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Parenting with love and logic

District to sponsor 12-hour parenting workshop

by Stephen Harding
Staff Writer

SHOREVIEW — Love allows children to grow through their mistakes. Logic allows children to live with the consequences of their choices.

These two concepts are at the heart of a six-part "Parenting with Love and Logic Workshop" to be offered by the Mounds View School District starting Jan. 28.

The workshop will be taught by Bel Air Elementary Behavior Specialist Katie Solem. It kicks off with a class that teaches parents to allow children to make mistakes, and to learn how to use each mistake as a valuable learning experience.

"By and large, kids in America are not doing well," she said. "If as a culture we do not put more intelligent effort into the way we raise our kids, families and our future will be in more trouble than they are already."

Many of the parents that Solem speaks to say they are confused, tired and stressed. The complex world we live in makes parenting even harder, she said, but there are parenting techniques that can give children a good shot at being responsible and respectful and reduce the stress of parenting.

Solem

Another reason Solem started offering the workshops is because she's seeing more children in crises. Regardless of the standard of living they're raised in, they are not receiving the attention they crave or need, she said. As a result, they're becoming more disruptive in the classroom and negatively affecting other students.

On the flip side, Solem said, parents who smother their children are causing just as much harm. The workshop is also aimed at teaching parents to let go and let their child make mistakes they can learn them. For example, she said children should decide on their own what to wear on a cold day.

"Typically children don't make the same mistake twice," she said. "If you let them be uncomfortable, the child's brain tells them it's bad, they won't do it again."

She gives an example of a mother of a third grade student who did everything for him. She did all of his homework, told him exactly what and when to eat and micro-managed every aspect of his life. The child and parent were both getting depressed. Solem advised the parent to back off and let the student struggle for a bit.

"He is finding out he is responsible for his actions," she said. "I can already see his self-esteem is rising."

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> **— Katie Solem**
> Behavior Specialist

Love and logic

Solem said the two-hour workshops are composed of video presentations, group work, lecture, discussions and laughter, and she bills it as "the most entertaining parenting class available." Her goal: to teach parents strategies they can use right away at home that will quickly begin to change the balance of power in the homes.

She said the word "empathy" is used in every session because when adults deliver consequences with an empathetic voice, the brain stays in the thinking mode and the child is more apt to be feeling bad because of the behavior. Children respond to that more often than when a parent is screaming or using power to punish the child.

"Using empathy also uses much less of the parent's energy and can prevent a situation from becoming highly emotional, so both the child and parent can keep their brains in the thinking mode," she said.

The ideal result of the workshop is to help parents raise children who are able to solve their own problems, become thinkers and begin to connect their choices and behaviors to real life consequences.

Solem said she will be working with the city of Blaine in the near future. That workshop will be a collaboration between the city and local schools, churches and community groups.

Solem said she would like to target parents who have elementary-age children, because by the time children get to middle school, they are making decisions that will affect their lifetimes — and it may be too late by then to help them.

"It's my dream that parents who take this class will be able to say that they love being a parent and find it joyful and fulfilling," Solem said.

If you go

Highview Middle School media center in New Brighton. Cost for a single session is $13 or $72 for all six sessions for a single parent ($18 per session or $102 for all six sessions for couples.) To register, go to www.www.moundsview schools.org/comm_edu/adult_ programs.asp or call 651-639-6030.