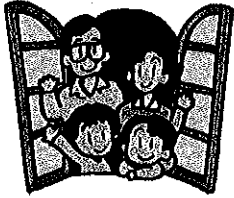


Current information on learning,  
reading and parenting issues



## St. Sebastian School Scholars by Nancy Meier, MA

Volume 10; Issue 1

September 2009

### Setting the Stage for Responsible Kids

Sometimes when we're in the trenches of parenting, it's difficult to imagine that our children will *ever* accept responsibility. Responsibility for what? You name it. Feeding the dog without being reminded, making the bed, daily grooming, homework or daily/weekly chores. Choosing expectations for responsible behavior is a combination of knowing your child well and studying checklists for age appropriate behavior: (<http://academic.son.wisc.edu/wistrec/net/developstagetext.html>)

In addition, you can also teach responsible behavior with these 7 suggestions from Linda B. Silbert, author of Why Bad Grades Happen to Good Kids:

- "Provide structure" - You want your child to be responsible for vacuuming her bedroom without being reminded, but her record is spotty at

best. What to do? **Have your daughter choose the day and time the job is to be performed.** Zeroing in on an appropriate time will increase the likelihood that the chore will be completed. However, if the chores remain uncompleted by the date and time agreed upon, give her a chance to respond. You may be angry but "threats may indeed get the household chore done for the moment, but will not help the long term development of a responsible child."

- "Help Your Child With Scheduling" - Sit down with your child and come up with a visual method for helping your child schedule his commitments. Type up a daily checklist once (cont. on page 2)

For about 10 years, I've been writing to you, the parents of students in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee by way of this newsletter. My name is Nancy Meier and I am your learning resource/reading specialist here at Divine Mercy School. I like to read the most respected and current research from many sources and pass it on to you, your child's first and most important teacher. Please look for this newsletter periodically for reading and study strategies as well as articles on time management and tips for better family communication.

Comments or suggestions? Please see my email address on the bottom of page 2.

### Keeping Our Children Safe Online

"All things in moderation." The author of this quote is Mark Twain, Aristotle or it is the Bible, depending on who you believe. It's a timeless quote that has many implications when we consider giving our children computer time. Would you be able to determine whether your child just enjoys being online or is addicted?

When your child is away from the computer, is he moody, withdrawn and uncommunicative? Does his behavior improve once he is back on the computer, video game, etc.? Missing meals, losing sleep, dropping activities, skipping showers and homework assignments are all warning signs that your child may be overusing online activities. (continued on page 2)

## Setting the Stage for Responsible Kids (cont.)

and print multiple copies for activities or responsibilities that are repeated every day or use a white/dry eraser board. This will remind your child, without your nagging, that there are activities yet to be completed. You know how good you feel when you can check off items on your "to do" list. "It will give her feelings of worth and pride when she sees a task has been completed."

- "Avoid doing tasks that children can do themselves"- Parents sometimes continue doing tasks long after the children are capable of doing the jobs themselves. Monitor carefully, of course, but you may be surprised at what your child can do. "Generally the more they do on their own, the higher self-esteem they will have. Paradoxically, in many situations, the less you help your child, the more you help your child."
- "Allow your child to help you" - This tip is more effective while your child is younger or if your style is more creative. Dusting the floor with socks sprayed with floor cleaner, accruing points when tossing toys back in the toy box, etc.
- "Allow adequate time for training." - Think support, not punishment. It takes LOTS of time and practice to learn a new skill set, whether we are children or adults. If your child has problems with oral directions, you might want to list directions on 3x5 cards for easier review. Even with detailed directions, allow for some slip-ups and

remind yourself that your child needs lots of support, not punishment, in order to become responsible. Remember, your child is a work in progress!

- "Be prepared to keep encouraging your child" - Some children need lots of encouragement when school projects or homework assignments weigh them down. For those children, your calm voice reminding her of her past successes can be far more reassuring than arguing with her. Also, helping her break the task into manageable units can also relieve stress for both you and your child.
- "Emphasize the logical consequences of irresponsible behavior"— It may be tempting to do your child's social studies project for her, but "this is an unacceptable choice because all you're doing is showing her that she can be irresponsible without consequences." For now, back off and let the natural consequences take effect. There may be a zero for that assignment, failure on a test or, perhaps, the failure of a course. Some children need to see first hand that there are real consequences for their irresponsible behavior. Granted, it would be a difficult decision to allow your child to get as far as failing a course. But make no mistake, your child is watching to see if the rules apply to her.

Natural consequences need to take effect in order for our children to become truly responsible people.

## Keeping Our Children Safe Online (cont.)

Common Sense Media, a non-profit resource that educates families on the uses and misuses of media, says that "developing children need to be able to have real lives independent of their cyber ones to fully develop socially, emotionally and even physically. While some kids may blossom in the freedom and anonymity of online lives, they also need the interpersonal skills that online life can't provide."

As parents, we must:

- Establish good habits early. - That might mean setting new rules. One hour of computer time is

recommended on school nights.

- Determine if your child is addicted or just spending too much time on the computer. - Is she argumentative or depressed when not online? Do you see a change of behavior when the computer use is resumed?
- Don't take away the computer if you see a problem - "This may seem like the best solution, but it can be very damaging to addicted players. Don't hesitate to get professional help."

[www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)