

# The Parent Page



WINTER 2012



## Through the Eyes of a Child

by Kim Atkinson

Jeremy is running. His arms swoop up and down and his fingers on both hands are poised precisely. He is making interesting electronic noises and is systematically bashing into every other 3 year old on the playground. He leaves behind him a trail of children looking surprised and bewildered.

4 year old Sally and Alexa bustle around the dramatic play area, setting out dishes, putting wooden food on plates, and propping up dolls in highchairs. As they clang spoons and pots on the stove, Bea walks in and sits at the table. Sally glances at Bea and in a loud voice says to Alexa "We're the only moms right? No one else can play here, right? You're not allowed here Bea."

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*"Your community's best source of  
child care information and resources"*

Yikes! As parents and educators we often witness scenarios like this. How to react?

Our initial response is likely emotional and comes from deep in our gut. But those emotions surging from the deep will be different for all of us. If you are the parent of the 'wronged' child you will likely view this differently than if you are the parent of the 'hurtful' child. You may recall an instance where you excluded someone or were excluded yourself or you might have been the brunt of physical aggression. Your values, your beliefs about children, your culture, your past experience, all will influence how you view these situations. And then the kicker: how you view the situation will influence how you deal with it.

So what to do with the basher and the excluder? For the moment, nothing. Keep your hands in your pockets and your mouth clenched shut and give yourself a quick self reflection check list: How am I reacting to this? Why is that? Is my reaction really about the children, or is it more about me?

Now, with your hands still in your pocket and your mouth still firmly clenched, ask yourself these questions: What might be going on inside the mind of the child? What might she be trying to achieve?

Checking in with Jeremy "the basher" revealed that he was completely absorbed in a complex fantastical story in which he was a spaceship who needed to touch down on all the planets. When it was pointed out to him that those planets were in fact children and they were being hurt, Jeremy was baffled. He had not intended to hurt them, in his mind they were merely props.

Closer observation of Sally in the house area told a story of emerging friendships. Sally had been wanting to play with Alexa for days, trying hard to engage her. Today it had worked, and Sally was thrilled. By entering the play area Bea threatened the possibility of friendship and Sally was desperate to save it.

Early Childhood Educator and author Deb Curtis puts it succinctly when she says "Meet up with children's minds — not their behaviour" When we put aside our

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initial gut reaction to a behaviour and open our minds to the child's perspective, we open possibilities of knowing that child in a more authentic way.

At the hand washing tub 3 year old Kayla is washing paint off her fingers, swirling her hands through the warm soapy water. A moment later Jayden joins her, and they dip a paper towel gingerly into the bubbles. When I glance over again Kayla and Jayden are scrubbing the wall with dripping paper towels. Soap bubbles stream down the wall and puddle on the floor. The two girls are concentrating, and methodically apply bubbles to the wall over and over.

While the behaviour of putting water all over the wall might not be desirable, recognizing what might be going on in the minds of the girls isn't too hard. We can imagine the delight of discovering bubbles, watching them reflect the light and then pop, the texture of wet paper towels, the beauty of cascading water, the joy of a companion.

Pausing to look beyond behaviour brings with it a new appreciation for the complex thinking of children. Putting aside our adult perspective and spending some time in careful observation or engaging in thoughtful dialogue (in which you listen more than talk) can transform how you see a child.

Scissors are common in every preschool program and in the bustle of my day I pay them scant attention (unless I notice them hovering near an extended clump of hair). But one day I sat down with my camera and took photos of 3 year olds grappling with paper and the mechanics of making scissors cut. Looking at the pictures later I saw so much more than I expected. The children were clearly not 'just playing'. They were entirely focused, concentrating on all the intricacies of the task: Which fingers go in which holes? Once the blades are open, how do you close them? Does it work to have your palm up? Or down? How do you keep the paper between the blades? Their faces are serious, intent.

A remarkable thing happens when you begin "meeting children's minds." Ordinary moments of children's play suddenly become fascinating. Painting becomes an investigation of texture, colour, quantity and consistency. Zooming cars on the floor becomes an experiment with speed and a dramatic narrative. Even the inevitable conflicts show us how a child is thinking, provided we are ready to listen.

Putting aside our adult agenda, our emotional gut reactions, our somewhat rigid perspective of what is "right" and stopping for a moment to consider the child's perspective can change the way we see children. If we can think about what a child is trying to achieve, how she may be thinking, we can respond in a way that highlights the strengths of that child.

Flying a spaceship is exhilarating, making a new friend feels wonderful, and experiencing bubbles is a beautiful thing. It's all about perspective.

*Printed with the permission of Kim Atkinson who has been an Early Childhood Educator for over 25 years. Currently she is Co-Coordinator of the Images of Learning Project and a Pedagogical Facilitator for the University of Victoria Unit for Early Years Research and Development.*

BC Housing

## Rental Assistance Program

The Rental Assistance Program provides eligible low-income, working families with cash assistance to help with their monthly rent payment.

To qualify, families must have a gross household income of \$35,000 or less, have at least one dependent child, and have been employed at some point over the last year.

To apply visit [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org)

## New Child Restraint Regulations

Beginning January 1, 2012 all child restraints sold or manufactured in Canada must conform to new regulations, making the Canadian standards for child car seat safety world-leading.

Replace your existing car seat if it was involved in a collision, is torn, damaged or is expired. If you are not able to find an expiry date, visit Transport Canada's website at [www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety](http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety) or contact the car seat manufacturer.

*Terry Fox Library*

## Family Christmas Special

**Wednesday, December 7– 6:45–7:15 pm**

Kids of all ages are invited to celebrate the season with a night of festive family fun! Enjoy stories, sing carols and help decorate the library Christmas tree. Seasonal goodies will be served. Drop in.

## Babytime

**Mondays, February 14–March 7– 10:15 -10:40 am**

*Free Registration begins January 31, 2012*

Bring your baby, newborn to 12 months, to the library and discover the pleasure of reading stories nursery rhymes and songs with them.

**Terry Fox Library**  
**2470 Maryhill Road, Port Coquitlam**  
Please call 604.927.7999 to register.

## Budget Gourmet

**February 13, 20, 27 & March 5**  
**12:00 to 2:30 pm**

**The Heritage Room at Place Maillardville**  
**1200 Cartier Avenue, Coquitlam**

Budget, prepare and eat agreed upon menus. Attention is given to financially challenged families and much of the program is designed around cooking on a limited budget and utilizing groceries received from local Food Banks. To register, please contact Jan Waldbillig, Community Development Coordinator, Westcoast Family Service at 604.254.5457 or email [j.waldbillig@westcoastfamily.org](mailto:j.waldbillig@westcoastfamily.org) Free.

## Parents' Night Out

Parents' Night Out are free parent information sessions that focus on current and emerging topics. The evenings are from 7pm to 9pm and open to all parents/caregivers in New Westminister. Light refreshments and child minding will be provided.

**Helping Kids Navigate Anxiety** Hosted by Ecole Glenbrook Middle school, on January 19th  
Is your child struggling to cope with the demands of home, school and friends? This session will touch on certain aspects of anxiety with some tips for parents.

**Internet & Social Media Awareness** Hosted by Queensborough Middle school, on February 15th.  
Listen to guest speakers as they discuss the concerns of social media and how it's affecting our kids.

For more information call Dan Kalivoda District Community School Coordinator: 604.517.5995.

*S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Multicultural Early Childhood Development Project and Coquitlam Public Library present*

## The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program in Cantonese

This program is offered to Cantonese-speaking families with children 18 months to 3 years old.

The Mother Goose Program provides songs, finger plays, bounces and tickles. Parents and children will be learning through repetition, in a comfortable environment.

**When:** Begins on December 5, 2011

**Time:** 10:30 am to 12:00 pm

**Location:** Coquitlam Library, City Centre Branch 3001 Burlington Drive, Coquitlam

To register, please call Ada Sin at 604.408.6002 or email [ada.sin@success.bc.ca](mailto:ada.sin@success.bc.ca), or contact Shirley at 604.937.3221.

*New Westminister Family Place presents*

## Nobody's Perfect

Nobody's Perfect Parenting program is for parents of children aged 0-5 years. This program runs for 6 consecutive Thursdays from 1:30–3:30 p.m. Childminding is provided on site while you take the program.

**When:** January 5–February 9, 2012 *or*  
February 23–March 29, 2012

**Time:** 1:30 pm–3:30 pm

**Location:** 101-93 Sixth Street, New Westminister

Pre-registration is required. Please call 604-520-3666 for additional information, or visit [www.nwfamily.bc.ca](http://www.nwfamily.bc.ca)

*Family Services of Greater Vancouver*

## New Westminister Single Mothers' Support Group

Single mothers are welcome to join in this 'drop-in' informal, friendly setting. Discussions take place on parenting and other issues of interest. Child care for children 6 years and under is provided on the premises

Sessions are held weekly at 101-93 Sixth Street, New Westminister.

For additional information contact New Westminister Single Mother Support Group Program Family Services of Greater Vancouver at 604.525.9144 or visit [www.fsgv.ca](http://www.fsgv.ca)

# Family Fun!

## Heritage Christmas 2011

**Burnaby Village Museum**  
**November 26–Jan 1, 2012**  
**6501 Deer Lake Avenue, Burnaby**

Enjoy the boughs, red bows and all the other old-fashioned ornaments and decorations throughout the village and farmhouse. The season features traditional entertainment, demonstrations, hands-on activities and exhibits from the early 1900s. Always popular with children is a chat with Father Christmas.

For a complete list of dates, times and scheduled events visit [www.burnabyvillagemuseum.ca](http://www.burnabyvillagemuseum.ca)



## Carol Ships Parade of Lights

**Friday, December 16**

**Barnet Marine Park–Burnaby, 8:00 pm**

**Reed Point Marina–Port Moody, 8:35 pm**

Watch the flotilla of carol ships sail past. View the Carol Ships from the shore and enjoy the parade of ships decorated with more than 100,000 lights.

[www.carolships.org](http://www.carolships.org)

## CP Rail Holiday Train

*Making a Difference, One Stop at a Time*

**Saturday, December 17**

**5:45 pm**

**Queen Street @ Clark Avenue, Port Moody**

The Canadian Pacific Holiday Train hits the rails again in November, visiting over 140 communities.

The goal of the Holiday Train is to collect food and money for local food banks and to raise awareness in the fight against hunger. Donations accepted for local food banks. There is a line up of great musical talents that will perform beginning approximately 10 minutes after arriving.

[www.cprail.ca](http://www.cprail.ca)

## Community Banner Painting Festival

**January 21–21, 2012**

**11:30 am–4:30 pm**

**Galleria–Civic Centre**

**100 Newport Drive, Port Moody**

Local artists and Port Moody residents paint colourful community-designed banners that line major Port Moody streets come springtime. Come see the artists painting their banners, or volunteer to paint a banner yourself.

For more information please contact the Public Art Coordinator at 604.469.4605 or email [publicart@cityofhearts.ca](mailto:publicart@cityofhearts.ca)

## Jan Ken Pon! Family Games Day!

**Saturday, March 17, 2012**

**1:00 to 4:00 pm**

**National Nikkei Museum & Heritage Centre**

**6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby**

*\$5 for children over 2 years old.*

Experience over twenty traditional Japanese heritage games and toys at this annual event. Children can play with colourful tops and a Japanese style cup & ball.

The highlight of the day is a rock, paper, scissors tournament (Jan Ken Pon) with prizes. Old Japanese heritage toys will also be on display. Suitable for children aged 4 to 12. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

For additional information call 604.777.7000 or visit [www.nikkeiplace.org](http://www.nikkeiplace.org)

