

When Parents Go Back to School

THREE MOTHERS WHO DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER, and have children of different ages, came together for a parenting workshop. These moms spent two hours, once a week, focusing on their most important job: parenting. Like their children who face challenges typical of their age groups, these parents have a few hurdles of their own:

How can I discipline my child using consequences?

What's the right consequence and how can I be more effective as a parent?

I want my child to know that I mean what I say, and take me seriously."Sometimes I feel 'rudderless' like I don't know what I want and what's important.

These moms are great parents. They love their children more than words can express, are life-long learners, and have a strong desire to experience better results and build stronger relationships. Yet they feel a bit out of control and frustrated with the way things are going at home.

All are facing an edge – a dividing territory between a primary process (where you are now; the old way) and a secondary process (what's trying to happen for you; a new way). The edge is the space between the known and the

unknown, a horizon you can't see over and a place where we tend to get stuck.

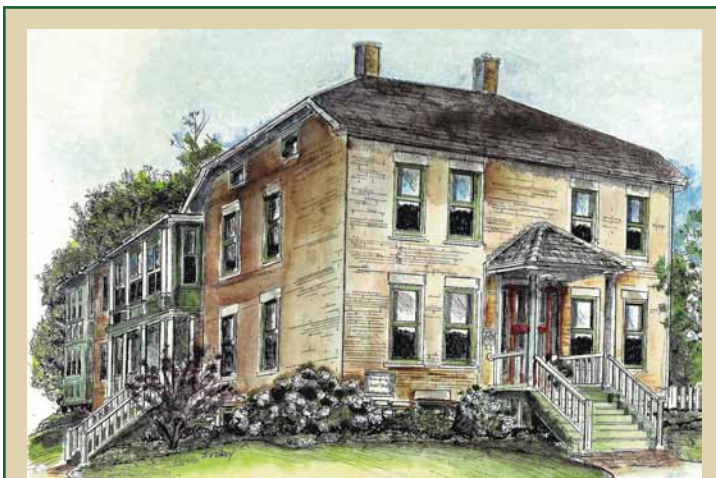
They are also graduates of the Samaritan Counseling Center's Parenting with Peace & Purpose Workshop. They continue to practice the principles they learned from this workshop. They also participated in Parenting Workshop Level 2: Making It Work For You, which is based on the work of Stephen Covey and his book, "7 Habits of Highly Effective Families".

Something magical happened in these parenting workshops. The more these moms talked out loud, and challenged each other to apply the principles from Covey's book, the more they were able to think differently about their challenge. They started to learn how to let go of trying to fix things, or control situations and people in their life, and instead, learn to accept their loved ones for who they are. They replaced their need to know why with the curiosity of an anthropologist. They learned how to be better listeners and to be empathetic.

What's really happening in these workshops? Here, we are building Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Unlike IQ, EQ refers to our ability to recognize, identify, appropriately read and express emotion. Research by Daniel Goleman and others have suggested that EQ is a critical component of effective personal and organizational relationships. Parents are developing self-awareness, self-management and social awareness. They step into a safe and confidential space to work on growing their social and emotional skills. (Social and emotional learning has become a priority in District 220, which has adopted a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum that will be implemented in K-5, this year.)

We often spend a lot of time trying to fix the other people, when in reality, we can't "control" them, or get them to do what we want them to do. We add our anxiety or energy into the mix when trying to change things; then, we actually get the very outcome that we are trying to avoid.

As they were encouraged to open up to each other in this confidential and safe space, they were able to gain clarity and understanding about themselves. The more time they spent together, the more they learned how to laugh at themselves, relax, and take risks. They became more confident in knowing that they could use new tools and mindsets. Things shifted because they reframed their thinking and they started to get different results at home. U



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For more information, visit www.sccnw.org or call Rayanne Coy at 847-382-HOPE (4673) EXT. 12. The Samaritan Counseling Center of the Northwest Suburbs blends empirically supported counseling, coaching, and educational approaches with principles from one's faith to promote healing.



Rayanne Coy is a certified professional coach and parent educator on staff at The Samaritan Counseling Center.