

Parenting

A Girls & Boys Town South Africa initiative

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

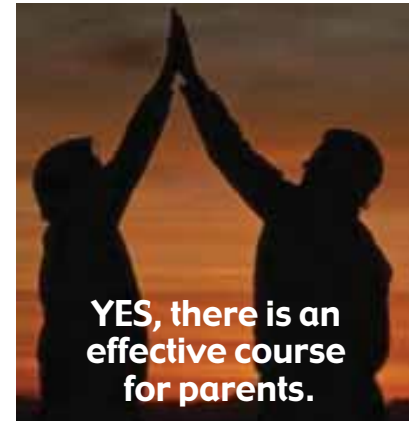
TODAY

FEBRUARY 2007

IN THIS ISSUE

SMS 'safety' to ... 2
Text messages under the spotlight

Winning at parenting 2



Respect for all life 3
It's crucial to raise kids to care

Classroom chaos? 4
Working towards solutions



National Hotline No. 0861-58-58-58
Private Bag X6, Greenside, 2034 South Africa
Tel. (011) 482 2655 Fax (011) 482 6059
E-mail ds@gbtown.org.za
Website www.girlsandboystown.org.za
Registered as a Nonprofit Organisation
(Act 71 of 1997) **Registration No. 009-244 NPO**
Registered as a Welfare Organisation (Act 100 of 1978)

SUBSCRIBE TO THIS NEWSLETTER
To subscribe, send your name, postal address and telephone number to: Girls & Boys Town, Parenting Today, Private Bag X6, Greenside, 2034.
E-mail: ds@gbtown.org.za or visit
www.girlsandboystown.org.za.
Tel. (011) 482 2655



Searching for good advice?

If children came with instruction manuals, advice wouldn't be needed.

There are times when every parent's at a loss – and that's when wise words and help from others is a blessing.

Girls & Boys Town has 50 years of extensive experience in managing children and programmes for youth, parents, teachers and professionals.

The benefit of this experience – and sound advice – is available at no charge through our National Hotline.

Pearls of wisdom that friends like you have shared include the following tips:

'People are always telling their kids what not to do. Tell them what they *should* do!'

'Approach things with a sense of humour. Too often, parents are angry.'

'Be consistent in the way you handle your child.'

'Train your children in the way they should go and they will not depart from it.'

Vision for the future

Deepak Chopra said that there is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in. Aim for many such moments.

For expert advice, call Girls & Boys Town's National Hotline: 0861-58-58-58



Message from Joe

Joe Araujo

Following the debate on the move to outlaw physical force – such as smacking – has been interesting. It's clear that consensus won't be reached on the proposed legislation.

Whatever one's views, it's worthwhile to note that Girls & Boys Town's *Common Sense Parenting Programme* in no way advocates smacking as a means of 'discipline'.

Respect

Another contentious issue is violence at schools – of grave concern to all of us. The answer?

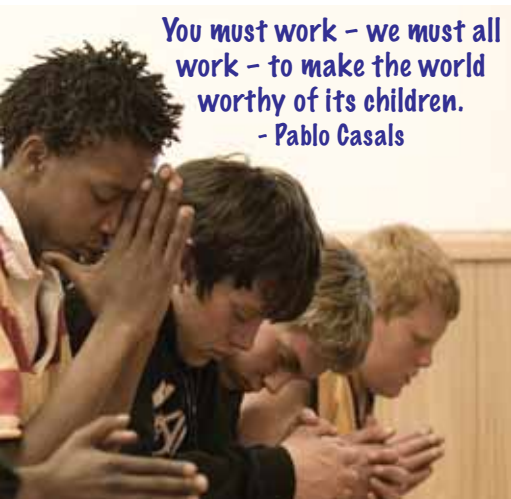
There are no quick-fixes, but a return to real values must surely be an essential part of any remedial process. And this, very importantly, includes inculcating in children a respect for all life.

Living in harmony is a noble and achievable ideal – one that we can all strive towards, starting in our own homes.

Joe Araujo

JOE ARAUJO: Executive Director
Girls & Boys Town SA

You must work – we must all work – to make the world worthy of its children.
- Pablo Casals



Safety first with SMS messages

It's ironic that the cellphone given to a teenager or child – for safety's sake – can become the same instrument that's used to lure them into harm's way.

SMS messages are a popular, inexpensive way to communicate – and instant messages provider, MXit, is even cheaper. Over 1.8 million users – aged between 12 and 25 – use the service.

The predominantly young age of MXit users makes it a paedophile's dream. It's easy for sexual predators to pose as harmless 'friends' through



a series of text messages – just enough to gain trust.

If your child has a cellphone, talk to her – or him – about safety. Communicating with strangers is unwise; anyone can sound 'genuine' in an SMS – or pretend to be someone they are not.

Visit www.mxit.co.za for important SMS safety tips.

Winning ways at parenting



'There's now far more understanding between my teenage daughter and myself. We are respecting each other and staying calm.'

- A mother reports positive change after completing the programme.

We enrol for courses in driving, computers – you name it – but what about enhancing our skills for the most important job of all – parenting?

The Girls & Boys Town *Common Sense Parenting Programme* offers guidance based on decades of working with challenging children.

It develops skills in teaching children and teens self-discipline, self-control and self-confidence. They learn to make their own decisions, get along with others, resist

peer pressure, take control of their own behaviour and face consequences.

The course also offers techniques for handling potentially disruptive or explosive situations.

Aimed at anyone who interacts with children – not only parents – the programme's a powerful means of creating positive change.

For more details, contact the Girls & Boys Town Training & Resource Centre on (021) 939 8085, email wctr@gbtown.org.za or (011) 482 2655, email gptr@gbtown.org.za or visit www.girlsandboystown.org.za.

Raise kids to respect *all* life



Teaching children to value living creatures – and the environment – sets the foundations for showing respect to people and property. But there's even more at stake.

Many parents would agree that raising a child to be kind to animals is both an essential part of good parenting and a vital demonstration of values.

Showing consideration for other living creatures – and knowing that it's wrong to inflict harm – is perhaps one of the first crucial lessons we learn in our development.

FBI studies

Beyond this fact is overwhelming evidence which proves that the abuse of animals is linked to violence towards people.



This fact was highlighted in the 1970s when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) analysed the lives of serial killers. They found that most had killed or tortured animals as youngsters.

Research has also revealed that 'cross-over' occurs, as 70–80% of domestic violence situations involve cruelty to animals, too.

According to the National Council of SPCAs (NSPCA), pathological cruelty to animals can manifest in children as young as six-and-a-half years of age. Uncorrected, it could lead to further and increased violent behaviour.

'Young children learn by emulating the actions and attitudes of their parents,' says Dave Thorpe of the NSPCA's education division.

Copycats

If parents fail to care for the family pets responsibly or yell at or beat the animals, their children are going to do the same, as they will perceive this as normal behaviour.

'This attitude and behaviour is likely to duplicate when these children deal with their peers – establishing a breeding ground for bullies or youngsters who fail to fit in with other children,' cautions Thorpe.

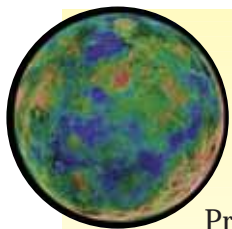


Paws for thought ...

- The mistreatment of any animal should never be ignored. No matter what their age or gender, children must be corrected if they treat an animal inappropriately.
- Report cases of deliberate abuse to the parent, teacher or authorities – for the sake of victim and perpetrator.
- Support your school's efforts to sensitise children to animals and the environment. School projects or the hosting of visitors to talk about wildlife or pets are superb opportunities to nurture a child's interests and caring.
- Note that the American Psychiatric Association considers cruelty to animals one of the diagnostic criteria of conduct disorder.



'One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it.'
Margaret Mead, Anthropologist



Children aim for a better world

Grade 1 children at Chelsea

Preparatory School in Durban North, KwaZulu-Natal were asked what they wished for to make a difference in the world ... and they said:

Aidan: 'More oxygen so that we can have lots of clean air and a cure for cancer so that we can save

lots of people.'

Michael: 'That more people become vets so that more animals can be looked after.'

Matthew: 'That there were more jobs so that people can have money.'

Darin: 'A superhero to get rid of crime.'

Jessica: 'For more people to believe in God and then we would all be happy.'

Hear, hear!

I spy with my little eye ...

Reports have revealed that 82 children are charged in South African courts every day for raping or indecently assaulting other youngsters.

When asked about their motive, many of these children said that they had wanted to copy 'love scenes' they'd seen on TV.

Some admitted that they'd seen sexual scenes on late-night shows on TV.

As disturbing, Childline studies in KwaZulu-Natal found that as many as 90% of male child sex offenders – between the ages of 13 and 18 – had been exposed to pornography.

Soapies

It's clear that far more vigilance is needed. While soaps such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* may seem harmless, they depict a distorted view of reality and relationships and are not suitable for children.

Today, being a censor is

close to the top of the list of vital parental duties.

It's impossible to watch a child every second of the day, but there are steps we can take towards reaching a healthy balance.

Consider these:

- Limit even 'educational' TV shows. Experts agree that kids watch too much TV.
- Encourage alternatives such as reading, puzzles, board games, outdoor activities and sports. What about a chat – good old conversation?
- Discuss the shows your child watches; ask questions. This is a good way to see if children are learning appropriate values through the shows they prefer. Share your own value system with them.
- If your children can access the Internet at home, take steps to block pornographic sites. Software is available for this purpose.
- Lead by example: limit your own viewing and be selective in your choices.



On a sweet note

One of the many wonderful things about children is the funny things they say ... like these gems:

- * Melanie, 5, asked her gran how old she was. Gran replied that she was so old, she didn't remember. Melanie advised her: 'If you don't remember, look in the back of your panties. Mine say 5 - 6.'
- * James, 4, listened to a Bible story: 'The man named Lot was told to take his wife and flee out of the city but his wife looked back and was turned to salt.' Concerned, James asked: 'What happened to the flea?'
- * Brittany, 4, wanted to take the lid off a bottle of tablets, but couldn't. Her mom explained that it was a child-proof cap. Eyes wide in awe, Brittany asked: 'How does the bottle know it's me?'
- * What would it take to make your mom perfect? 'Diet. You know, her hair. I'd diet, maybe blue.'
- * What kind of little girl was your mom? 'My mom has always been my mom and none of that other stuff.'
- * Why did your mom marry your dad? 'My granny says that mom didn't have her thinking cap on.'

Towards solutions for school chaos

Educators in South Africa identify discipline as the main problem in schools – and education suffers when teachers have to focus on behaviour rather than teaching.

Girls & Boys Town has a positive solution to the problems rife in classrooms.

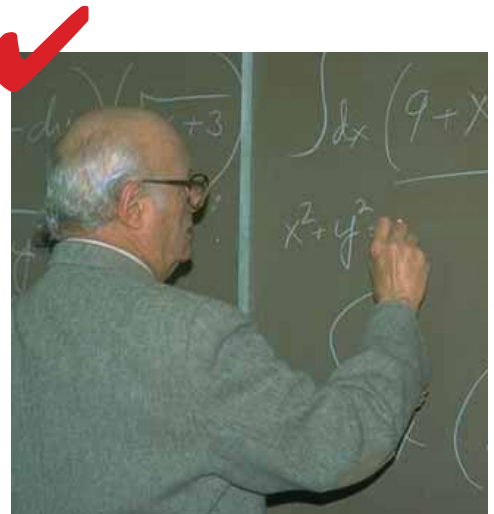
Since 2001, its *Well-Managed Classroom Programme* has achieved great success in schools where it has been implemented.

It offers a proven,

outcome-oriented model that addresses the social, behavioural and emotional needs of learners – as well as the professional needs of educators.

Following discussions with government, it's hoped that this programme will benefit schools throughout the country. Watch this space!

■ For information, contact the Girls & Boys Town Training & Resource Centre on (021) 939 8085, e-mail wctr@gbtown.org.za or (011) 482 2655, e-mail gptr@gbtown.org.za



Teachers have a powerful influence on children. Sometimes, they're the only role models of acceptable social behaviour that children experience first-hand.