Evidence to Action in Injury, Violence and Suicide Prevention," Vancouver, British Columbia. Canadian Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Conference. www.injurypreventionconference.ca