



May Counsellor's Corner

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May's Topic: Anger or Guilt?

Your daughter tells you at 9 pm that she needs cupcakes for the bake sale tomorrow morning at school. You've had a terrible day at work, come home to 3 kids pulling you in different directions and a house that looks like it hasn't been cleaned since last Leap Year. She shoves the crumpled-up newsletter from school in your hand and you notice it is dated over a week ago. You've already filled the tub with the hot water you've been dreaming about all day and you are ready to unleash on your child for laying this task on you at the last minute.

As parents, we are often put in this position and are left with the choice of feeling angry or guilty. Whichever one we take on, it puts our child in the position of feeling the other.

For example, if we say, "No," and refuse her last minute demand, Suzy gets angry and stomps around the house, making us feel guilty that she will have to show up empty handed for the Bake Sale.



If we say, "Yes" and accompany it with a lecture about being irresponsible and leaving things until the last minute, we take on the anger and our child is left with the guilt.



Which is better? Well, unleashing anger can definitely feel better in the moment and guilt never feels good, so most would probably opt for being angry and letting the child feel guilty. Unfortunately, our kids quickly figure out that anger feels better than guilt and then start playing the game, "I'll be angry so that you are the one that has to feel guilty." In our cupcake example, that would probably play out like:

- Parent gets angry and lectures, child feels guilty
- Child dislikes the guilty feeling so rises up and gets angry ("You never want to help – all the other parents make stuff for the Bake Sale...")
- Parent instantly feels guilty and tries to put it back on the child by getting angrier ("All the other parents don't have kids that leave things till the last minute")...laying the guilt back on the child...and so on.

"I'll be angry so that you are the one that has to feel guilty."

What is really going on? We are all jockeying for position and trying to not be the one left holding the guilt at the end of the fight. Remember that card game? Whoever was left holding the "Old Maid" card at the end lost the game. In the "game" of anger vs. guilt; however, there really are no winners and the only loser is the relationship we have with our kids.



Dr. Thomas Phelan uses the example of a teenage daughter asking her dad for a ride to her friend's house half way through the football game. Dad gets angry, making daughter feel guilty for interrupting the game. She dislikes feeling guilty, so she takes on the anger and pushes the guilt on him by saying, "Football is obviously more important to you than I am." He doesn't like

feeling guilty either, so he steals the anger back by saying, "Fine – I'll just drive you and miss the whole fourth quarter. Let's go...." Thus ending the battle with her feeling guilty and him being angry. They drive to the friend's house in silence.

How can we break this cycle? Not only does it happen in parent/child relationships, but dating relationships, work relationships and marriages. As soon as we realize what is going on, we can learn new ways of communicating. Once we stop jockeying for position and lay both the anger and guilt aside, we can greatly improve our relationships with our children and partners.

That could look like:

You get up early every Saturday morning to drive your son to the hockey rink. You were looking forward to sitting with the parents and enjoying a coffee and visit. Upon your arrival at the rink, your son realizes he forgot to put his hockey bag in the trunk. You know that you are going to have to drive all the way back home, so you prepare your lecture (feeling angry and pushing guilt on him). Instead, consider saying,

"You are in a bind right now because you didn't put your things in the car last night when I reminded you. I am not angry; however, it will take an extra half hour to drive home and back to get your things. While we are driving, we can talk about what extra chore you can take on for me tonight to help me out for 30 minutes. I am always here to help you out as we all make mistakes – I appreciate that you will also be helping me out later today."

Although your child may immediately respond with anger at this suggestion, you can let go of any guilt, as this is a fair and reasonable trade-off. If you respond with the calm (anger-free) message consistently, avoiding putting a guilt-trip on your child, he will not feel the need to rise up in anger simply to avoid feeling guilty.

For more suggestions or assistance with parenting tips, contact your school or community counsellor.

Supports In the Comox Valley



1. **Parenting Through Anxiety** – Free (Funded by Comox Valley Family Services Association) – runs May 27th from 6 – 8 pm for five weeks. Offered to parents who identify as experiencing anxiety and have children aged 5 – 10 years who are also demonstrating signs of anxiety. Space is limited and registration is required. See your school counsellor for a referral form or email info@dvfsa.org.
2. **Healthy Families Program**– Accredited BC Family Resource Program supporting families and caregivers of children birth up to 6 years old, offering drop-in groups, parent-child resources, nurses, a nutritionist, infant development consultants and outreach workers for individual support. Assistance with family development of those facing challenging life circumstances. To register, call 250-871-7577
3. **In The Know** – Video Presentation: Topic – The Four Step CARE Model for conflict management for parents and caregivers – raising and loving chronic conflict children. Lake Trail School Tuesday, May 21 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm RSVP wendy.safruik@familysmart.ca
4. **Kidsport** – Provides financial support to low-income families to get your kids involved in sport. <http://www.kidsportcanada.ca/british-columbia/apply-for-assistance/>

5. **Jumpstart** - Provides financial support to low-income families to get your kids involved in sport.
<https://jumpstart.canadiantire.ca/content/microsites/jumpstart/en/apply.html>



Spring Mental Wellness Challenge 2019

Congratulations to the Winners of our Spring Mental Wellness Challenge 2019!
Thank you to all of those who participated in getting some family togetherness time in this spring. Prizes can be picked up at the front desk of Brooklyn Elementary School. Thanks again to all of our sponsors!

- Grand Prize \$300 gift certificate to Wild Play in Nanaimo (courtesy of Comox Valley Schools): **Schillemat Family - Queneesh Elementary**
- Family pass - Summer Scenic Chair Lifts (courtesy of Mt. Washington Alpine Resort): **Deluca Family - Brooklyn Elementary/Highland Secondary**
- 10 Visit Fitness Studio Pass (courtesy of Town of Comox - Recreation Centre) - **Thornton Family - NIDES**
- \$50 Gift Certificate to Lewis Centre programs (courtesy of City of Courtenay - Recreation Centre) - **Evans Family - Brooklyn Elementary**
- Family Bowling Pass (courtesy of Codes Country Lanes) - **Deforge family - Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - Cumberland Community & Royston Elementary**
- Family Bowling pass (courtesy of Codes Country Lanes) - **Cairncross family - Brooklyn Elementary**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Blais family - Brooklyn Elementary**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Galliford family - Queneesh Elementary**
- \$25 Punch Card to the LINC Youth Centre - Courtesy of City of Courtenay - **Ignatiuk family - Navigate**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Roggenkamp family - Brooklyn Elementary**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Pantuso Family - Navigate**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Dehr/Moshiri family - Brooklyn Elementary**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Phillips family - Ecole Robb Road**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Tobacca family - Brooklyn Elementary**

- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **O'Maley family - Courtenay Elementary**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **Crellin family - Valley View**
- Family pass to CVRD Sports & Aquatic Centres (courtesy of Comox Valley Regional District) - **McGregor Meilleur family - NIDES**
- Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Beatson/Landry family -Valley View Elementary**
- Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Flint/Reid family - Ecole Puntledge Park**
- \$25 Punch card to the LINC and Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Pulsford family - Ecole Puntledge Park/Isfeld**
- \$25 Punch card to the LINC and Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Servos family - Brooklyn Elementary**
- Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Hansen family - Courtenay Elementary/Lake Trail**
- Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Chard family - Ecole Puntledge Park**
- Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Blaak family - Brooklyn Elementary**
- Family pass to Courtenay Recreation - squash/aerobics/outdoor pool/wellness centre/LINC youth centre (courtesy of City of Courtenay) - **Miller family - Valley View Elementary**

Prizes provided by these terrific community partners:

