

Thrive update



Enhance Inspire
Inform healthy kids make smarter students

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JANUARY 2012

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>> Make 2012 the Year of the Family

The last several years have been highlighted by challenging times for us as individuals, a community, a country, and a planet. Financial hardships affected most of us and our country continues to be at war. For many families, the sacrifices have been overwhelming. The beginning of a new year offers us the opportunity to reflect and re-evaluate our priorities - a time to look within and focus on what's really important.

When we look back on our lives, few things have as much importance, influence, or meaning as our families. While friends may come and go, family is one of the few constants in our lives. Because we often take what we have for granted, we may not focus much on our day-to-day family lives. Make 2012 an opportunity to really spend quality time with those we love, letting them know how important they are to us, and strengthening our bonds.

We've all heard the stories of people who, told they have a limited time to live, decide to dramatically change their lives in order to truly pursue what's important to them. Erik Erickson, a renowned developmental psychologist, theorized a life stages model of identity development with challenges at different life stages. In the final stage of life, during old age, he discussed "integrity versus despair." More specifically, that we would look back on our lives with a sense of integrity based on our accomplishments or be left with a sense of despair if we had many regrets and/or felt that our lives were wasted. When we are at the end of our lives, few things have as much importance or meaning as families. Now is the time to make sure that when you look back on your life, you will experience the peace and wisdom that come with a life of integrity. Because family is such an important part of our lives, make 2012 the year of the family.

by Dr. Jan Hittelman
Licensed Psychologist

and

Leisha Conners Bauer
Boulder County Healthy Youth Alliance

Look for us on the web!
www.bvbsd.com

>> The Y is for Healthy Living

With the new year upon us, it can be difficult to find the balance that we need in our life to stay healthy. Being healthy means more than simply being physically active. It's about maintaining a balanced spirit, mind and body. The Y is a place where you can work toward that balance by challenging yourself to learn a new skill or hobby, fostering connections with friends through our lifelong learning programs, or bringing your loved ones closer together through our many family-centered activities. At the Y, it's not about the activity you choose as much as it is about the benefits of living healthier on the inside as well as the outside.

A supportive community is a big part of wellness. At every age and every level of activity, you'll find people just like you looking to live a little bit healthier. Members and program participants often cite the support and enthusiasm of fellow participants and staff as some of the key factors in their achievement of greater well-being. We all need the advice of an expert sometimes, as well as the personal attention that comes with a trainer or coach. Ys offer personal training and coaching to help you set and meet your specific goals in order to live healthier and stay with it. Ys also offer classes for all ages, all levels and all interests. From low-impact exercise and chair classes, stretching and strength training to indoor cycling, water exercise, and yoga, you'll find a group class that's fun, supportive and keeps you moving.

We know wellness when we experience it. It's an overall feeling of health and wholeness. A sense of belonging. The energy to live our fullest life. The desire to continually learn new things and improve our skills. And the chance to contribute and help someone else. Commit to your health in 2012.

For more information, or to register for YMCA programs, visit www.ymcabv.org. We offer financial assistance for membership and programs to those that qualify. **YMCA of Boulder Valley - One Membership, Two Locations:**

Mapleton Center Y • 2850 Mapleton Ave., Boulder • 303.442.2778

Arapahoe Center Y • 2800 Dagny Way, Lafayette • 303.664.5455



>> Fighting Over Feelings

My kindergartener came home from school the other day and said, "Daddy, I think I'm stupid." I quickly reacted to this absurdity by launching headlong into a counterattack of mythic proportions. "Stupid?! Are you kidding? You are the smartest, most amazing child in the world! Here, let me give you a few examples of your brilliance..."

Confident in my ability to craft a compelling argument, I was sure my little dumpling would soon see the error in her logic. I also knew that she would then experience a gigantic boost in self-esteem once she saw the light.

But instead of being swayed by the brilliance of my reasoning, she simply redoubled her efforts to convince me otherwise. We were soon in a tug-o-war over her limited intelligence, and I wasn't going to win. I could feel the rope slipping.

Then I got smart and set down the rope. I stopped trying to talk her out of her feelings. I took a breath, felt the sadness that comes with feeling stupid, and I joined her. "Oh honey, that's hard," I began. "What's going on that you're feeling that way?" And she told me. It was a cute story and I had to bite my lip to keep from smiling. I took another breath and stayed with her.

I left space. I let her feel sad. I felt sad with her. Soon something both ordinary and magical happened. As kids do with such ease and grace, she moved through the feelings, and was quickly on to something else.

Funny how I was still feeling sad long after she had moved on. Thankfully, there was plenty of time later for me to tell her what a genius I thought she was.

by **Jeremy Dion, MA, LPC**
Parent and Boulder Psychological Services Psychotherapist

>> Living in the Fog

On December 6, 2011, Fairview High School hosted a panel discussion on the consequences of insufficient sleep among teens.

- On average, teens get about seven and a half hours of sleep per night, which decreases as they get older.
- In middle school, 35 percent get an optimal (9+ hours) amount of sleep.
- In high school, 9 percent get an optimal amount of sleep¹.

Studies have demonstrated a link between insufficient sleep and a student's physical health, mental health, and academic performance.

Physical impacts include increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes. Mentally, a teen may be irritable, less alert, and report having a depressed mood.

Fairview and Boulder High are piloting later school start times this school year. Prior to the pilot, Fairview surveyed students and found students struggled to stay awake when doing homework (68%), taking a test (28%), driving (12%) and in class (66%).

Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom, University of Minnesota, looked at two different school districts (one with a 98 percent college going rate; the other with 82 percent free and reduced lunch students) that shifted their start times. Some key findings:

- Students reported earning higher grades, lower frequency of falling asleep in class or during a test, fewer emotional problems, and less depression.
- Teachers reported that students were more alert during the first two periods of the day.
- Parents found that their teens were easier to live with.
- The later start times didn't affect participation in sports or extracurricular activities; coaches found students were better able to remember plays.

Dr. Wahlstrom's research indicates an optimum school start time occurring between 8 am and 8:45 am. We may think that if school starts later, teens will just stay up later. Dr. Wahlstrom found that the average bed time preference didn't change with a later school start time.

As parents, we can support later high school start times throughout Boulder Valley as well as reinforce good sleep habits. Make sure your teen has a bedroom favorable for sleeping, has the same sleep and wake times every day, no caffeine or eating late at night, and no high stimulus activities close to bedtime.

¹2006 Sleep in America Poll

>> Children Who Cope With a Mentally Ill Family Member

They are often high achievers; they shine academically, excel in sports, are gifted in the arts. It's important to be "good," to be the child mom and dad don't have to worry about, thank goodness, because there is another family member who consumes enormous amounts of energy; the son, the daughter, the partner, who suffers from a mental illness.

They witness the volatility, the tears, the exasperation of their parents. They worry about their sibling or parent's depression, anger, suicidal risk, substance abuse, and yet, they often suffer in silence. Sometimes this "good" child feels so sad that they question their existence. Sometimes they cut to relieve the overwhelming feelings. Sometimes they feel tremendous guilt when their anxiety interferes with their success in the classroom. And often they succumb to the temporary antidote to pain that drugs and alcohol can offer.

Victoria Secunda, the author of "When Madness Comes Home," describes this type of child as the "Custodian." Their role is to "keep mothers and fathers from collapsing." They closely monitor their parents' moods, acting as mini adults. It's important to make it clear to these kids that adults are responsible for the ill member.

by Kathy Cornelius Smith, M.A.
Prevention/Interventionist at Southern Hills Middle School

Family therapy can be invaluable in tending to the emotional needs of all family members, and in providing information about the specifics of the illness. NAMI, the National Association for the Mentally Ill, offers free support to family and friends. Peer support groups, offered in many BVSD schools, can help with the sense of isolation that can occur for these kids. The realization that you are not alone, that other kids are experiencing many of the same feelings, can be empowering. Contact your child's school counseling department for more information.

>> In the Wake of Penn State, a Call to Action

Let's take a deep breath and focus on how to prevent these violations in the first place! Let's break through the discomfort of talking about child sexual abuse so perpetrators cannot get away with their acts.

As a prevention specialist, my job is to coach parents on how to speak up about body safety. In the coming weeks, I invite you to revisit your child sexual abuse prevention plan and take at least one of the following actions toward keeping your kids safe:

by Feather Berkower
26-year veteran in child sexual abuse prevention
www.parentingsafechildren.com

- **Put your discomfort aside and have a conversation about sexual abuse prevention and body safety with one person in your child's life.** Remember: conversations about body safety are not accusatory, but rather are about building prevention teams.
- **Make sure your children understand the body-safety rules for your family.**
- **Ask your baby sitter/nanny to sign an agreement in which he or she agrees to follow your family's body-safety rules and join your prevention team.**
- **If there is anyone in your life who you are concerned about—a child, teen, or adult who is engaging in inappropriate behavior or a child who is exhibiting signs that he or she may be abused—speak up and get help.**

If you feel safe doing so, speak directly to the person in an open, non-defensive manner:

- Name the behavior that concerns you – e.g., “I notice you are tickling the children’s bellies at nap time.”
- State your feelings – e.g., “I am uncomfortable with you doing that.”
- Make a request – e.g., “And I would like you to stop doing that.”
- You might even ask a question like, “Why do you tickle the kids in the classroom at nap time?”

By speaking up about a concerning behavior, you put a potentially unsafe person on notice that you are educated and intolerant of inappropriate behaviors with children. If you're speaking with a “safe” person, it's a great opportunity to discuss appropriate touch of children. If you do not feel comfortable speaking directly with the person, you have other options:

- Report your concerns to social services or the police if you suspect abuse of a child.
- Remove or separate your child from the situation or person in question, even if it's family.

Speaking to other people about your concerns is not gossip; it's about keeping kids safe and building communities that are off limits.

>> Child Abuse Reporting Awareness in BVSD

In early 2011, a Child Abuse Policy and Training Task Force was established to review and update BVSD's policy about the reporting of child abuse and/or neglect. Representatives from Boulder Police Department, Boulder County Health and Human Services, Blue Sky Bridge, and BVSD Social Workers, Human Resources, Legal Counsel, Security and Communications staff participated. This group created a training video that provides the foundation for all BVSD staff members in understanding their role and responsibility as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse.

Superintendent Bruce Messinger makes the following remarks in the training video which all BVSD employees are now required to watch:

“I can think of no higher priority than the safety and well-being of each student in the school district. I'm counting on each employee's assistance as we work with parents, students and the community to ensure student safety.

“We have launched a district-wide educational campaign to address important questions about reporting child abuse or neglect. What is child abuse? What are some of the signs of child abuse? What is required of you by law and district policy when you suspect child abuse?

“Thank you for your attention to this very important issue. We will work together to provide the safest environment possible for every student in the Boulder Valley School District.”

View the video at <http://www.bvsd.org/SECURITY/CHILDAUSE/Pages/default.aspx>.

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

JANUARY 2012

Monday, January 9, 7-8 p.m.

Teen Depression: The Good News

Pathways to Parenting Success Series - Live from the BVSD Board Room!

BVSD Ed Center Board Room - 6500 East Arapahoe Road, Boulder

While Colorado leads the nation in adolescent depression, several local groups are working hard to address these issues in our community. Learn about the warning signs, resources available, and how you can get involved. **Panelists: Members of the HOPE Coalition of Boulder County, Colie's Closet, & the Boulder Second Wind fund. Moderator: Dr. Jan Hittelman.** Join the live audience in the BVSD Board Room, watch it on Comcast Cable Channel 22, or stream from your computer at <http://bvsd.org/BV22/Pages/PathwaystoParentingSeries.aspx>. Go to BPSBoulder.com for more info.

Thursday, January 19, 6-8 p.m.

Employment – Bob Lawhead from Community Link will lead this important discussion about supported and customized employment.

BVSD Ed Center, 6500 E. Arapahoe Rd., Boulder

Part of the *On the Road: Transition to Adulthood Series for Students with Disabilities*. Co-sponsored by Boulder Valley School District and Association for Community Living in Boulder County, Inc. **Youth are invited to attend. We will have some concurrent sessions for them in the next room led by staff from the Center for People with Disabilities. Youth cannot be dropped off.** For more information, contact BVSD Parent Liaison Anna Stewart at 720-561-5918 or anna.stewart@bvsd.org or ACL Executive Director Ailsa Wonnacott at 303-527-0888 or awonnacott@aclboulder.org.

Monday, January 23, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

The Teenage Brain

A Pathways to Parenting Success Workshop – Free and open to the public.

Meadows Branch Library, 4800 Baseline Road, Boulder

Learn effective communication strategies and gain a better understanding of your teenager's developing mind. **Facilitator: Dr. Elizabeth Olson**

Thursday, January 26, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

PEN Event – HOPE Coalition

Providing hope and inspiration in the area of suicide and depression prevention and awareness. Collaborative with HOPE Coalition, Colie's Closet, First Presbyterian Church. www.hopecoalitionofbouldercounty.org; www.coliescloset.org; www.parentengagementnetwork.org

Monday, January 30, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Understanding Self-Harm in Teens

A Pathways to Parenting Success Workshop – Free and open to the public.

Meadows Branch Library, 4800 Baseline Road, Boulder

Learn about this growing epidemic and how to stop the cycle of self-abuse. **Facilitators: Susan Denison, LCSW and Jeffrey Kuhn, LCSW**
www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

THRIVEupdate for BVSD Parents

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and parents

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Look for us on the web!
www.bvsd.com

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

FEBRUARY 2012

Thursday, February 2, 6-8 p.m.

Employment 2 – More on how to find and keep a job using support from Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Workforce, and options for self-employment.

BVSD Ed Center, 6500 E. Arapahoe Rd., Boulder

Part of the *On the Road: Transition to Adulthood Series for Students with Disabilities*. Co-sponsored by Boulder Valley School District and Association for Community Living in Boulder County, Inc. *Youth are invited to attend. We will have some concurrent sessions for them in the next room led by staff from the Center for People with Disabilities. Youth cannot be dropped off.* For more information, contact BVSD Parent Liaison Anna Stewart at 720-561-5918 or anna.stewart@bvsd.org or ACL Executive Director Ailsa Wonnacott at 303-527-0888 or awonnacott@aclboulder.org.

Thursday, February 2, 7-9 p.m.

Gifted Children and Friendships

Presenter: Catherine Zakoian, M.A., L.P.C.

Monarch High School Auditorium, 263 Campus Drive, Louisville 80027

Learn more about the delights and challenges of the gifted social experience as well as strategies and practices to encourage and support a child's capacity to create and maintain true, meaningful and healthful friendships in this world. Co-sponsored by Boulder Valley Gifted and Talented (BVGT) and Boulder Valley School District. More information at www.bvgt.org or programming@bvgt.org.

Monday, February 6, 7-8 p.m.

Address Stress Now

Pathways to Parenting Success Series - Live from the BVSD Board Room!

BVSD Ed Center Board Room - 6500 East Arapahoe Road, Boulder

Stress can lead to significant physical and emotional illness, as well as substance abuse. Learn how you and your family can dramatically reduce your level of experienced stress. **Panelists:** *Susan Denison, LCSW, Jeffrey Kuhn, LCSW, Elizabeth Matthews, LPC, Karen Wilding, LCSW. Moderator: Leisha Conners Bauer, MPA.* Join the live audience in the BVSD Board Room, watch it on Comcast Cable Channel 22, or stream from your computer at <http://bvsd.org/BV22/Pages/PathwaystoParentingSeries.aspx>. Go to BPSBoulder.com for more info.

>> BVSD Lifelong Learning's Winter Classes for Adults, Teens and Kids

Winter is the perfect time to take a class! Check out BVSD Lifelong Learning's Winter Catalog for lots of fun, energizing and informative adult classes. In addition to the many popular classes we offer every year, Lifelong Learning has a great variety of new offerings. Here's a sample:

- Demystifying the College Application Process
- Mediterranean Bistro Cooking
- Art for Renewal and Stress Management
- How to Downsize and Declutter for an Easier-to-Maintain Life
- Realistic Self Defense (perfect mother-daughter class!)
- Make Your Own Baby Food
- Preparing Your Own Tax Return

There's more to BVSD Lifelong Learning than our adult classes, though. Watch for our catalog of kids' classes and camps, which will be sent to parents in early January. We offer afterschool classes in the arts, outdoors and adventure, fencing, digital photography, video production, and science (taught by Science Matters!) We're also offering creative Saturday cooking classes for kids this year. Additionally, our No-School Day Camps and Spring Break Camps are very popular with kids (and parents!)

Teen classes include Driver's Education, SAT Prep, SAT Prep Small Group Intensive, ACT Prep, and ACT Tactics and Strategies.

To receive BVSD Lifelong Learning winter class information, call Ivy Lee at 720-561-5968 or visit our website at www.bvsd.org/LLL.