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Printing on December 16, 2021, running to February 17, 2022

Advertising Deadline December 1, 2021

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What you think about, you bring about

By Carol M. Shirley, Registered Psychologist, with ENIGMA

Every human on the planet dreams about a world where there is peace. Where we can all live in acceptance of one and other and without fear. Unconditional love is a concept we also dream about where our happiness is not contingent on someone else's behavior. Unfortunately, many people these days live in fear forgetting that the only person they can control is themselves. If your happiness is tied up in people behaving in a way that makes you feel safe you may never feel safe. Conditional love says do what you want as long as it doesn't cause me stress; as long as I am OK with it.

Control what you can. As an individual you have many things in your daily life you can control; things like whether or not you eat, take a bath, go to work, get dressed etc. There are things within our control that we don't control but yet we are the only one who can; for example eating better, exercising, doing a meditation practice etc. Work on controlling those aspects of your life. Set reasonable and manageable goals; if you fail to meet your goals adjust them and remember it takes about 30 days to build a new habit. Be kind to yourself and practice self compassion. Encourage yourself like you would your best friend.

Think about a time when you tried to control someone else...it rarely works out well. No one likes to feel controlled. Often the reason we do try to control others is because their behavior causes us stress and so to reduce our stress we cajole or manipulate others to behave in ways that make us but usually not them feel better. A better way is to allow them their freewill and you yours. Learn to manage your own upsetness and free yourself.

I need you to remember that your body responds to what you think within fifteen seconds of holding a thought. Think about that and recognize the fact that you actually do control how you feel through the thoughts that you think. Choose to think about the people, places and activities you love that add peace and a sense of safety and hold those thoughts in your mind. As your holding the thoughts gently tap alternate thighs and explore using your senses (see what you can see, smell the smells you'd smell, feel the space on your body and listen to the sounds you'd hear in that space). Doing so works to help calm your nervous system and take your body out of survival mode. Do this exercise multiple times a day and begin to develop a daily practice.

Other things you could add to your practice of calming on purpose could include singing or humming aloud, shower with cool water (or just put a cold face clothe on your face), start a gratitude journal and remind yourself of the good things in your life rather than the worries. You could also make a list of the things you can do that you enjoy and pick something from the list and do it for yourself frequently (wellness tools might include walking, go for a drive, take a bath, call a friend, read, write, music, drinking your favorite tea or coffee etc.) Be kind to yourself and control what you can. Peace and Harmony requires us all to be personally responsible (the ability to respond to your personal needs and to the needs of those you are responsible for).

For more information go to www.carolshirley.ca or phone 902-495-3181.



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HRM MLAs and MPs Working Hard for YOU!

A Message from Darrell Samson, Member of Parliament for Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook

I hope everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving weekend!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for re-electing me as your Member of Parliament for another term. It is an absolute honour and a privilege to represent you in our nation's capital, and one that I never take lightly. In return of your support, I vow to continue working to advocate for all residents of this riding, whether on individual casework or championing projects that will better our many communities.

I would also like to thank the other candidates for putting their names on the ballot, as well as the many volunteers on all campaigns for your dedication to our electoral process.

Back to Work!

Now that the election is over, our government is already back to work. That includes promoting our programs to help young families get ahead, like the **Canada Child Benefit (CCB)** and **affordable housing** initiatives that were outlined in Budget 2021.

Another key measure will be subsidizing **Early Learning and Child Care** across the country. So far, we have signed agreements with eight provinces and territories, including Nova Scotia. This will see child care fees in those jurisdictions drop by 50% (on average) by the end of next year as a first step

toward **\$10/day** child care by 2026.

The benefits of Early Learning and Child Care are well known. Access to high-quality child care is a fundamental element of children's future academic success. It also promotes greater gender equality in the labour market, which includes improving and growing the female-dominated early childhood educator workforce.

Women's History Month

October is Women's History Month. This year's theme is **Women Making History Now**. It recognizes the amazing women who are making a lasting impact in our country, especially in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canada has so many historic women to be proud of, from historic figures like Jeanne Mace (Founder of Canada's first hospital) and Viola Desmond (civil rights activist) to modern examples like Roberta Bondar (first Canadian woman in space) and Réjane Laberge-Colas (the first women to serve on the supreme court).

I encourage everyone to take time this month to learn about our nation's historic women and to also reflect on the perseverance of the feminist movement in Canada.



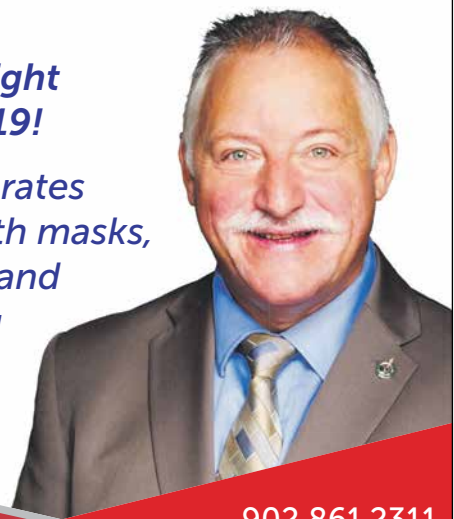
Roberta Bondar works at the International Microgravity Laboratory next to NASA astronaut Stephen Oswald aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery mission STS-42 on January 23, 1992 (NASA)



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Darrell.Samson@parl.gc.ca

A Message from Ali Duale, MLA

I would like to start this message by saying thank you. To all the supporters from the constituency who gave up their time to speak with me about ideas and issues in the community that need to be addressed, thank you. To those who assisted me through the campaign, promoting the values of diversity and inclusivity, thank you. To all those who continue to work in the community, that strive to make our neighbourhoods safe and welcoming to all, thank you. To my family, who have uplifted me and walked with me for every step of this journey, I thank you.

I humbly say to you now that this journey has just begun. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to represent the diverse riding of Halifax Armdale, and I promise that

I will not shy away from making sure your voices are heard.

Throughout this pandemic the people of Nova Scotia have proven that working together, hearing all sides of the story, is the most effective way to move forward in times of turmoil. Armdale is no exception to that. Moving forward I promise to hear as many perspectives on community issues as I can.

If I can ask one thing, it is that I want you to talk to me. I also encourage you to follow our social media pages for updates and important information on



Facebook and Twitter). I look forward to the future and to including the residents of Halifax Armdale in making Nova Scotia a better place to live.

Reach out to our office at (902) 943-1025 or by email at info@alidualemla.ca.

Facebook: @AliDuale-Hfx

Twitter: @Aliduale1



Hon. Patricia Arab
MLA, FAIRVIEW-CLAYTON PARK

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Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 4H9
902.329.8683
info@patriciaarab.ca
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HRM MLAs and MPs Working Hard for YOU!

A Message from Hon. Tim Halman MLA Dartmouth East

I'd first like to thank the residents of Dartmouth East for putting their trust in me again to be their representative in the Nova Scotia Legislature. Being able to serve my community in this way has been one of the greatest honours of my life.

I would also like to thank my family for their continued support. To Christine, Sophie, Emma, Ella and Christopher, thank you for everything. From knocking on doors and putting up election signs, to joining me at community events, I am so grateful for your love and support.

While this past election has brought change and presented new opportunities, my responsibility will always be to listen to the voices of the residents of Dartmouth East and to be their voice in the Legislature. With the next session beginning on October 12th, please let my office know if

there is anything on your mind.


I want to hear your thought—whether you agree or disagree with a piece of Legislation, or you have a concern, let me know. The staff at the Dartmouth East office, Lucie and Claire, will ensure that your message gets to me or that a meeting is scheduled so that we can chat. Let's work together to achieve the Nova Scotia of our dreams.

You can reach the Dartmouth East office through email, timhalmanmla@gmail.com or by calling (902) 469-7353.



Tim Halman
Member of the Legislative Assembly | Dartmouth East
902.469.7353 | timhalmanmla@gmail.com

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Tony Ince
MLA Cole Harbour-Portland Valley

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A Message from Suzy Hansen, MLA, Halifax Needham

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" — Nelson Mandela

Much of what I have done in life has revolved around kids and education. Throughout my children's lives I have held many roles at their school. It started with the Parent Teacher Association and School Advisory Council. I was so active in the school that I was elected as a school board member for HRSB. A few years later I was appointed by the education minister to sit on the Provincial advisory council on education for NS. Later I was involved with Phoenix Youth Services to support families and their young people to thrive by being a voice for social justice and community engagement.

Most recently I am grateful for the opportunity to have a seat in legislature to serve the constituents of Halifax Needham as their new MLA and to be the Education and Early Childhood Education Spokesperson for the NDP. I'm looking forward to working with the schools in my consti-



tuency of Halifax Needham and hearing the concerns raised by parents and guardians, as well as the staff and educators of Nova Scotia.

Feel free to reach out to me at (902) 455-7300 or by sending an email to suzyhalifaxneedham@gmail.com.



SUZY HANSEN
MLA for Halifax Needham

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FUN Places To Go!

My How Ye Olde Shoppe Hath Changed!

By Pete Cullen, Executive Director, Ross Farm Museum

Today if I can dream it up, I can go online and probably find someone to sell it to me. With a few clicks the item arrives on my doorstep only a few days or a week later (ideally). We don't see the back-end logistics of our shopping and many products originate around the world, with the supply side spread out over multiple countries!

Things were a little different when Edward Ross operated his little store here at Ross Farm back in the late 1830s. Nothing happened at the click of a button. Most necessities were produced in the community itself, so only manufactured dry goods and a few staples such as salt and gunpowder needed to be imported from Halifax. Edward would go on supply runs to "The City" every couple of months, sometimes taking two days to get there on foot and by sailboat. The whole trip might take two weeks!

He would spend a week or

ten days on the waterfront in Halifax, trading with some of the biggest merchant houses of the day. Manufactured items were often made in England, but from materials coming from other parts of the Empire. Having filled orders and purchased items he could sell in his little store, Edward headed for home. Arriving in Chester or Chester Basin, Edward would load his wares on an ox cart and head for Sherbrooke (today New Ross).

His arrival was an event! Only once every so often would community members have the opportunity to do some shopping right in their own village! There were fewer than 500 people in the settlement at the time. They would gather at Ross Farm to purchase new items and get paid for the raw materials they had sold to Halifax through Edward. He would spend all day stocking, trading and settling accounts.

Shopping itself was an

event! An occasion! Something to be saved up for and enjoyed with family and friends. Well, let's just say that it is a little different today. "Click".

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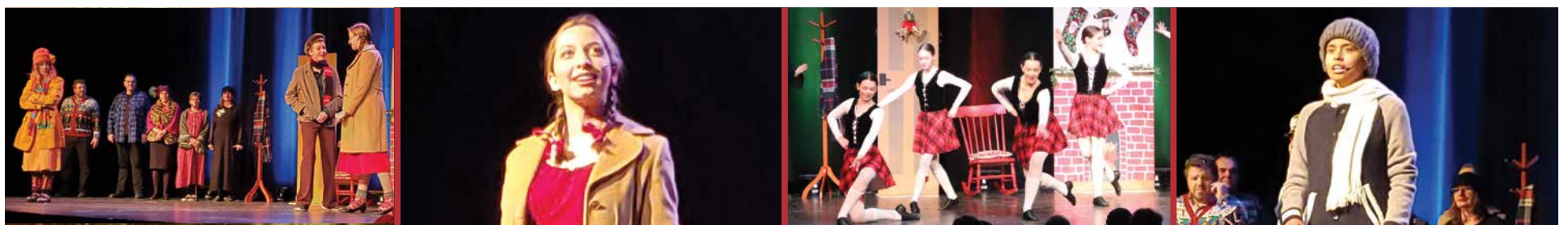
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Alzheimer's, Caregiving, and COVID-19

By Bayshore Home Health

Dementia is now widely recognized as one of the most significant health crises of the 21st century," says Alzheimer's Disease International. Around the world, 50 million people live with dementia; that number is expected to triple by 2050. In Canada, more than half a million people live with dementia; by 2031, it will be 1.4 million, says the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

About 61% of Canadians who have dementia live at home. Most have a caregiver, usually an adult child or spouse. The role of caregiver can be rewarding but also highly demanding, both physically and emotionally—and the COVID-19 pandemic has made caregiving more stressful and complicated.

As the pandemic stretches past its six-month mark, people with dementia and their caregivers continue to face several challenges, including:

- **Physical distancing:** Physical distancing reduces the risk of infection but also limits the social contact and supports that seniors and their caregivers rely on.
- **Safety precautions:** People with dementia may have difficulty understanding, remembering and following COVID-19 precautions such as hand-washing, mask wearing, and physical distancing.
- **Behavioural and emotional changes:** People with dementia may experience difficult feelings – such as stress, fear, confusion, frustration, agitation, or anxiety – as a result of the disruptions and challenges caused by COVID-19.

If you are struggling, it's important to seek support. Caregiver stress and burnout were common even before the pandemic struck, and practicing self-care is often challenging when looking after a loved one.


Talk to family members and friends to see if they

can pitch in—by preparing meals, picking up groceries, or socializing with your loved one by phone or video call.

Home health care also helps to ease the strain on family caregivers. Bayshore HealthCare provides quality home care services to individuals living with dementia. Our caregivers are trained and certified to provide dementia and Alzheimer's care at home, and they understand the complexities and techniques required for day-to-day support.

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Learn more at www.TwiceTheWild.ca. You can also contact Barbara Haley at 902-425-5263 or Barbara@nsnt.ca, or visit nsnt.ca.

Health & Wellness

Are you Missing Something?

By Dr. Sarah Davidson DDS, MSc (Ortho) FRCD (C),
Halifax Orthodontic Specialist Group



It's a big day when your child first notices a wiggly tooth. That they can finally free that little stub of a baby tooth from the mouth, place it carefully under their pillow and await the ever-exciting arrival of the tooth fairy is a bit of a rite of passage. But it doesn't happen that way for everyone.

The primary dentition (or baby teeth) is made up of twenty teeth that are very important in guiding the future permanent (or adult) teeth into the right spot. Those primary teeth are placeholders. All twenty teeth are expected to loosen and exfoliate to make way for the permanent teeth. However sometimes a primary tooth will not become loose as expected. In 5-6% of the population, one or more permanent teeth may be congenitally missing (or not present from birth.) This condition is called hypodontia. Hypodontia is associated with both genetic and environmental factors. Often a person with a missing tooth will know of someone in their family with the same experience. Missing teeth can occur in both the primary and permanent dentitions. When a tooth is missing in the primary dentition, there is a high probability that it will also be missing in

the permanent dentition. More surprisingly, when all of the primary teeth are present, it can be shocking for parents to learn that there is no permanent tooth to replace its predecessor.

So what happens if you suspect a missing tooth? Often parents may not even realize that there has been a disruption in the eruption pattern of the permanent teeth. Just like everyone gets their teeth at a different infant stage, so do young children lose their teeth at a range of ages. That said, there are still some general patterns for tooth loss and although the various teeth may be lost at different ages among peers, the pattern is quite consistent. Your family dentist will monitor your child's tooth loss pattern but often the first sign of a missing tooth is in a screening radiograph (x-ray) that may be taken at your early orthodontic screening appointment. One of the reasons for an early orthodontic screening at age 7-8 is that by that age, all of the permanent teeth should be visible and accounted for on the radiograph. With this early diagnosis, there are more options with how to deal with a potential missing tooth or teeth.

Unfortunately at this time there is no way to

regenerate a missing tooth. The closest thing we have is a dental implant, which can replace a single missing tooth without impacting the teeth on either side. Other options include bridges which "suspend" a tooth in the empty spot, or partial dentures. Orthodontics is an important part of treatment for missing teeth. An orthodontist can assess a primary tooth to evaluate the root to help determine how long a retained primary tooth may last. Some primary teeth can be maintained for many, many years without replacement. Another option with orthodontics is closing space for a congenitally missing tooth. This can be made easier with early diagnosis as careful planning is important in these cases.

Although hypodontia is rare, it does exist in our

population and can be a stressful finding for unsuspecting parents. Early diagnosis is the key to having the greatest treatment options available.

Dr. Sarah Davidson

is a Board-Certified Orthodontic Specialist with the Halifax Orthodontic Specialist Group. She is a co-owner of The Brace Space in Bedford (Larry Uteck), The Brace Space (Sackville) and Stuart &

Davidson Orthodontics in Dartmouth, offering conventional braces Lifestance and Invisalign for children, teens and adults. For more information, contact (902) 455-7222 or (902) 252-7222.

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Education

How Can Students Stop Procrastinating?

Submitted by Oxford Learning

Procrastination is a habit that every student struggles with at some point. But beating student procrastination isn't impossible!

Procrastination can have many negative impacts on students, including poor performance, lowered grades, and increased stress. These consequences can snowball quickly, leading to a cycle of poor grades and low self-confidence that can be hard for students to break out of.

Whether it's homework assignments or studying for upcoming tests—it's time to help your child beat the procrastination problem.

The first step toward helping your child stop putting off school work is understanding why students procrastinate. Many parents may feel that their child is lazy or just doesn't care—but that usually isn't the

case. Procrastination is commonly a sign of a deeper issue.

If your child struggles with procrastination, there are things you can do to help get him or her back on track to better grades (and less stress about school).

1. Start Small

Don't: Tackle Everything at One

Do: Break projects into smaller tasks. If your child is working on a big task, help them break it down into smaller pieces that can be tackled individually. This will help make the task more manageable and less overwhelming so your child is able to get started.

2. Set Goals

Don't: Start projects without knowing what the goal is

Do: Break down the task and help your child set specific goals such as completing a certain

amount of the assignment by a particular date. Having goals to work toward will help give your child a clearer path to completing a project.

3. Don't Overthink It

Don't: Stress about the "what ifs" (ex., "What if I get a bad mark?")

Do: Stressing about a task can make it seem more daunting than it actually is. This makes it even harder to get started. Before your child starts, have him or her get out all of his or her concerns about the project. Once these are written down, talk to your child about a strategy to overcome each concern.

4. Remove Distractions

Don't: Let distractions steal the focus.

Do: Create a space that is just for school work. This space should be free from distractions like clutter, television, cell

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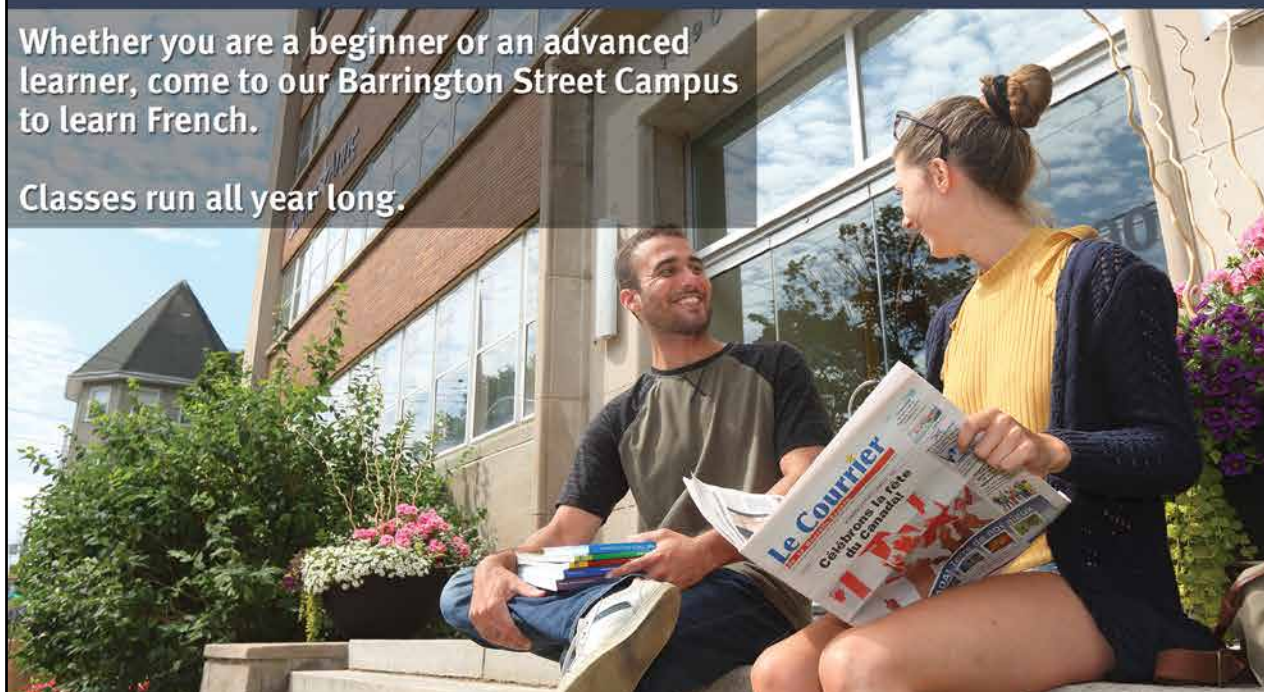
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Education

Teaching Children Through Their Interests

By Angie White, The Growing Place

As most families are aware, our Early Years Department follow an Emergent, Play Based, Child Led curriculum. This has many benefits for children and can create a more positive learning environment for them.

Children learn through play. This has been something that has been researched and proven for many years. It is how we teach the little ones in our care through the day. Children will show you what they are interested in, whether it is construction, dinosaurs, house, cars, animals, etc. We, as Educators, create a program to incorporate their interests. Many of our activities are carefully thought out with a goal in mind to teach them. For example, they show an interest in cars. It is a very broad area and so much can be taught. One activity our classes enjoy is laying out a large piece of paper and putting different color paint on it and placing cars on it. We then leave it for the children to do their thing and observe what they do with it. Most will drive the cars through it creating tracks and mixing colors. This gives us opportunity to talk to them about sizes of the tracks, the textures

of the tracks, the colors mixing and what new colors are being created. This will fall under the teaching of Math and Science. Other things the children will learn is fine motor, gross motor, literacy, and social skills. Just this one simple activity can teach so much and can be done with anything the children are interested in. Can you imagine what they learn when doing multiple activities throughout their day?

Activities don't have to be big and complex; children love simple activities that they can go between when it piques their interest. So, when you think your child just plays all day while at daycare, look further and think about what they are learning while playing. You will be amazed what these tiny humans know.

Angie is currently our Assistant Director at The Growing Place (Pleasant Street location). She also serves as Inclusion co-ordinator where she specializes in supporting children with special needs in our classrooms, as well as offering support to families. Angie is also our Arts and Crafts expert and is an endless creative resource for our classrooms.

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continued from pg 15

phones, and other family members or activities so your child can focus on his or her assignments.

5. Stick to a Schedule

Don't: Make a habit of thinking "I'll do it later"

Do: Create a schedule that includes the due dates of any upcoming assignments. Help your child schedule a time to work on projects and set deadlines to work toward.

6. Take Breaks

Don't: Allow study breaks to turn into procrastination traps

Do: take study breaks the right way. Avoid checking in on social media or text messages—these can steal focus, with 10 minutes quickly turning into an hour. Instead, encourage your child to use a 5-10 minute study break to stretch or go outside for a walk before getting back to work.

7. Keep the List Short

Don't: Start too many things at once and end up with lots of half-started tasks

Do: Complete a task (or as much of a task as possible) before starting a new one. This will help your child avoid feeling overwhelmed by working on too many tasks at once. A study sched-

ule will help here as well, outlining exactly what your child should be working on and when.

8. Adjust Expectations

Don't: Expect to be perfect

Do: It's ok not to be perfect—the goal of any project is to do your best and learn from any mistakes you make so you can get a little better each time.

9. Boost Motivation

Don't: Dwell on not wanting to do a task

Do: Provide motivators when your child hits a milestone such as meeting a deadline or completing a project. This could include words of praise and encouragement for your child or a special treat.

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Education

Giving Goes Beyond Thanksgiving

By Chris Parsons, Award-winning Author of *A Little Spark*

As the fall season commences, many of us are entering a season of "super thankfulness." Obviously, we should teach our children to be thankful all year long, but it's so much easier during the holiday season. And besides a time of thankfulness, the holidays are a perfect time to teach our children how they can be a blessing to others—how they can "Be That Spark" every day. Here are a few ideas to teach those lessons to your children this harvest season. I hope you'll take these lessons and stretch them out to last all year long. After all, Giving Goes Beyond Thanksgiving!

Start by reminding your children that even the smallest among them can make a big difference in the world. Children doing good deeds is one of the most heartwarming things you'll ever see, so why not encourage your children to be that spark for the people around them? But keep in mind that children will often get cold feet when push comes to shove, so practice with them in advance of the "big day." Do some role-playing with them, going over the different experiences they might encounter while doing their good deeds.

In the book *A Little Spark*, Spark risked his life to help his town. We don't necessarily need to go that far (although some of us might do that someday), but we can take risks. These risks might be big things or small things. And what's big

to one person will be nothing major to someone else. For example, a child (especially a teen) might need to risk their popularity among their peers in order to keep their reputation unblemished and do what they think is right.

This idea came from an 8-year-old girl. She says that caring for other people is a great way to Be That Spark, and I have to agree! Little things can make a big difference in the lives of other people, especially people who may not see those "little sparks" very often—older people, kids who don't have many friends, etc. Teach your kids to do one good thing each day. These can be bigger things like taking the time to write and send a letter to a friend, calling a family member you haven't seen or spoken to in a long time (especially appropriate in the age of COVID), helping your parent to make dinner, or helping friends and siblings with their homework. Or it could be something as small as smiling at a stranger in the grocery store or holding the door for someone as you enter or leave a restaurant.

What's most important, though, is to make sure kids understand that each one of them can Be That Spark in whatever environment they are in. And they don't (always) need a grownup to tell them to do something kind—they can do it all on their own.

There have been many studies over the

years about different types of gratitude. I'm not going to get overly deep in this article, but I do want to focus on two of the main types: concrete and connective.

The best way to teach these lessons is by practicing them ourselves. Parents, if you are not regularly increasing your own positive emotions through the practice of fully appreciating, how can possibly expect your kids to begin? Monkey see, monkey do, after all. Within this, though, keep in mind the age and emotional level of your children. A 2-year-old won't have the same way of showing gratitude as an 8-year-old. In the earlier years, focus on concrete gratitude. This is what is commonly known as "manners"—an automatic statement of "Thank you" when something is received. When spoken by a child to an adult, these simple words often make the giver feel like they've been given a gift all their own, and it's so easy for a child to give a statement of gratitude.

As children age and mature, they should begin to show connective gratitude. This is a fully understood and appreciated receipt of whatever has been given. The appreciation is returned in a meaningful and heartfelt way, benefiting both receiver and giver. This simply means that there is a repayment of some sort. This can be an actual repayment of something of value, or the giving of sincere feelings—becoming (or staying) close friends.

For gratitude to be an effective way to increase happiness, it must be felt, and connective gratitude is the key.

Teaching kids about gratitude is an important job. Start by asking what they know about the subject. Once you understand what your kids know, it will be easier to find a starting point on the instruction. Children's understanding of positive emotions can be a challenging

conversation, as they are abstract and subjective. Gratitude is about focusing on what is good in our lives. Being thankful for all the things we already have is a daily practice.

Showing a child gratitude in practice is the most powerful way to reinforce the definition. When your child does something for you (even if you may not truly appreciate it—hello, dandelion bouquets!), show true gratitude. While the gift may not be something you adore, the mindset behind it is.

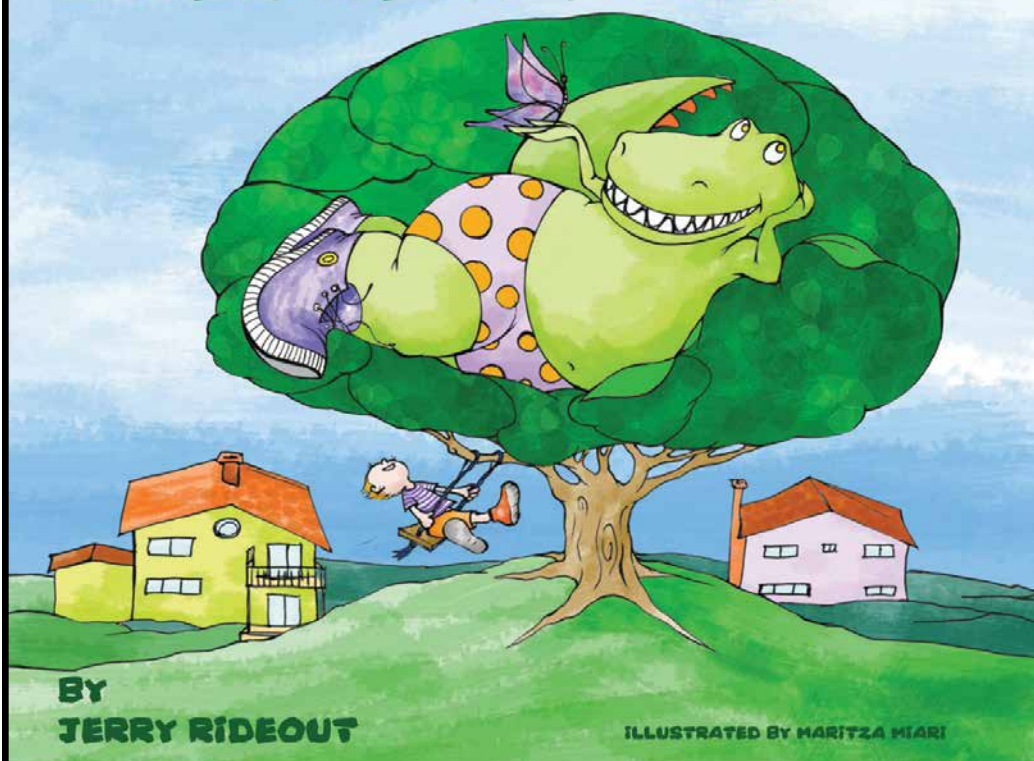
Take the time to demonstrate what it means to pause and appreciate the things we take for granted. Reveal what it is to be fully aware of your own blessings. Help them imagine what it would be like to live without things we deem necessary in the modern world: running water, electricity, Wi-Fi.

Developing an awareness of what is good is simple enough when you give this perspective often. Clean water, refrigeration, and a roof over our heads are all things not provided to all humans and can be appreciated more when the focus is on blessings. Modeling daily gratitude with consistency will instill an understanding that gratitude is a positive emotion that can be cultivated. And isn't that what we all want for our children?

Originally from a small fishing community in Newfoundland and surrounded by storytellers, award-winning author Chris Parsons started creating his own children's stories when he became a father. Today, he is focused on creating new, meaningful experiences for children on bethatspark.com. His book, *A Little Spark*, is available on Amazon. Chris also is a contributing writer to many US-based parenting sites.



A DINOSAUR LIVES NEXT DOOR



BY
JERRY RIDEOUT

ILLUSTRATED BY MARITZA MIARI

A story about the friendship between a boy and a dinosaur

When author Jerry Rideout's children were little, they would sometimes say things that were interesting, sometimes eye opening, and sometimes funny. Several of those circumstances prompted him to describe them in the form of kid's songs. Since Jerry retired and now has a grandchild, he decided to reinvent the songs in the form of illustrated stories.

A Dinosaur Lives Next Door resulted from an incident that took place when Jerry's oldest son was in grade one. Jerry's son came home one day after school and announced that he had seen a dinosaur in the neighbour's yard. This story is about what may have taken place had the event actually happened.

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CRAFT CORNER

All You Need are Pine Cones...

By Jenny Joan Larisey, Craft Consultant for Maritime Hobbies Crafts



Fall is calling for a wilderness adventure and I'm ready! Taking a stroll in wooded areas this time of year is like a treasure hunt for holiday decorations.

Pine cones are one of the most useful items for dozens of winter decorations both indoors and out. If you are gathering your own pine cones to use the most important step is to prepare them so they'll be clean, fully dried, de-sapped and de-bugged.

To start you'll need to clean the cones. Soak them in one part water, one part vinegar for about 30 minutes. Avoid leaving them in for a long time so they do not fully close up.

Rinse the pine cones and let them drain out in a strainer for a few minutes.

Next you'll want the pine cones to dry and open up to their fill decorative shape.

Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with aluminum foil and spread pine cones across it in a single layer. Put the pine cones in the oven for 30 minutes to an hour, keeping an eye on them until the cones are fully opened and any excess sap has melted off. Do not leave the oven unsupervised during this time and be alert for smoke or fire. This drying process will kill any bugs and melt the sap due to the heat.

This year I wanted to try making pine cone bird feeders. During the cold winter months food sources are tough to come by for wild birds and with just a little help you can create a feast for them to get through those cold months.

All you need are some clean pine cones, wild bird seed string and a source of fat such as pea-nut butter, lard or a vegetable lard

substitute. Birds need high levels of saturated fat to help sustain them during the cold months.

Start by tying a string securely to the top of your pine cone. Next you will cover the cone in the fat source of your choice and then roll it in the birdseed until fully covered. Hang these decorative feeders out for the birds to feast on all winter long, preferably near a window so you can cozy up and keep track of all the beautiful birds that swing by.

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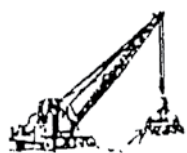
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