

# The Counseling Center Inc.

FEBRUARY, 2006

## Newsletter

### Welcome

As we begin the new year at The Counseling Center, we look back and ask ourselves how we can better serve the community in which we work, and, many of us, live.

One of the most constant concerns we hear about is our children. We are frequently asked about how to create family values and instill a sense of social responsibility in a time when material needs and technology seems overwhelming. The main article in this newsletter was written by our child psychologist, Jennifer Naparstek Klein, and talks specifically about ethics as part of raising a successful human being. Recognizing and celebrating the small moments in our children's lives can be just as important as ensuring a good education.

We will be sending out three newsletters in 2006. Each issue will include information on timely topics, as well as let you know what events The Counseling Center is participating in or planning. It is our hope that the information provided in this brief format will help you to gain a better understanding of what we do, how we do it, and what a valuable resource we are to the community, and to you.

Our professionals are dedicated, involved and experienced individuals who can provide a great service to those in need. Give us a call if you think we can be of help to you. Have a healthy new year!

**Richard Shoup** is the director of The Counseling Center. He is a psychotherapist, consultant and speaker, specializing in work with people experiencing career and life transitions. In addition to his work at The Counseling Center, he is the director of the Human Resources Consulting Group, helping small corporations improve their team-building efforts and conflict resolution, a supervisor in The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT), and a clergyman in The Presbyterian Church. Dr. Shoup is the author of *Take Control of Your Life* (McGraw-Hill, 2000) and *Soul Mapping*, Coauthored with Nina Frost and Ken Ruge (Marlowe Press, 2001).



## Ethics in Parenting *and the Sanctity of Small Moments*

JENNIFER NAPARSTEK KLEIN, PSY.D.

An interesting challenge to all of us who are parents, and one that can be positively confounding to many of us is how to raise children with a good ethical sensibility. Can we raise our children to feel good about themselves, be good at things, and also be good people? For example, if a child asks to buy an expensive toy in a store (an all too common occurrence) a parent is suddenly put on the spot, and thrown into a paralyzing parenting crisis. "Well, this is an enriching toy and made for his area of interest (let's say dinosaurs, for the sake of specificity)." One might think, "but, he just received an elaborate dinosaur toy from his grandparents," and then "I can

afford it, and he wants it, plus getting him out of this store will be a nightmare if I refuse." Then, finally, "how can getting everything he asks for be good for him?" All of these conflicting deliberations occur in the space of a minute, as you are either on your way to the register, or scooping your screaming child in your arms as you exit the store, ashamed that your child is the one causing such a ruckus. These small moments pose large questions about raising children effectively, and these same moments often make us wonder if we are on the right track as parents.

Wendy Mogel, in *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*, suggests a style of parenting that incorporates religious ideals, or commandments, in order to tackle such dilemmas as the one presented above, with the intended result of rearing ethical children. One idea she poses that seems,

*(Continued on next page)*

## ETHICS (Continued)

on the surface, counterintuitive, yet in a deeper sense quite profound, is her idea of “sanctifying the mundane.” The suggestion is to not only pay attention to the greatness that our children can achieve, but to realize the importance of everyday efforts and moments. This is quite a valuable idea for the many parents hurrying their children throughout the week from activity to activity, seeking signs of excellence and a promise of success for the future. Most parents probably agree that the most precious moments with their children are mundane, when you are all piled into bed together, or playing games together, or perhaps a moment when you share a joke, a good family chortle. Yet, do we think of these moments as the building blocks for success, or as helping our children advance in the world? The irony is that these moments are probably more formative, and more predictive of life happiness than the participation in any lesson. They prepare our children for loving relationships, for expressing kindness to others, and these moments give them a radar for the really good stuff available to them in the world.

Dr. Mogel also coins a term that is quite useful in describing an ill in American culture, that she calls “specialitis.” It is the frequent insistence that our lives, our children, and thus, we, are special. Again, she poses an interpretation of ordinary as sacred. It seems that the American dream sets us up for the affliction of specialitis. We are encouraged by society to strive for success, to better our positions in life, always aiming higher. In terms of parenting, the American dream translates into affording all the opportunities that could potentially enrich our children.

It is a challenge for parents with means to help their children find the path to a life of humility and generosity. Often members of affluent communities are faced with a pressure akin to keeping up with the Jones’, yet that pressure transforms into keeping up with little Billy Jones, who may join the Olympic swim team, or tiny Susie Jones, who excels in recognizing all her letters, and is already fluent in four languages. When waiting for excellence to emerge, we are sometimes guilty of overlooking the wonderful ordinary things about our children. The focus on specialness can lead us to feel more demanding, more frustrated when things are not so special, or on occasion more focused on appearances. The same parents would like their children to develop humility and generosity, yet there is a clear disconnect.

So the hunt begins for minor miracles, the smallest of moments with seismic meaning. Ethics are in the details, the ways we address others, and each other. Ethics are in how we handle the toy store tantrum, and how we communicate to our children that we see their ordinariness and find it beautiful.



**Jennifer Naparstek Klein, Psy.D.** is a licensed child and family psychologist practicing at The Counseling Center. She specializes in treatment with children ages 4-18, and young adults. Dr. Klein works with families struggling with specific mental health disorders such as depression, behavior disorders, learning disorders, or those families facing challenging life circumstances. Dr. Klein received a bachelors degree from Duke University, and a doctorate from Yeshiva University's Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology.

Q & A

**Question:** I think that my daughter is about to become sexually active. She has a serious boyfriend, and they are both seniors in high school. I do have an open relationship with her, and I believe her when she tells me she has not had sex yet. I wish she would wait. My upbringing and my own value system makes me think she should wait until she is older, or that marriage is on the horizon. How do I communicate my values to her?

It is your role as the parent of an older teen/young adult to act as “consultant” as opposed to “manager,” which I suspect you have done up to this point since she does confide in you. If you have an open relationship with your daughter, you are in a wonderful position to share your views, but frame them as “your views.” The lesson you want to teach a child of this age is to use her own judgment wisely. Share with her your concerns, what the emotional and physical effects of sexual activity can be, and what the dangers are. Share with her your wishes for her, with regard to the level of emotional connection you would like her to have with a partner. Impart your values to her. The most important thing at this juncture, however, is to maintain your connection to her so that she keeps you and your voice in her mind, and so that she can turn to you when she needs your guidance. If you alienate her with heavy-handed opinions, demands, or limitations, she will reject you out of hand, and your influence dies there. Good luck, this is a tough one for a parent!

# Q & A

**Question:** As the mother, I am the primary disciplinarian and thus the enforcer of family values. How do I get my husband involved in promoting and creating family values (when he is not around much)?

This question can be answered in a few different ways, and is certainly extremely relevant for many families. Firstly, “values” come in all shapes and sizes. Even if your husband is not typically the enforcer in the home, his participation in the way of modeling kind or ethical behavior and his general involvement with the children contribute to the family value system. In other words, finding value in the role your husband does play with the children is as important as asking him to become more of a disciplinarian. Often, the parent who takes on the primary parenting responsibilities throughout the week creates the structure or “the lay of the land”, if you will. That parent typically does act as enforcer, as she is more acquainted with the system. It is a responsibility of the parent who is less familiar with the structure to support the enforcer, thus reinforcing the value system. If your husband takes a “hands off” approach even when he is around the home, that is a different issue. And if he disagrees with the system, that is also another issue, and that requires parental discussion and compromise. Think of your husband as a resource to you in the ways that he is able to help. If, on the weekends, he can spend some time alone with the children so you can relax, exercise, etc., and so he can connect with the children, do so. If he can, as someone who steps into the system, reflect to you some ways that the system could use some tweaking, accept that input from him. If you allow him to contribute in that way, he will almost certainly become a more active participant in the family value system.

Jennifer Naparstek Klein's E-mail:  
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# What's Happening!

## **The 9th Annual Chamber Music Series –**

Held at Christ Church, 17 Sagamore Road in Bronxville on three Sunday afternoons: **February 12, March 5 and April 9.** Enjoy some wonderful music and quiet time for yourself or with your family. Support for this concert series is provided through subscriptions – call Catherine Nicholas at The Counseling Center (914-793-3388) for more information. Individual tickets at the door \$20/\$10 for seniors and students.

## **Save the Date**

### **The 35th Annual Benefit –**

On **Friday, April 28, 2006** friends of The Counseling Center will celebrate 35 years of service with a benefit at the Generoso Pope Foundation in Tuckahoe, NY. The event will honor local restaurateur and board member Steven Palm for years of continued service to the organization. For more information or to join the Benefit Committee please call The Counseling Center office at 914-793-3388.

## **Lollipop Concerts –**

On **Saturday, January 7,** The Counseling Center sponsored Lollipop Concerts for children from Kindergarten through 5th grade. Children were entertained in an interactive session with musicians who perform regularly at The Counseling Center's Chamber Music Series. A great time was had by all!



Cellist Edward “Eddie” Arron with Avery Archibald (3.5 years) at the Lollipop Concert presented by the Counseling Center at the Bronxville Public Library on 1/7/06.

## **A Counseling Center Educational Luncheon**

was held on February 7 to discuss “Ethics in Parenting and the Sanctity of Small Moments” with Dr. Jennifer Klein of The Counseling Center. This on-going series provides opportunities for community members to learn more about issues relevant to psychological well-being in a small group setting that we hope encourages discussion. If you are interested in attending one of these meetings in the future, please call The Counseling Center at 914-793-3388.



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FOR INFORMATION AND APPOINTMENTS: Call Catherine Nicholas at 914-793-3388  
 Visit our website: [www.counselingcenter.org](http://www.counselingcenter.org)

## At a Glance

### Lollipop Concerts —

Sunday, January 7, 2006



### The 9th Annual Chamber Music Series

Sunday afternoons

February 12, March 5 and April 9

at 2:30 p.m.

### The 35th Annual Benefit

Friday, April 28

#### Save the Date

Honoring local restaurateur and board member Steven Palm



## The Counseling Center Inc.

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## Newsletter

The Counseling Center — A resource for psychological health and emotional well-being