

Raising Children

Raising children and youth requires strength, wisdom, endurance, and flexibility. Parents need all the help and support they can get, especially from the church community which often acts as surrogate aunts, uncles, and grandparents. The popular parenting and educational guru, Barbara Colorosso, is a wonderful source for no-nonsense, practical parenting advice.

What kind of family leadership do you provide for your children?

Barbara Colorosso says that there are three types of families: *brickwall* (These parents say, "Stop that right now or else ..."); *jellyfish* (These parents are nice, kind, and thoughtful, and let the kids work out their emotions); *backbone* (These parents are flexible, firm, guiding). We need backbone parents.

Here's an example of how each type of family might react to a child breaking a glass.

- The brickwall parent: You are *such* a clumsy kid. Get the broom right now.
- The jellyfish parent: Oh, I shouldn't have given you a glass to carry.
- The backbone parent: We need to gather up the broken glass so no one will get cut. Come with me to find the broom.



Looking for a good parenting skills course for your church?

STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) is excellent; it also comes with a Christian supplement, *STEP Biblically*. This video set may be borrowed from church offices: (bookroom@presbyterian.ca); 800-619-7301; 416-441-1111, Ext. 234

What is bullying and how will I recognize it in children?

Bullying is *not* about conflict or anger. Bullying is getting pleasure from someone else's pain. Perhaps you have noticed a look of pleasure on the face of a child when he/she takes a toy from a younger child, and the younger one begins to cry. That's bullying. There are at least three forms of bullying: *verbal*, *relational*, and *physical*. In teens, we could also add sexual bullying (e.g., boys who rate girls sexually). A very small number of children and youth resort to physical bullying. Verbal bullying often happens on cell phones and chat lines. Relational bullying takes the form of shunning and rumour.

The good news is - bullying is a *role*, not a *person*. This gives us hope. We can drop roles. It *is* possible to help children and youth get pleasure from new roles. Meanness is not in our genes; it is learned. It is important for adults - parents, teachers, ministers - to be alert to bullying in young people. If bullying is not dropped as youth grow up, they become bullies in their homes, and as teachers, business people, politicians, and church leaders.

How do adults help the child who always seems to be ‘tattling’?

Barbara Colorosso makes a distinction between “tattling” and “telling.” It is easy, she says, to teach this to a child. Tattling gets someone *into* trouble. Telling gets someone *out* of trouble. What if a child has seen a bully pushing someone in the playground? Is it both telling and tattling to report it? It’ll get the pushed kid *out* of trouble and it will get the bully *into* trouble. If it’s both, Barbara tells the children, it’s something an adult needs to know about.

How do parents/teachers/youth leaders correct kids who make mistakes?

Barbara Colorosso advocates that we take a “no blame approach.” She uses the acronym “FOOD.”

- F** **Focus:** Focus on the problem. “Can you explain the problem to me?”
- O** **Ownership:** Don’t worry about who did it or who started the fight. Just say, “Let’s fix it.”
- O** **Options:** Focus on options, opportunities. “What are some different ways we could fix this?”
- D** **Dignity:** Give the child dignity when it is all over. Say, “I can tell tomorrow will be better” or “You have worked hard to fix this problem.”

The following are some great books by Barbara Colorosso to add to your church or home library.

- *Kids Are Worth It! Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline* (Penguin, 2003)
- *Parenting With Wit and Wisdom* (Penguin, 2003)
- *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander* (Harper Collins, 2003)
- *Who’s In Charge, Anyway?* (Whitecap Books, 2003)
- *Just Because It Isn’t Wrong Doesn’t Make It Right* (Penguin 2007)

Youth and Technology

The teen on the front of the Winter 2007/2008 Edition of *With* magazine says it all - he’s holding an ipod and a laptop, and he is talking on his cell phone. This entire issue (seven articles) explores violence in video games, text messaging, web sites, and what to do when the server is down.

Individual subscriptions make a great gift for the youth in your church. This Mennonite magazine could also provide the basis of a good youth group study. You can place your order (\$6.60 CDN per issue) from Kitchener, ON by calling 1-800-631-6535.

