

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141

Phone (415) 459-5999 Fax (415) 459-5602 www.cipmarin.org

2024-2025 News & Notes



March 2025 News and Notes **Key Insights for Today's Parents** **By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT**

Over the years, our annual Raising Healthy Families events have brought together experts knowledgeable on multiple topics related to child development, family relations, and emotional wellbeing. Here we are pleased to offer just a few of these insights.

Most striking among these examples is their emphasis on the need for parents to “show up,” that is, to listen to their children and spend time with them. Another presenter stressed the importance of teaching children to make good choices for themselves.

Insights from: *Helping When Your Child Is Hurting: What Every Parent Needs to Know to Prevent Adolescent Self-Harm and Suicide*, presented by Dr. Keith Sutton, PsyD

Adolescence is a time of unique development, Dr. Sutton explained, during which young people are learning to interact with the world in new ways. It is often a time of intense emotions, including stress, anxiety and depression. Parents can help their children navigate this important period by remaining open and approachable, and especially by building their own ability to problem solve and handle difficult issues.

While adolescence is a time of individuation and identity development, children “still want to turn to their parents” when they have a problem. By being able to talk with their parents about their feelings, children feel

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relief: They are no longer alone with these intense emotions. In order to be available for problem solving with their children, it's important for parents to overcome their own fear of difficult feelings, and “develop a tolerance for distress.”

Insights from: *Searching for the Lost Boys: Discovering the Hidden World of Teenage Boys*, presented by Mark Edwards, LMFT

Listening is one of the most important approaches parents can take. Edwards' reasoning is simple: “By the time that your child is a teen, they know everything that you think and do. They have been your keen observers from the beginning. Now is the time to hear what they think and do.”

You can create activities that provide the opportunity for your son to communicate more easily. For example, driving together in the car or simply taking a walk. Begin a conversation with an open-ended question, rather than an observation or advice.

Insights from: *Raising Wise Girls: Helping Girls Develop Self-Esteem in the Age of Social Media*, presented by Sierra Dator, LCSW

Parents can help mitigate social media's negative impact by offering their daughters high levels of social and face-to-face connection. These are key to bolstering both self-esteem and resilience.

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Dator explained that it's important that parents “show up.” Be present for your daughter and provide opportunities for her to connect with you. Take family time together away from home, connect through nature. Express interest in her activities, asking “What did you see online?” and “How was school today?” Stay open to her views, giving room for her opinions that may be different from your own. Compliment her about what you've noticed or relay positive comments others have shared about her. Encourage her connections with extended family members, and other important people.

Insights from: *Prevent Adolescent Substance and Behavior Problems Using Systemic Approaches to Promote Harmony and Safety for the Whole Family* presented by Kenneth Perlmutter, PhD; Dylan Kersh, LMFT; and Jed Purses, LMFT

Let your child know that their opinion matters: “I believe in you.” As you spend time with your teen, listening and sharing, you can learn their concerns, what they enjoy, what they consider fun. Discover ways to provide opportunities for fun time together as a family. Provide occasions for them to relax and de-stress. Take trips and engage in activities together as a family.

Insights from: *Parenting with Wit and Wisdom: Raising Responsible, Resourceful, Resilient, Compassionate Human Beings*, presented by Barbara Coloroso

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Among the most valuable gifts parents can give to their children, Coloroso maintains, is a sense of agency, that is, faith in their own ability to make decisions for themselves and to take responsibility for their actions. Parents can do this by giving children choices in all areas of their lives from the earliest ages. In fact, this learning can begin as early as two years of age, with a question, “It’s time for bed: do you want to wear the red pajamas or the blue pajamas?”

By giving children choices every day (“Here are three choices, which do you want?”) and holding them accountable for those choices, parents demonstrate their trust and expectation that children know best what they want and can make sound choices. Over time, youngsters gain confidence in their decision-making ability and assume responsibility for the natural consequences of their actions. This self-confidence enables them to embrace new situations throughout their lives.