Cherished Moments Column
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Cherished Moments
Cathy L. Graham, County Extension Director with the Scotland County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, writes the “Cherished Moments” column. The following column will provide information to improve relationships between adults and children. “Cherished Moments” is dedicated to the many adults (parents, teachers, caregivers, volunteers, educators) who strive to grow and to the children who will surely benefit.

“You Get In Life What You Have The Courage To Ask For”
-- Oprah Winfrey

Teaching Children Peaceful Problem Solving

The violence in today's society is frightening. Everyone wants to do something to stop it. The solutions vary greatly from preventing child abuse, to gun control, to installing metal detectors in high schools. One of the most notable approaches is to start early with violence prevention education. Prevention programs teach children peaceful ways to solve problems, and help them feel empowered to deal with frustrations.

What can adults do to teach children peaceful problem solving? We can give young children lots of gentle guidance and clear lessons in how to get along and still get what they want. Children need skillful adults in their lives who help them develop habitual ways of reacting that lead them toward problem solving and away from violent solutions to conflicts. What are these habitual ways of reacting? When a conflict arises, even preschoolers can learn how to:

• seek information before jumping to conclusions
• explore alternate solutions to the problem instead of acting on impulse
• consider consequences of their behavior

Without help from adults, young children are likely to lash out and use force to solve problems. They don't outgrow this approach naturally, especially if it works for them and gets them what they want. To teach children nonviolence, adults must be on the spot when difficulties arise so they can help children talk it through before the action gets physical. This approach takes diligent supervision to manage this feat, but is well worth it. Once children develop the problem solving skills they need and start applying them, the adult can begin to trust them to work things out on their own. Until that point, constant supervision is important.

Talking things through with children in conflict is more than just telling them to be nice or judging who was in the right and who was in the wrong. Talking things through is about getting them to discuss with each other what happened, acknowledge feelings, explore alternative solutions, and examine possible outcomes of each solution. Adults have to guide these conversations because children don't naturally know how to have them. They have to learn.
Adults often short circuit this kind of learning by solving the problem themselves. Taking a disputed toy away doesn't let them talk to each other about assumptions, feelings or possible solutions.

Intervention makes a difference. Of course, it isn't the only approach to violence prevention, but it is something positive and concrete that adults can do consistently on an everyday basis. We can create a more peaceful America! We know how to teach children to be peaceful members of society. We have to do it every day, working skillfully to help children grow up to be problem solvers. We have to pull together – families, schools, providers, agencies, organizations, and government – to insure every child has a peaceful, secure upbringing. We as adults must make a firm and clear commitment to stop violence.

Source: Growing Together Newsletter

**Fun Things to Do with Your Child**

- Cinco de Mayo, Mexican Independence Day, is May 5th. Have a Mexican fiesta and make a piñata to top off the festivities. Hang the piñata and let the fun begin.

- Plan a cook out at a local park or at your home to celebrate National BBQ Month.

- Plan a family celebration for Mother's Day.

- Summer fun includes hiking and camping. Schedule a trip to a nearby park for a hike and picnic. Try to identify birds, trees, insects, and mammals.

For more information contact the Scotland County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service at 277-2422. Employment and program opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. In addition, North Carolina State University welcomes all persons without regard to sexual orientation.

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