



Newsletter

Parent to Parent Inner East

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Sensational Spring, 2003



SENSATIONAL SPRING

Finally, my final newsletter and my favourite time of year. I'm deliberately typing this at home because, as I have the house to myself for a change, it's quiet and relaxing and I actually have time to look out of my window at my neighbours' magnificent plum tree in blossom. If I dose myself up on antihistamine and nasal spray I could even go outside and get a close up view. The other good thing is, because the tree is next door, by the end of next summer my kids won't be squishing their way through overripe plums on their way into the house. Sometimes you have to rejoice in the small pleasures life gives you!

There have been a few changes since the last newsletter, as some of you might be aware, both personally and professionally. At home, I believe my husband has gone through a mini mid-life crisis although I have been assured that it could have been a lot worse from a financial perspective. After purchasing the new Led Zeppelin DVD with "over 5 hours of previously unreleased LIVE footage" followed by a period of retrospection going over what could have been (lead guitarist), we are now the proud owners of not one but two guitars with amplifier and a "How to play Guitar" instruction manual. There has been much guitar posturing and air

playing by all male members of the household. I think it's a boy thing, and some progress made in actually playing the thing. As for me, I am just about to max out my credit card as Alf has so easily done but not on jewellery or an island holiday. My dentist will be the proud recipient of an indecent amount of money that he has informed me should cover the cost of repairing one back molar. This is definitely payback for a misspent youth chewing my way through bags of Fantaes and Jaffas. Life for me was far too sweet.

Enough about teeth, what's been happening at Parent to Parent you are probably asking? There is now a new Coordinator. Judy Little, whom some of you might have met in your travels. She is the proud mum of two teenagers and seems to be surviving despite this! Her eldest, David, currently attends St Paul's School and will be moving on to bigger things next year when he turns 18. Her daughter is one of her biggest supporters and best friends. She has been slowly finding her way around the office and is looking forward to meeting new parents and catching up with old friends over the next few months. She will be in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I'm sure she would enjoy some parent contact either via the phone or personally if you feel up to a visit. Judy has been trying to type her life story in 20 words or less for the next Newsletter so you will know everything you need to know about her by then.

I have had a few phone calls about the Coffee Mornings recently. As a temporary measure they are continuing on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at my house (86 Headingly Rd, Mt Waverley) The next one will fall during the school holidays, (its already the end of Term 3 so it will be held on Tuesday, 7th October instead. The final Coffee Morning has traditionally been held at the lovely David Jones Coffee Shop and I can see no reason for that to change. All the details will be in the next newsletter after I've had a word in Judy's ear. (I promise no more interference from a former coordinator with problems around letting go) We are looking for ideas for new locations for coffee mornings. One proposal that has been put forward is to go coffee shop cruising. There is certainly plenty to choose from in the eastern region. Any other suggestions?

The "Care for Caring Parents Course" ran from June to August over 8 sessions and a big thank you to all the parents who participated, sharing their stories and providing laughs. By the end of the course we were all firm friends and will try to keep in contact and support each other by doing this. One of the aims of this course is to help create "support groups" where parents can turn to each other when the need is there. It's a great concept.

The "Block and Tackle" course that was scheduled for the end of August unfortunately had to be postponed until early next year. The course won't be re-advertised because it was booked out but if there are any parents interested in

doing this course, please let Judy know and she might consider running another later in the year.

Thank you to those parents who took the time to fill out the quality surveys that were sent out in June. Judy is collating the information and ideas that were suggested and from that the committee of management can get a feel for what courses, workshops, information sessions and social events have been popular and consider those ideas put forward. This all helps in the planning and budgeting of future events. For the person who suggested a day out at the football, specifically "that one day in September" (the AFL Grand Final for those non- footy people), sorry but as my team didn't even get a look in, its out of the question. Maybe next year.

One other thing before I sign off. The Parent to Parent email address is in the process of being changed and the new address will be posted on the Parent to Parent Inner East web-site and the next newsletter. You can also contact Judy in the next week for the details.

So, finally to the end. Thanks to everyone for being so supportive over the past six years, it's been a wonderful experience. Don't forget that I'm currently working at The Association for Children with a Disability so I can be contacted there. And also don't forget that the good work of the group continues on with Judy at the helm. Good luck to you all, in those famous words of Jeff Fenech (the ex boxer) "I love yous all"

Cheers, Jenny

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MOVIE MORNING

Attention to all those movie buffs out there or would be movie buffs if you had the time, energy and money. Here is your opportunity to relax and have a good time by watching one of the latest releases and catching up with others over coffee afterwards, free of charge.

All you need to do is book yourself in, mark the day on your calendar and turn up. It's that easy. So come alone and have a fun morning.

Date: Tuesday, 14th October, 2003

Venue: Century City Village Theatre's,

Kingsway, Glen Waverley

Time: Approx: 10.00am

(notified closer to the day)

RSVP: Judy Little 9500 2416

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Reducing Anxiety and Building Self Assurance in Children

Tips for Parents and Teachers

Elizabeth J. Bruce PhD. MAPS.

Fear and anxiety are a natural part of childhood - especially anxiety surrounding the overwhelming nature of the world, and the fear of being alone and helpless. An ongoing task for parents, starting in the child's infancy, is containing their child's anxiety. Obviously, the task is far more difficult if the child has an ongoing medical condition or a significant impairment. In this brief article, I'd like to look at two sources of anxiety and offer some tips that I have found helpful. Remember, at times they have been helpful, but sometimes have got me nowhere, a common experience in parenting!

Sources of anxiety

1. Reading the Body's Signals

When a child has a relatively normal functioning body, their experience of their body or internal state may be

likened to the systematic "tick of a clock". Now and then it ticks differently; it makes a bleep, an error often so minor that attention is only momentarily shifted - the child says to himself, "what was that?" Sometimes, or more frequently depending on the child, he seeks reassurance from his mother, father, grandparents or siblings. Typically, things return to normal and the child just adds this "bleep" to his "life-file" of experiences in general. These children are very blessed as they can develop trust in their body and can trust, to a certain extent, exactly what it has in store for them.

In the case of a child with a significant impairment or condition, the child often has to monitor far more erratic

physical symptoms: their bodies are less predictable. Therefore, because a pattern is more difficult to establish (or may even be "unestablishable"), the anxiety of this child is heightened. Moreover, the parent's reassurance may be required repeatedly and the parent may inadvertently, convey more anxiety by their reaction. Unfortunately, as the child grows older, it may be realistically more difficult for the child to take the parents' reassurance on board. At varying stages of development, the child may have become aware that you, as the parent, do not share similar physical experiences. Because they will not have had opportunities to model what you do in those circumstances, your reassurance will not have the same authority.

2. Control of the body

A second factor relates to the "abilities" or "capacities" of the body. A certain amount of anxiety can be reduced when an individual senses that he has control over parts of their body. For instance, even when a child conjures up the idea that he "can" get out of bed and head to his parents' bed, he will have exercised some control over feeling helpless in a night-time situation. When a child gets older, they can even cultivate illusions of escape in situations when they feel in danger.

A child with significant impairments is limited here. Often they cannot physically move towards solving their

anxiety - or easily design escape-routes from their anxiety. The fire drill taught to Preps is "Get down low and go, go, go!" - Not such a comfort for those who cannot get down low or go, go, go.

In combination, these two characteristics of the internal and external world of children highlight the need for

parents to recognise the part that anxiety plays in their child's life. Designing, as far as possible (and this is a tall order), small bit-by-bit experiences of the world will help. Initially, protecting your child from degrees of exposure

to novelty, that so often cause massive anxiety for children with impairments will be critical. Much of this will be "on the hop" as you find out in retrospect what happened at school and attempt to design some specific advice that meets your child's abilities.

Read the following advice as you would a recipe book but without quantities or measures and with no pictures supplied.

That being said, I will state that according to my experience, the best and fastest route home for parents in terms of their childrens' anxiety, is to be on to it quickly - anxiety can be mastered! Working with children with impairments, I am convinced of the use of the following techniques:

- As your child may be aware that you as a parent do not experience the same physical experiences, or social situations as they do, your undivided attention to what they are saying is a vital first step. You must convince them by "proving" full attention that you are on the "right track" as close as possible to recognizing the personal intensity of what they are demonstrating. As your child gets older it will be important to locate an older buddy who has weathered some of these feelings and can quickly provide validation and examples of how he coped.

- Let your full attention and facial expressions demonstrate empathy and indicate that you can handle it. Of course, keeping your anxiety levels down at all times will provide the necessary background. Check your anxiety levels (read your pulse). Keep your anxiety and grief separate at all times from your child's interpretation of their experience.
- Confirm that you will be with them through it until they demonstrate that they no longer need your listening or presence (do not withdraw first). If you inadvertently make moves to leave them before they are ready, the anxiety related to your potential leave taking will add to their emotional burden. Rather than managing what is at hand, they will be anticipating more problems such as when you leave and what they will do with their feelings then. To understand their feelings, try to recall what happens to you in a Doctor's surgery when the Doctor makes a move to get up before you have all the answers.
- Calmly reassure your child that together "we'll get through this". Providing a worthy example of resilience particularly theirs, will be extremely useful. Make sure they regard it similarly. Of course there are age restrictions on this. But if they are still very young, going with the previous dot points will set this example.
- Privately imagine back to your childhood or sharing memories with your partner may help you to keep in touch with your child's socio-emotional level. Do not get swayed into believing that they are emotionally older than they are.

This reassurance pattern is based on the child becoming as convinced as possible as to the parents empathy for the intensity of what that they are trying to convey, and how it worries them. Remember, if your child believes that you have captured their feeling or are as close as possible to knowing what has transpired, the most important part of the work is done. Imagine when you were a child and those times you instinctively felt that your parents had not really understood the intensity around a concern you may have had. What did their reassurance mean to you? Very little, I imagine.

Of course some children due to their age or impairments cannot talk. Try and help them with their words or demonstrations of how they feel - help them to get as close as possible to what they are experiencing. Use videos music, metaphors (use of something, objects or things that convey a feeling e.g. sand), or

picture books. It may be useful to get a set of figurines (such as we use here) and offer them ways to play out/show/demonstrate (symbolise) their feeling. Do not give up on finding a medium.

Emotional Health Centre,
Cheltenham. Tel: 9553 7127

Therapists and counsellors specialising in the socio-emotional development
of children and helping families adapt to the loss, grief and trauma related to disability.

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ON TUESDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER

FROM 7.30 - 9pm

WENDY LAWSON

WILL BE SPEAKING ON

"WENDY'S JOURNEY WITH AUTISM"

AT ST DUNSTAN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

163 WATTLE VALLEY ROAD

CAMBERWELL

(MELWAYS 60 D4)

LIGHT SUPPER WILL BE SERVED

TO RSVP or for more information contact Kathryn on: 9893 3224

(school hours if possible please)

or email: crosspurposes1@optusnet.com.au

(Meet Wendy at: <http://www.mugsy.org/wendy/index2.htm>)

And yes! Wendy's books will be available for purchase on the night.

Wendy's next tour dates:

Australia - May - August 2003
Singapore - November 2003
UK October - November 2003
Bangkok - November 2003
Japan - April 2004
Canada" November 2004

An Introduction to Wendy Lawson
Bss,
Bsw(Hons), GDip(Psychstud),
GDip
(Psychology)



Wendy Lawson is an adult with an autism spectrum disorder. Wendy is also a parent with three children, her youngest son, now 18yrs. old, also has Asperger's Syndrome. Becoming a professional and sharing her knowledge, understanding and experience of Autism Spectrum Disorder has been Wendy's occupation over the past six years.

What other's say about Wendy:

"Wendy's ability to convey the essence of her autistic world to others is remarkable. As an adult educator, with training in psychology and family issues, Wendy offers a valuable contribution to understanding and working with individuals with Autism Spectrum disorder. Having known, listened to and worked with Wendy, I highly recommend her as an intriguing and interesting speaker who has much to offer professionals and families, to enhance their insights into autism in a humorous and vivid way".

Professor Margot Prior. Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

"When Wendy spoke to us at the parent's night, for the first time I understood my little boy. I wish I had heard Wendy's words two years ago when Michael was first diagnosed with Autismit would have saved me so much stress and confusion." Jane,
Sydney.

"After listening to Wendy I finally realised that Paul's Autism wasn't my fault. He processes the world differently to us... but, I understand better now and I can see such a brighter future for us all."

Bill Masters, father to Paul.

" Hearing Wendy changed my life....." Sarah, Bradford Support Group.

" At last I understand...." Lynn, Guildford Support Group.

"Now I have some hope for the future..." John, Dagenham Support Group.

Wendy is available to talk to support groups, facilitate training and workshops, as well as professional development for teachers, carers and other professionals. She is a member of the Australian Association of Pastoral Counsellors (AAPC) and a member of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). She also has 5 university degrees including a Graduate Diploma in Psychology.

If you have Microsoft Word '97 (or higher) you can [download a leaflet](#) which gives more information about the services Wendy can provide.

Wendy's website is: <http://www.mugsy.org/wendy/index2.htm>

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Companion Card—Frequently Asked Questions

How was the Companion Card Developed?

The Victorian Network on Recreation and Disability (VICNORD) initiated the Companion Card concept as a way to address the current ticketing practices in the sport, entertainment and recreation industry.



What is the Companion Card?

The Companion Card is a wallet-sized card issued to some people with a disability. The card has a photograph of the cardholder and identifies that person as someone who requires the assistance of a companion to access events and venues. The cardholder will be entitled to a free Companion Ticket when it is necessary for the person to be assisted by a companion.

The Companion Card is not a concession or discount scheme, nor does it give you a benefit that others do not receive. It simply promotes an existing right for some people to have a companion admitted without charge, when that companion is required to access community facilities.

Participating organisations will recognise the Companion Card and will issue a Companion Ticket (second ticket) at no charge, when it is necessary for the cardholder to be assisted by a companion in order to access initially sport, leisure and recreational opportunities.

How is the Companion Card funded?

The Companion Card is funded by the Community Support Fund, Strategic Initiative Fund. (www.dpc.vic.gov.au/csf)

Who is a Companion?

Someone may be considered a Companion if the person they are supporting/assisting could not access a venue or event in the community without them being present. A Companion may be a paid or unpaid carer or assistant. The cardholder may choose whom they wish to have as their Companion; this may vary depending on the event and the occasion.

What if I need more than one companion?

The Companion Card will indicate a person's need to have a companion to participate in sport, recreation and leisure opportunities. The minimum expectations of industry will be that one companion will be admitted free of charge to cardholders. Where a cardholder has a requirement for more than one companion, this will need to be negotiated with the venue or event by the cardholder at the time of booking.

Who receives the Companion Card?

In keeping with the vision and philosophy of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012, the Card is designed to remind industry of the Human Rights of the individual with a disability to participate to the same extent as the rest of the community. The practical implications to note are:

- Cards will only be issued in the name of the applicant, to ensure that they have a choice of whom they take as a companion. The Card will not be issued in the name of facilities (ie residential) or carers.
- Cards cannot be applied for by someone else on the applicant's behalf, without the consent of the applicant unless there is a legal guardian appointed.

Who can apply?

Cardholder applicants must complete an application form when it becomes available in late 2003, and must meet criteria developed by the Victorian Department of Human Services, based on the Disability Services Act 1991 (Vic).

In summary, you will be able to apply for a card if:

1. You have a disability, including those related to ageing and psychiatric illness; and
2. Your disability is permanent—or likely to be permanent; and
3. You require a Companion to assist you to access community venues and events; and
4. You live in Australia, or you reside in Australia under a valid Visa; and
5. You have had your application signed by a professional witness.

There are no income or assets tests, and people may apply irrespective of their employment status, age or nationality.

Facilities, organisations or companions are not eligible to apply for a Companion Card. Cards will only be issued to, and will remain the property of, the person who has a disability. This enables the cardholder to choose whom they take as a companion to each event.

How do I apply for a Companion Card?

By registering your interest in the card, an application form will be sent to you in late 2003. Eligibility to receive a Companion Card will be determined once a completed application form is returned.

How do I register my interest?

People who wish to register their interest in the Companion Card need to provide their name and mailing address details (or request a registration of interest form) by either:

- Telephone: Ring Free Call 1800 650 611 during business hours
- TTY: Ring Free Call 1800 898 888 during business hours, (for people who are Deaf or have a hearing, speech or communication impairment);
- Completing the Online Registration of Interest Form, found at the Companion Card website: www.companioncard.org.au
- By Email: info@companioncard.org.au

- By Fax: Free Call 1800 00 4413

Why should I register my interest?

Registering your interest in the Companion Card will ensure that an application form will be sent directly to you in late 2003.

How much does the card cost?

The Companion Card will be issued free of any charges.

Who is managing the Companion Card?

The Department of Human Services is responsible for the establishment of the Companion Card.

Where can I use a Companion Card?

To date there has been enthusiastic support from the sport, recreation and leisure industries. Several organisations have previously allowed companions free entry and are prepared to adopt the Companion Card from its initial implementation.

The Companion Card staff are working on informing industry of the expectations on them to recognise & accept the card when it is presented, and on signing up key industry as official affiliates.

How long is the Companion Card valid for?

Companion Cards will be valid for five years from the date of issue. The expiry period considers the physical life expectancy (wear and tear) on the card. This also ensures that photographs are updated to remain representative of the cardholder, and account for potential changes in the requirement for a companion.

When will I get a Companion Card?

The Companion Card will be available in late 2003. If you have registered your interest in the Companion Card an application form will be sent directly to you.

How do I register a sporting leisure/entertainment or recreation venue/event to participate in the Companion Card?

If you own, run or manage a sport, entertainment and recreation venue/event, and you wish to participate in the Companion Card please email info@companioncard.org.au or phone the Companion Card Team on: 9616 9710.



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