

## Problem-solving skills: a gift for life

Children who avoid trouble often have good problem-solving skills. To help your child develop these skills, consider the 'SODAS' system that's used at Girls & Boys Towns:

### Define the problem Situation

Start by helping the child to clearly *define the problem*. Children can be vague about what's troubling them and say things like 'I'm sick of school.' To help get to the root of the matter, use clarifying questions like 'Why don't you explain that some more?'

### Examine the Options

Help your child identify potential solutions to the problem – the options – but ensure that he voices his own ideas before you offer your own suggestions. Phrase your ideas as questions, so your child still feels involved in the process: 'How about talking to

your teacher after class?'

### Disadvantages and Advantages

After various options have been generated, help your child consider the disadvantages and advantages of each. This helps you teach him the cause-and-effect relationship between decisions and their outcome.

If your child has difficulty with this, guide him by asking specific questions.

### Summarise/Solution/Simulation

Summarise the discussion by reviewing each option and letting your child select the solution that he feels is best.

Even if this is not the ideal option in your opinion, let your child make the decision.

Role-play with your child afterwards so that he can experience several different outcomes to the solution he has chosen.



## How to help your child resist peer pressure

Peer pressure can place enormous burdens on children of any age.

To help your child feel prepared for potentially confrontational situations, practice role-playing with him. Start by trying various responses that he feels comfortable saying. This will help him feel more confident about putting into practice the solutions he's found to difficult problems.

Let him play both roles. Ask him what troubles him when faced with a tough decision, and include this in the practice. Guide him through the following steps:

1. Look at the person.
2. Speak in a calm voice.
3. Say clearly that you don't want to do whatever it is.
4. Suggest another activity. Give a reason.
5. If the person keeps trying to convince you, keep saying 'No.'
6. Ask the person to leave – or remove yourself from the situation by leaving.

Role-playing in this way enables a child to deal with peer pressure more assertively.

## About apologies, thanks and making new friends

If you received *Parenting Today* after telling us that you don't want it, we apologise.

Computer problems have led to mix-ups in our records and we ask you to kindly bear with us. To help rectify matters, please advise us if you do not want to receive future issues of *Parenting Today*. You can write, fax or e-mail us – all our contact details are on page 1.

### Refer a friend

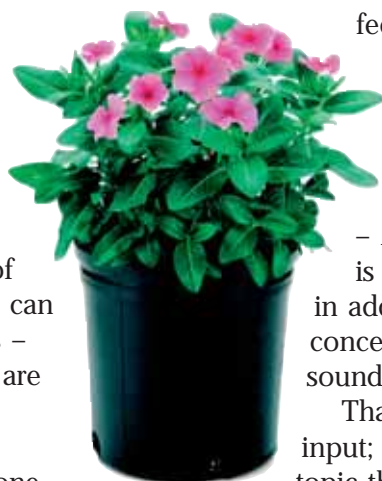
If you know someone who would like to receive *Parenting Today*, please

provide their name and address and we'll send off complimentary copies.

### Valued and appreciated

Based on the feedback we've received from parents, caregivers, teachers and social workers – *Parenting Today* is 'right on target' in addressing parental concerns and offering sound advice.

Thank you for your input; if you have a topic that we need to share with other parents please let us know.



# Parenting

A Girls & Boys Town South Africa initiative

Support and advice for raising healthy, happy and successful children.

TODAY

FEBRUARY 2006

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## Build relationships from the heart up

You are more likely to be an influence in your children's lives if you work to create a warm, open relationship with them.

It doesn't happen overnight, but you can create the type of atmosphere in which your child will feel comfortable confiding in you, sharing both joys and concerns. Suggestions that may help include:

### Improve communication

Spend time together as a family. If your children resist conversation about their lives, try to make the setting relaxed. Work on a project together – gardening, baking

or running errands. The awkwardness of 'Let's sit and talk about you' becomes a natural conversation over a shared task.

### Make talk non-threatening

Rather than saying, 'Don't mix with that child' you could say something like, 'I bet you're a good influence on your friend'. Ask questions and help your children come up with decisions on their own.

Use praise throughout the process as your child works to make those decisions.

### Listen to your child

Give your child your full

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Registered as a Nonprofit Organisation  
(Act 71 of 1997)

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## Build from the heart up

attention without thinking about what you're going to say next.

Let your child know that any subject is open for discussion. When there are problems, make sure you address what's really happening, not what you fear might be going on – and talk about what you've learned.

### Do things together

Share your time: eat meals together, play games, watch TV or go places with your child.

Children thrive on attention and acceptance. It's vital to be around to listen to, praise or console them. It's about quality time *and* quantity time.

## Love is ... when little stars come out of you



In a survey of four- to eight-year-old children, surprising gems of wisdom were revealed when they were asked about love:

When someone loves you, the way she says your name is different. You know that your name is safe in her mouth.

Love is when a girl puts on perfume

and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.

When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.

Love is when my Mommy makes coffee for my Daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK.

Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day.

Love goes on even when you stop breathing and you pick up where you left off when you reach heaven.

God could have said magic words to make the nails fall off the cross, but He didn't. That's love.

## Message from Joe



Joe Araujo

We can't dispute the fact that we live in a dangerous society. Violent crime, child abuse and other evils make it imperative that we educate our children about safety.

It is possible to do this in a responsible way, from a young age, without making them fearful and distrustful. Our article on child abuse contains some useful pointers in this regard.

Despite all the challenges of parenting, it remains the most rewarding – and important – job on Earth. Raising a healthy, happy and confident child is nothing less than a parent's masterpiece – so enjoy every moment of the experience!

*Joe Araujo*

JOE ARAUJO: Executive Director, Girls & Boys Town SA

## FOCUS ON ... child abuse



### Staying safe

While you don't want to frighten your child, you can teach basic rules of safety in a non-threatening way.

Teach her to keep her distance from strangers, not to wander away from you in unfamiliar territory, to say 'no' when someone asks her to do something against her will, and always to tell you if someone hurts her or makes her feel bad.

Emphasise that she won't get into trouble if she tells you about any abuse. Say that you need to know this to be able to keep her safe and she can even tell you 'secrets'.

Teach her that she's capable and that she can always count on you.

### Porn on the Internet

Disturbing findings presented at the "Child Online and Child Pornography Roundtable", held in April 2005, included:

- The biggest 'consumers' of Internet porn are children aged between 12 and 17.
- 51% of child sexual abuse cases reported to Childline are child-on-child abuse cases. A Childline study showed that most of the children who had committed abuse had been exposed to pornography.

# The ultimate betrayal

It's not a stranger who's most likely to molest a child, but someone who is known to them. This is one of the most disturbing facts about child abuse, since we naturally assume that family friends and relatives pose no threat to the well-being of our children.

You may also be surprised to hear that boys are as vulnerable to sexual exploitation as girls.

Child abuse has reached epidemic proportions in South Africa. According to "People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)", a child is abused every eight minutes in our country.

### Indications

So what can we do to help safeguard our children? Personal involvement in your child's activities and supervision is the best way to help prevent physical and sexual abuse outside the home.

Educating children from a young age on the difference between inappropriate and appropriate behaviour is also a proactive step we can take to help protect them. And as

importantly, we must educate *ourselves*, as adults, by arming ourselves with the facts.

While there are many indications of abuse, each child is unique. Not all youngsters display obvious symptoms of a problem.

### Physical abuse

Behavioural indications of physical abuse include inconsistent versions about the occurrences of injuries, seeming afraid of the parents, frequent lateness or absenteeism from school, aggressive play with peers and complaints of pain upon movement or contact.

There may be multiple injuries at different stages of healing, evidence of poor care, injuries or swellings to the face and body or a high incidence of 'accidents' and bruises.

### Sexual abuse

The child may complain of pain or have unusual itching of the genital or anal area. He may also have sexually transmitted diseases, experience difficulty in sitting and walking, have regular urinary tract infections or continual mouth sores.

No matter who we are, we have a responsibility to report suspected abuse to the relevant authorities in the interests of a child's right to live without exploitation and fear.

### Useful contacts:

SAPS Crime Stop 08600 10111  
Girls & Boys Town Hotline 0861-58-58-58  
Childline 08000 55555  
Child Abuse Action Group (011) 793-5033



### Act against abuse

The American Academy of Pediatrics provides the following tips:

- Talk to your child about sexual abuse.
- Find out whether your child's school addresses this issue through any programmes.
- Always investigate if your child tells you he's been mistreated or if you see a sudden unexplained change in behaviour.
- Teach your child about the privacy of body parts. Listen to what he says, especially when it seems hard to talk about it.
- Give your child enough of your time so he won't seek attention from other adults.
- Know with whom your child is spending time. Be careful about letting him go to out-of-the-way places with other adults or older children.
- Visit your child's caregiver without notice.

### Open communication

Prevention measures to safeguard your children should begin early. These guidelines offer age-appropriate topics to discuss with your children:

- 18 months:** Teach your child the proper names for body parts.
- 3 - 5 years:** Teach your child about private parts of the body and how to say 'no' to sexual advances. Give truthful answers about sex.
- 5 - 8 years:** Discuss safety away from home and the difference between good touch and bad touch. Encourage your child to talk about scary experiences.
- 8 - 12 years:** Stress personal safety. Start to discuss rules of sexual conduct that are accepted by the family.
- 13 - 18 years:** Discuss rape, date rape, sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy.