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Thriving During the Elementary Years

Importance of Early Intervention

By Dr. Jan Hittelman

We all know that long-term habits are hard to break. That's why addressing our children's learning, language, emotional, and behavioral challenges early on is so important. If your child is struggling at home, in school and/or with peers, it is important to first understand where these challenges are emanating from. And that's not always so easy to do. A child who "is not listening" in class may have a language-processing problem. Someone who bullies others may be struggling with self-image issues. Temper tantrums may be a desperate cry for attention. While it's every parent's hope that our children are simply going through a phase (and sometimes they are), if these challenges continue consider the following steps:

1. **Get Other's Feedback:** Check in with other adults in your child's life (teachers, other parents, relatives, etc.) and get their feedback as well. If these issues are occurring in other settings then it may be an issue unique to your child. If it's only happening in one setting then the dynamics of that setting may play a role.
2. **Talk to Your Child:** On a good day at a positive moment discuss your concerns with your child in an open, supportive, non-threatening way. Try to elicit your child's viewpoints and feelings about your concerns. Ask what you can do to help.
3. **Consider an Assessment:** There are excellent learning, language and behavioral experts who are trained to assess children and provide valuable feedback regarding their challenges. Ask your child's teacher and/or principal for recommendations.
4. **Develop an Action Plan:** Once you're clear about the type of issues that your child is struggling with, develop a plan of action to ensure that your child's difficulties are being addressed.

The longer we wait to address these issues the more challenging they are to remediate and the more damage they are likely to cause.

UPCOMING PEN EVENTS:

Harvesting Healthy Families

Nourishing the Mind, Body, Soul and Community

Bryce Browne

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www.growefoundation.org

Monday, October 19, 6:30-8:30pm, BVSD Education Center (6500 Arapahoe, Boulder)

Learn more about PEN by visiting their website: www.parentengagementnetwork.org or by contacting Paula Nelson, PEN chair (pjn6225@yahoo.com 303-880-6030) or Eugenia Brady, PEN Co-Chair (eugenia.brady@bvsd.org 720-561-5150).

Dr. Jan Hittelman, a licensed psychologist, is Director of Boulder Psychological Services and the Founder of the Boulder Counseling Cooperative. Questions or comments for this monthly column can be sent via email to: jan.hittelman@gmail.com, or by phone: 720-217-3270.