

# Parenting

A Girls & Boys Town South Africa initiative

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

TODAY

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## 'Emotional intelligence' benefits parent and child

We'd all like to raise children who are happy and successful. One place to start is to recognise the growing evidence which proves the importance of a person's 'emotional intelligence' (EQ). A high EQ is a predictor of job and personal success.

### Foster EQ in children

EQ measures qualities like awareness of your own feelings, listening skills and the ability to empathise with others.

Given the importance of these qualities, how do we nurture them in children?

Start by recognising that

children have intense emotional experiences almost every day. This calls for you to help them learn how to manage these strong emotions – *and to model this behaviour yourself.*

Start at home, by listening to how they feel. Don't dismiss what they say with retorts like, 'Don't be silly; it's not that bad.'

If you deny the validity of their feelings in this way, you disconnect them from being able to identify and deal with their own emotions – and you lower their EQ.

For more on EQ, see page 4

# To smack or not to smack

If a new law is passed by government, parents will be banned from inflicting any physical discipline on their children, including smacking.

Last year, the Children's Bill Working Group was tasked to investigate abusive practices occurring within South African families – and particularly, to consider the rise in child abuse and family violence.

This resulted in a Bill that could be passed into law.

## Shameful

The proposed law has angered some parents, while others welcome the idea.

Whatever your opinion, the fact remains: our country has a shameful rate of abuse and

violence. And the new Bill is seen as part of a broader goal to curtail violence in all sectors of South African society.

If the Bill is passed, it will see government co-ordinating a drive to educate people on alternative forms of discipline.

## Alternatives

Girls & Boys Town has successfully dealt with serious issues involving children and teens – without the use of corporal punishment – for decades.

The benefits of this experience – and success – are part of our *Common Sense Parenting* programme – which is now available to anybody who cares for



*Whether a child's four or 14, discipline issues present an ongoing challenge for parents.*

children – parents, au pairs, child minders and even teachers.

## Effective Discipline.

Parents who completed the course report impressive results. These include more enjoyment – and efficacy – of their parenting role, fewer behaviour problems, better relations with their children and increased satisfaction with their overall family functioning.

## Workshop

The course (12 hours in total) is presented as a series of workshop sessions.

If you'd like to find out more about the *Common Sense Parenting* programme, call the Girls & Boys Town Training and Resource Centre in Gauteng (011) 482 2655 or the Western Cape (021) 939 8085.

*Our website contains a host of useful information. Visit [www.girlsandboystown.org.za](http://www.girlsandboystown.org.za)*

## Message from Joe



Joe Araujo

There's no denying that something is seriously wrong within society when you consider our sky-high family violence statistics.

It's interesting to note people's response to the proposed new Bill which, if passed, will ban parents from smacking their children. Opinions are divided on the issue. The challenge for parents is that the baby didn't arrive with an instruction manual, nor was parenting ever a subject taught at school.

This page features an article on the subject – and suggests a proven, effective solution to discipline problems in the form of our *Common Sense Parenting* programme. After all, working with troubled children and teenagers over the past 48 years has taught us a thing or two!

*Joe Araujo*

JOE ARAUJO: Executive Director, Girls & Boys Town SA

**SPECIAL  
ALERT**

# Dangerous drugs easy to make in your home

**T**ik, also known as crystal meth, has grown so popular that home-based 'kitchen laboratories' – which illegally manufacture the drug – have sprung up all over the country.

Tik is a white substance typically smoked through a light bulb – or snorted or injected by hard-core users.

Its effects? Excitation, loss of appetite, euphoria and increased blood pressure – while withdrawal symptoms range from apathy to irritation, long periods of sleep, depression and disorientation.

Overdosing can result in hallucinations, agitation,

convulsions and even death.

## **Making money**

'If you have a bit of a chemistry background and you know what you're doing, you can set up a



laboratory in a kitchen or a garage, or even make it up in a hotel room. And you can make a serious amount of money,' says a police detective.

## **Tolerance**

Tolerance for the drug develops fast – so users end up taking an ever-increasing amount to feel its effects.

Tik is sold in little straws for R20 or R30, so it seems cheap at first – until more of the drug is needed – as well as much more money to buy enough of it.



## **'Worst drug ever for child welfare'**

A disturbing report in *The New York Times* spelled out the devastating effects that methamphetamine ('Tik') is having on American children. Officials say that the drug's destructive nature – and the way it's often made in the home – conspire against child welfare unlike any other drug.

In a five-year period, 15 000 children were found at home laboratories where the drug was being made. This resulted in thousands of children being taken from their parents.

## **Ending parental rights**

The parents' drug binges tend to last for days or weeks, leaving children unwashed and unfed for days as parents fall into a deep sleep. According to pediatrician Dr Mike Stratton, 'The parents are worthless; when they're not stoned they're sleeping it off; when they're not sleeping they don't eat, and it's not in their regimen to feed the kids.'

Child welfare workers say they used to remove children as a last resort, first trying to help with services in the home. But it's dangerous to leave the children in homes with methamphetamine.

In one case, an 18-month-old child fell onto a heating unit (for the drug) on the floor and died while the parents slept. A three-year-old had tried in vain to rouse the parents.

## **Is SA next?**

Shelters for children in the US have been battling to accommodate the increasing number of youngsters being placed in care after being removed from parents who are using methamphetamine or making the drug in their homes.

'Could South Africa's children be next, as the drug rises in popularity here?' asks Joe Araujo, Executive Director of Girls & Boys Town South Africa. 'What's happening in the States could happen here – unless a serious crackdown is co-ordinated – by State authorities, schools and vigilant parents.'

## **'Date rape drug' is hard to detect**

**G**amma hydroxybutyric acid (GBH) – also known as liquid ecstasy or the 'date rape drug' – is also easily made up in 'kitchen labs'. The liquid has no smell and is untraceable in the blood for up to four hours after it has been taken.

The effects of the drug are intensified when mixed with alcohol – which causes impaired memory.

People who overdose are in danger as they lapse into a coma for several hours – yet the drug responsible can't be detected in their bloodstream.

Never leave any drink unattended in a public place or agree to 'have a sip' of a drink that's offered to you.

# A 'Mr Fix It' for children?

Whatever your child's problem, the US has an expert to fix it.

According to a report by Tony Allen-Mills in the *Sunday Times*, stressed-out parents are 'outsourcing' some of the most basic rituals of family life.

## Too lazy

In suburban New York, Aresh Mohit, a professional sports trainer, is hired to teach children how to ride their bikes. He said some of his clients were 'too lazy' to do the work.

In Dallas, Lynda White offers classes to children

whose parents want them to learn good table manners.

Behind the trend lie contrasting forces of fear and ambition.

## Status symbol

'Affluent parents are trying to balance work and family and give their kids a leg-up in the race for success,' said Steven Mintz, a childhood historian.

According to the trainers, at first parents were a little ashamed to admit they wanted someone else to perform basic family duties – but then it became a status symbol to hire a personal trainer for a child.



## Help raise your child's EQ

To increase your child's EQ, consider these guidelines:

- Make it a habit to identify your own feelings *and* the feelings of others. Avoid labelling people by saying things like, 'He was a real jerk.' Rather say, 'He seemed very angry.'
- Stop trying to cheer up your kids when they're upset. They need to know their feelings are being acknowledged and need to know you're there to listen and understand.
- Do all that you can to keep your own emotional life balanced so that you can be there for your kids. If you're overwhelmed, you can't be a source of emotional support for your child.
- Be a great listener. When your child has something to say, try to stop what you're doing and focus completely on what they're saying.
- Help your kids identify what they're feeling. Your goal is to help your child process their feelings and to work through them, not to fix anything or to judge their emotions or tell them if they're 'right'.
- Kids who don't feel heard emotionally tend to either shut down or to get louder. Is either a good choice?

Our kids would live in a happier, healthier world if they were raised in an environment in which their feelings were honoured. When parents learn the secrets of creating that, they'll be an important part of that process.

*All EQ information adapted from an article by Mark Brandenburg, author and speaker.*

# A parent's alphabet – for life

Ask your child about his day – every day.

Best interests of *your child* are paramount.

Consult with teachers about school progress.

Demand respect as a parent. Develop talent.

Encourage acts of generosity and kindness.

Familiarise children with good literature.

Get to know your child's friends and associates.

Have high but realistic ideals for your child.

Inspire your child through your own good example.

Judge only after listening to both sides of a story.

Know where your child is – all the time.

Learn with your child. Love unconditionally.

Manage your household: chores, TV, etc.

Notice any changes in



your child.

Open doors through art, music, languages.

Pray. 'Families that pray together, stay together.'

Quiz your child before tests.

Refrain from criticism of any type of authority.

Show respect for your child.

Teach self-control, honour and social graces.

Use every opportunity to develop your child's skills.

Venerate your religion.

Welcome suggestions, both critical and laudatory.

X is short for 'kiss' – express your love.

Yield to requests for exceptions to rules only when your child's best interests will be served.

Zeal is contagious. Catch it and spread it around.