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A Newsletter for Greenwich Parents of Adolescents ©  
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## “Where’s My Math Book?”

### Organizational Tips for School Success

by Meg Drake, MA, MA

**A**LL OF GEORGE’S TEACHERS love him. He is an active participant in class and always seems to understand the material. A junior in High School, he plans to go to college to study writing. George has a wonderful imagination and loves to tell larger-than-life stories. He has a wide circle of friends and is popular with both boys and girls as he is energetic and enthusiastic and he cares about the small stuff. But, behind the scenes, George is falling apart. He can’t find his homework even though he spent time on it the night before. His book bag is a mess and contains essential material as well as last week’s sandwich. George keeps his daily assignments in his head long enough to walk out of the classroom but he can’t remember the details by the time he gets home, necessitating a phone call to a friend. He does his homework on his computer in his room. Sitting on his bed he works on his laptop and he will often forget to pick up his assignment from the printer.

Despite his lack of organization, George is smart enough to get by in his classes. But George’s parents are worried that, when he goes off to college, he will fail because no one will be after him to keep him together.

Graham’s teachers describe him as a team player. A student in the seventh grade, he learned early on that, in order to do well at school, he needed to be organized. Graham’s friends depend on him to know the daily schedule and

the list of homework assignments. He prefers to keep his school subjects organized by color. Math is red because it is hard for him and Language Arts is blue because it is his favorite color and his favorite subject. He keeps his daily papers in folders that he can recognize in his book bag quickly so he can hand in his homework on time. Graham knows that he is not able to study for a big test in one night so he starts studying earlier than some of his peers.

School can be challenging for Graham. He often has to spend more time studying but he uses a system that works for him. He uses a lot of index cards and asks his parents to drill him on a regular basis. He can’t wait to get a laptop so he can keep his stuff organized on the computer.

Perhaps you have a child exactly like George or Graham. Or perhaps you see similar traits of each of them in your own child. If you have a child like George you may have already approached the school to ask about help with organization. Whatever the case, discussions with educators suggest that organization, time management and planning skills may be crucial for success. In some situations, a child who does not have a clear set of routines for completing school tasks is hindered even if the child possesses all of the necessary knowledge for the tasks.

There are many ways that children

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learn to organize their materials, time, and actions. Some may learn by watching others and others may gain the skills by being told what methods to use. A subset of children may need to receive direct instruction and practice in order to adopt effective routines.

Recently, *Parents Together* asked Learning Specialist Meg Drake to offer some organizational strategies and tips for parents.

### Preparation

The first step in becoming an organized student is to make a trip to the store for basic supplies. While every teacher has specific requirements for folders and binders, it is important for students to pick out items in colors that are appealing to them so they will enjoy using them. Subjects can easily be categorized by colors, so have your child choose binders, folders and spiral notebooks that can be color coordinated. That way each subject is easily identified for quick access. Encourage your child to pick out the cool “tools” that he will enjoy using - pencils, pens, erasers are often available with jazzy designs and special features which can make using them more fun.

Easy access to these tools ensures that students will be prepared, so don't forget the pencil case.

To minimize the weight of a child's backpack, it may be necessary to have a set of tools at school and a duplicate set at home. A duplicate set of heavy textbooks is especially useful to keep at home instead of lugging back and forth and minimizes the chance of forgetting them for an important test or assignment.

Student planners are key tools for success. It is important for students to

learn to plot out longer assignments and to keep track of their work through the use of a planner. Starting in the fourth grade, students should begin to keep track of their assignments even if they can remember without writing it down. Keeping lists and writing down key dates are skills that we all need as adults. If children learn to use a planner early on, they will adapt this skill to the increasing demands of school as the years go by. My preference is the AT A GLANCE® teacher plan books that have a week on two pages with the days lined up on the top and subject spaces on the left. This type of planner has plenty of space to include extra subjects and special note space for reminders.

Structure at home for doing homework is essential in teaching children to be organized. Students should have their own special space for doing their homework that they know will be the same way they left it the day before. Doing homework in the kitchen is not recommended. While some younger children may need to be monitored during the completion of their homework, the kitchen is too busy. Students need to learn that they are in charge of their own desk supplies and need their own space to keep all their tools together, so they do

not have to get up to get anything once they settle in. Each student's desk should be organized and supplies should be assigned a place. Extra paper, index cards, Post-its™,

staples, pencils, pens, paper clips, rubber bands, glue, tape, White Out™, highlighters, etc. should all have their own home in a desk. Children should determine their own preferences for locations, but once the decision is made, that home is permanent and can be relied on. The point is to teach children that if items have homes, they

can always be found there. Just as you put your keys in one place everyday and therefore can find them easily on the way out to the car, a child needs to learn to assign a convenient location to find her things.

Time for doing homework should be regularly scheduled and adhered to. For example, if dinner is served at 6:00 PM, quiet time for homework can follow, which minimizes distractions. Everyone in the house can benefit from quiet time. If homework is finished before the allotted time is over, quiet reading can fill in. Consistency is the operative factor in creating a quiet time in any household. Once the routine is set, children will come to expect it and rely on the time to get their work done.

A common problem for students is making sure their homework gets transported back to school and handed in on time. Using a homework folder with two pockets labeled TO DO and DONE to carry work back and forth is the easiest plan for younger students. As the homework load increases, several folders may be needed, one for each subject. Whatever method is used, it should be decided upon in the beginning of the year and adhered to so that each student can develop a system that they can rely on throughout the year.

To ensure a less stressful beginning of the day, a little time spent the night before preparing for the following day can make a huge difference. Some children have difficulty figuring out what to wear to school, which can take up extraordinary amounts of time in the morning. Outfits should be decided upon the night before school and be ready to wear in the morning. The act of pulling the clothing out of the drawer or closet forces your child to make a choice. That choice is what takes the time in the morning.

When your child's homework is finished, it should be packed up and put back into the backpack before going to bed. A checklist is often helpful for some children to be sure that everything is put into the pack.

Structure at home for doing homework is essential in teaching children to be organized.

Sometimes a checklist for each day is helpful to remind children of special instrument lessons or after school activities. A magnetic weekly calendar in a student's room listing the special activities day by day can be a helpful tool for a child to develop the independence they need to be prepared. (BoardDudes.com or 1-800-521-4332) Creating an individualized checklist to attach to a backpack or to place on a visible doorway can be helpful reminders of the day's requirements.

Children who bring their own lunch to school have an extra item to be in charge of. For families with multiple lunches, it can be fun to assign the role of lunch chef to each sibling on a rotating basis. The role of the lunch chef is to prepare as much of the lunch the night before as possible. Sandwiches can be the final item inserted into each lunch bag in the morning.

## Study Skills

The key to being a successful student is to be organized. While learning styles may differ, organization is the bottom line in reaping the rewards of success. Using flashcards can be helpful to students of all ages and can be used in every subject area. The simple act of making the cards is one way to assimilate information; the repetition drill ensures access into long-term memory banks. Broader concepts in content areas can also be put on flashcards and even ordered into a sequence if necessary. To ensure that the cards do not get scattered on the bottom of a backpack, purchase index card boxes and label them accordingly. That way they can easily be transported back and forth to school or kept securely at a student's desk. Long-term storage of flashcards is especially helpful for those students who take mid-term and final exams. Once the flashcards are made they can be stored for future use.

While students in public schools are loaned the books they need to read for

English classes, they are limited because they are not permitted to annotate the text. In this case, taking notes on a separate piece of paper can be laborious and time consuming. I suggest purchasing one's own copy of the novels read in English class so that students can practice annotating their own texts. Taking notes in the margins and underlining important quotes as they read is an efficient way to prepare for the anticipated essay that is often assigned. If paragraphs and passages are marked, less time is needed to find appropriate quotes to support students' writing, not to mention the fact that it allows students to be more prepared for class discussions on a daily basis. Post-it™ notes and tabs are especially useful in marking pages in a text and are readily available.

Making up rhymes and using mnemonic devices can be a fun way to help students remember how to spell a word, remember a concept, or memorize a math fact. To this day I teach some students how to spell the word BECAUSE the way I was taught: **Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants!!** To remind a student the difference between the homonyms **stationary and stationery** I point out that the word that refers to paper has an E that stands for envelopes. Catchy phrases and fun rhymes can make a lasting impression on a learner!

The most important skill in teaching students to be organized is time management. Studying for a major test in one night is not productive. The process for preparing for a test should begin with collecting all the relevant materials, which can take a long time if studying for a mid term or final exam. The review of the material should be repetitious and systematic. To simply

read through the material to be tested is not enough. It is important for children to be able to *recognize* the correct answer and to *recall* the correct answer, which is an entirely different process.

A *recognition* task simply means that the information is visually understood. It does not ensure that the information is stored in their memory bank. For example, in a multiple-choice

The most important skill in teaching students to be organized is time management.

format, one can find the correct definition of the word given a choice, (recognition task). To write one's own definition of a word is a much more difficult task, (recall task). In preparing for a test, it is sometimes helpful to make up a preparation test. While reviewing the material, questions can be generated and answered in writing. A student is then able to assess to what degree the material is mastered and can go back to study information that was more difficult to recall on the prep test. Further, these preparation tests can be accumulated for future use on mid term and final exams.

Time management does not only apply to long-term assignments. A daily homework routine has time management demands as well. The toughest assignments should be attacked first to ensure that students have used the freshest reserve of brainpower. Time consuming projects can be divided up into smaller segments and completed day by day. Time should be allotted for planning and brainstorming ideas, which lessens the time necessary to execute an essay or a creative project. Prioritizing one's daily routine is an essential step necessary on the path to success.



For a list of Resources see page 7.

*Co-Chairman of Parents Together, Meg Drake is a Learning Specialist in private practice. She lives in Old Greenwich and can be reached at mwdrake@aol.com.*

# Ten Mental Health Myths

## About Children

by Kevin Kalikow, MD

**YOUR CHILD IS HURTING.** You need to do something, but you're not sure what. Your first goal is to get accurate information about the psychiatric disorders of childhood and their treatment. The following are 10 common myths and what you need to know.

### 1. Children are too young to have psychiatric disorders.

**No.** Many years ago it was thought that children were too young to have disorders, such as Depression. Although we have much to learn about the psychiatric disorders of children, researchers have shown that children can suffer with disorders such as Depression and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Illnesses, such as Bipolar Disorder, also occur in children, but their exact presentation is the subject of debate among physicians.

### 2. Anyone can have a little bit of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

**No.** We all have characteristics that make us who we are. Some of us are a bit more fidgety and others more slow moving. Some are fastidious and others are a mess. But, for those with a disorder, the characteristic has become a symptom, something that significantly interferes with the person's life.

### 3. Children get addicted to psychiatric medicine.

**No.** While some of the medicines used in psychiatry, such as the stimulants, like Ritalin, or the anti-anxiety medicines, like Xanax, are addictive when used at doses that are higher than normally used by physicians, the responsible, physician-managed use of these medicines does not lead to addiction in children. In fact, research

suggests that taking stimulants lowers the risk of drug and alcohol abuse among adolescents and young adults with ADHD.

### 4. Anti-depressants, like Prozac, make children suicidal.

**Yes and No.** When researchers examined whether this was true, they discovered that none of the more than 4,400 children and adolescents studied committed suicide. However, they also discovered that while 1-2% of those taking placebo (fake medicine) developed new suicidal thoughts or made a suicidal act, 3-4% of those taking anti-depressants did so. They concluded that an extra 1-2% of children and adolescent will have increased thoughts or acts of suicide from taking this group of medicines, although the risk might be lower for some of the specific anti-depressants. Again, there were no actual suicides. So, while this is an obvious concern that mandates close follow-up of young people starting these medicines, this risk must be weighed against the risk of Depression or the other disorder that is being treated. These disorders, in particular Depression, carry their own risks, especially of suicide.

### 5. Stimulants, like Ritalin and Adderall, cause the sudden death of children.

**No.** Although stimulants are well known to cause insignificant increases in the child's pulse and blood pressure, rarely are these side effects of clinical importance. And, even then, they are of concern in the long run, not short run. The allegations that stimulants caused sudden death are unproven and, if proven to be true, would still appear to be very, very rare. On the other hand, we must never be cavalier. While much is known about the stimulants, we can always learn more, for example, about

their use in children with underlying heart deformities.

### 6. Never take a medicine that has the FDA's Black Box warning!

**No.** A Black Box warning is the FDA's strongest way of pointing out that a medicine has a certain risk. The FDA still approves of the use of the medicine for treating a specific age group with a particular disorder. Some of the side effects that are given black box warnings are rare. The specifics must be discussed with one's physician.

### 7. Anti-depressants only treat Depression and stimulants only stimulate.

**No and No.** There are a host of reasons that medicines are classified under a given name, like anti-depressants, but their name does not limit what they do. Anti-depressants, such as Prozac, also treat illnesses such as Panic Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder and OCD. Stimulants do not stimulate children with ADHD, unless you want to look at them as stimulating the child's brakes. Rather, stimulants help children focus and lower their impulsivity. Interestingly, stimulants also improve the focus of children and adults who do not have ADHD.

### 8. If medicine helps, it's the only treatment my child needs.

**No.** Research has shown that while medicine is effective for the treatment of ADHD and Depression, treatment with medicine combined with a behavioral treatment, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), is more effective. For disorders such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, CBT has been shown to be at least equally effective as medicine and perhaps more effective in the long run. For OCD, a

*(continued on page 7)*

# Give Me Strength!

## A Workout for Parents

by Alison Birnbaum, LCSW

**R**ECENTLY RESEARCHERS and psychotherapists have zeroed in on strategies designed to increase optimism and resilience. These two qualities turn out to be cornerstones of a happy, healthy attitude toward life. Optimistic thinking habits must be practiced in order to make lasting changes. The mental and emotional workout that is required can easily be compared to “**strength training**”.

The term “strength training” is borrowed from the exercise world, and can be applied to our psychological fitness. Strength training workouts usually break into three parts: First, we develop **flexibility**. Flexibility helps us discover new solutions and literally “stretch ourselves.” We feel more open and willing to try new things. Second, we develop **muscle memory** which enhances and eases our performance in future situations. Third, we **build new muscle** which increases our feeling of capability, allowing us to perform at a higher level

### Start With a Good Attitude

Positive psychology pays attention to the way we each tell ourselves the story of our triumphs and adversities. Martin Seligman, PhD. has written widely on this topic, which is known as the theory of attribution. Seligman contends that we feel weaker if we attribute our failures to something **personal** (“There is something wrong with me.”), **persistent** (“There has always been something wrong with me and there always will be.”), or **pervasive** (“There is something wrong with me not only in this area, but also in every other area.”) By contrast, we feel stronger if we review our failures as **impersonal** (“I wasn’t my usual self that day.”), **temporary** (“I’ll do better next time.”), or **limited** (“I may have trouble in history, but I’m really great at math.”)

**Resolve to Make a Change**  
**Changing our thinking habits from a focus on strength rather than deficit is a behavioral workout.** Consider it this way: Fifty percent of fitness success is in the intent (arriving at the gym in your workout clothes), and the other 50% is in planning, implementing, and practicing. Changing behavior is like adjusting your grip to build a better golf swing, or developing the left side of your body (if you are a righty) to enhance coordination.

### Examples of Strength Training

#### Overcoming Obstacles

A young woman suffered a difficult setback. She was in a limo on the way to a school dance, there was drinking, resulting in disciplinary action at her school. Over the next year, the young woman worked to “redeem” herself, a word she and her family intelligently used to describe her journey. She shared her experience publicly and committed herself to her set goals. With this positive approach, she successfully overcame the shadow of the negative event, developing new understanding and resilience.

#### Changing Your Focus

A young man sought my advice on a school issue. His fellow students teased and bullied him. When he was teased, he lost perspective and became irrationally angry. Over time, he realized he couldn’t change his classmates, but he could find a better way to respond to them. He told himself: “They don’t even know me, so I’m not going to take their comments personally. I’ll just let the teasing fly by.” With this shift in outlook, he got a handle on his emotions and built core strength. (Note: the school also took action to stop the bullying.)

### You Are Ready to Begin

Think about one of your own life challenges. Try out the following questions: What is your “self story”? What viewpoint or framework does your history contribute to the story? Notice your tone: are you speaking to yourself with compassion about the area that needs work? Are the positive aspects of your struggle highlighted? Are they an afterthought? Or do you ignore them altogether? Now, run an attribution test on your story: are you explaining the adversity in a way that is **personal, persistent or pervasive**? Could you amend your story in any way to make it **impersonal, temporary and limited**? Finally, could you tell your story in a positive way to your loved ones?

### Cool Down

By reinforcing and developing our strengths, we give ourselves and our families a framework for the future. An optimistic point of view creates positive change and causes psychological growth. Each one of us is capable of refining our strengths, enhancing our abilities, and modeling healthy behavior for our children.

### Suggested Reading:

Brooks, Robert, Goldstein, Sam, (2001). *Raising Resilient Children*. New York: Contemporary Books.  
Seligman, Martin E.P., (2002). *Authentic Happiness*. New York: Free Press.



*Alison Birnbaum, LCSW, has worked with families, couples, individual adults and children for 25 years. She has offices in New Canaan and Greenwich. She has been married for 30 years and has two children.*

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# The Good News

## About Rejection

by Catherine Wald

“I SEE LONDON, I see France, I see Cathy’s underpants!”

That’s my earliest memory of rejection. I was five, and I’d been playing on my swing set when a bunch of older kids spontaneously burst into the famous chant. I’d never heard it before, and I found it truly shocking – not just the words, but the spirit and the intent. All these people ganging up on me to say something mean about the most personal item of clothing I possessed. Wow! At the time, I had no idea people even *did* such things.

My response was age appropriate: I ran into the house and cried to my mother. She tried to comfort me, but the rejection still hurt. To her credit, my mom was pretty calm about the whole thing. She didn’t go out and yell at the other kids, she didn’t call their parents, she didn’t call up my Dad at work and demand that he “do something” and she didn’t threaten to sue the swing manufacturer for designing a piece of equipment that made poor little tykes like me vulnerable to such attacks. She gave me the sense that she was sorry I was upset, but that these things happen and I would get over it.

By contrast, witness my response to the first major traumatic event of my son’s life — not a rejection, but a loss. Ben was three and I’d taken him to play in the park with his favorite toy of the moment, a tiny plastic dinosaur. When we got home from the park and realized he’d left it behind, he lost it. “Dino, dino,” he wailed mournfully. Like my mother, I tried to comfort him – with about as much success.

Here’s where the parallel ends. Unlike my mom, I panicked. Somehow, my inability to push a magic button and make things right felt to me like my worst possible failure as a parent. If only, I reasoned, I hadn’t been up late the night before trying to meet a client

deadline. If only I’d been more awake, more attentive, a more selfless, aware mother, all this anguish could have been avoided. I was determined not to let my son suffer. I would use all the resources at my command to get that dino back.

First step was a trip back to the park. No luck there. The prehistoric play toy was lost for good. But did this confrontation with reality force me to reexamine my reaction, did it daunt me in my quest to erase an emotionally traumatic experiences from my son’s life? Of course not. I was a resourceful woman, and a professional woman, and I’d solved worse problems than this. Next stop the store where I bought the toy and I demanded contact information for the vending company. No matter how many phone calls I made, I was not able to find one of those dinosaurs. And where did that leave my son? Difficult to admit, he had by this time transferred his affections to a small blue elf he’d found under the sofa. He’d gotten over the whole thing long before I had.

Thinking back, I can’t help but wonder why my reaction was so different from my mom’s. Why did my son’s “loss” make me *so* upset? Where did I get the idea that my job description included protecting him from all loss, all rejection, all the evils of this world we live in?

At least I wasn’t alone. There’s a historical precedent to my behavior. Siddhartha Gautama was born in Nepal in 563 B.C. and his parents the King and Queen, decided their prince should never experience anything bad. Not loss, not rejection, not illness, pain or sadness. They decided to keep him locked up behind the castle gates, where everything was rich, luxurious, stress-free and painless.

When he became a teenager,

Siddhartha rebelled. He escaped from the castle and ran into a funeral procession when he found out about death, and other negative aspects of the human condition. He was so traumatized that he renounced the world and spent the next few years meditating under a tree. Eventually he became Buddha, the Enlightened One, whose teachings about the meaning of suffering shaped the world view of millions of people all over the world.

The moral of the story? Well there are a few:

- 1) No one can protect their child from everything that’s ugly and painful in the world, including rejection.
- 2) Children who don’t have to deal with reality as they are growing up go into shock when they are confronted by it later on.
- 3) You have to let your children take their hard knocks. (You can’t do it for them, even if you want to.) No child is going to win the prize – the ability to deal with failure and rejection with their own unique coping skills - if we don’t let them play the game: the game of growing up, with all its wins, losses and draws.

Ever since my own first unfortunate but inevitable exposure to childhood taunts, I have been both traumatized and fascinated by rejection. My most recent encounter was a real eye-opener. I spent five years writing and workshopping a novel. I spent another year finding an agent. My agent spent two-and-a-half years sending the manuscript to publishers. In the end, no one wanted it. But no one. My agent threw up her hands in despair. As for me, I didn’t go crying to my mother — but I did cry. I cried, I got mad, I got vengeful, I got jealous – and I lost all my motivation to write.

Being a writer, this was a bit of a

problem. However being a writer, I also hoped I could find a way through the failure of my novel by writing about it. I also figured I could use some fresh insight. So I decided to interview a bunch of famous authors about their rejection experiences, and find out how they dealt with them. The result was the book *The Resilient Writer: Tales of Rejection and Triumph from 23 Top Authors*, and it was published last year.

While I was writing *The Resilient Writer*, I did a lot of research on rejection. And I learned four noble truths that have helped me – and later my children – cope with rejection along the way.

**Rejection Truth #1: Rejection really does hurt.**

In the annals of science, several recent experiments have shown that rejection causes physiological as well as emotional pain. Both the brain and the body actually suffer when our efforts are rebuffed.

**Rejection Truth #2: There's a good reason why rejection hurts.**

Think about early human society. We lived in tribes, traveled in tribes, hunted in tribes and gathered in tribes. There was a significant benefit to this: without each other, we wouldn't have been able to survive. In a world where rejection from the tribe would lead to certain death, it isn't really surprising that humans evolved to have strong negative reactions to any kind of rejection.

**Rejection Truth #3: There is no way to get through life without experiencing rejection, and there is no way rejection is going to feel good. But you can develop successful coping skills.**

My own personal technique is a five-step program called SORRY, for Sob, Obsess, Rant, Renew and Yearn. The idea is, you take a bit of time out to feel the pain, but you don't allow yourself too much time. Give yourself five minutes, an hour, a day – whatever it takes, and then move on. Go back to trying to get what you didn't get the

first time around, or reevaluate your goals.

**Rejection Truth #4: Rejection is good for you.**

Each brush with rejection makes you stronger, more self-sufficient, more resilient, and more self-aware. When your child doesn't make the soccer team, it's an opportunity for her to learn how to deal with disappointment. With parents who are supportive without interfering too much, this learning will be drawn from her own inner resources, incorporated into her world view, and it will stand her in good stead the rest of her life. With any luck, by the time she's old enough to get college rejection letters, she won't have to flip out like Siddhartha did and run off to the forest. She may not even have to punch a hole in the bedroom wall like my son did when he got his first rejection letter. She may need a few hugs, or she may need to hide out in her room, or she may need to text message a few dozen friends. Let her find her way! You'll both become more resilient, more relaxed, and better prepared to face the next disappointment.



*Catherine Wald, the author of The Resilient Writer: Tales of Rejection and Triumph from 23 Top Authors (Persea Books, 2005), is scheduled to speak at a **Parents Together** presentation on Monday, February 12, 2007. The mother of two teenagers, she lives in Yorktown, N.Y.*

Organization Resources

- ◆ Janet Fox, *Get Organized Without Losing it*. Free Spirit Laugh and Learn Press, 2005
- ◆ Julie Morgenstern and Jessi Morgenstern-Colon, *Organizing from the Inside Out for Teens: The Foolproof System for Organizing Your Room, Your Time, Your Life*. NY, Henry Holt and Co. 2002.
- ◆ Kathy Waddill, *The Organizing Sourcebook: Nine Strategies for Simplifying your Life*, McGraw Hill, 2001.
- ◆ Maria Gracia, *Finally Organized, Finally Free for the Home*, Bluemoon Publishing, 1999.
- ◆ [www.DiscoverOrganization.com](http://www.DiscoverOrganization.com)

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combination of these treatments seems best of all. Many parents also benefit from counseling that teaches them how to deal with their child's difficulties, regardless of whether their child takes medicine.

**9. My child's medicine is so easy to use that I hardly need to see the doctor.**

**No.** Modern psychiatric medicines are often relatively safe and easy to use. However, all medicines carry risk. Also, there is often little medical information about the combinations of medicines that many children take. In addition, many children with psychiatric disorders are at risk for other difficulties that require an ongoing working relationship with a mental health professional.

**10. Too many children are taking medicines, like Ritalin.**

**Yes and No.** Some children are given psychiatric medicine too quickly when another treatment might be more effective or when, perhaps, no treatment is needed. Other children would benefit greatly from a psychiatric medicine, but never receive one. Every parent, however, must be concerned that their child is properly treated. That means having a proper evaluation from a trusted professional with whom you can discuss the risks and benefits of medicine to decide if it is the correct treatment for your child.

In short, parents should be neither overly fearful, nor cavalier about psychiatric medicine. Rather, with their physician, parents must weigh the risks and benefits of medicine against those of other treatments and, with their child in the balance, decide the best treatment.



*Kevin T. Kalikow, MD is the author of Your Child in the Balance: An Insider's Guide for Parents to the Psychiatric Medicine Dilemma*

## Who We Are

*Parents Together* is an independent nonprofit organization in Greenwich, CT that offers ongoing opportunities for parents to communicate, share, support and learn together. We work in cooperation with the Parent Teacher Associations of the public, private and parochial schools in town. The *Parents Together* organization and delegates from Greenwich schools plan programs for parents of children in grades K-12. We also publish two newsletters: *Parents Together Primer* for parents of children from birth through fifth grade and *Parents Together*, for parents of adolescents.

**Distribution:** *Parents Together Primer* is distributed to parents through their children's preschools and elementary schools. *Parents Together* is sent to parents of children in grades 6 through 12 in all Greenwich public and independent schools.

### Newsletter Subscriptions and

**Correspondence:** We invite parents and all other readers interested in local parenting issues to subscribe to either or both newsletters.

For an **annual subscription**, please indicate which newsletter you wish to receive, and send your name, address and \$10 for each subscription in a check payable to *Parents Together*, to P. O. Box 4843, Greenwich, CT 06831-0417. Correspondence may be mailed to the same address.

### Contact Us!

Got a story idea, writer suggestion or comment for the *Parents Together* staff? You may fax it to 698-3376 or email it to [Togetherparent@aol.com](mailto:Togetherparent@aol.com).

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## Upcoming Programs

Parents Together

### February 12, 2007

*"How to Help Our Children Deal with Rejection"*, featuring author Catherine Wald.

### March 5, 2007

Ed Moran of Family Centers presents *"A Guide to Bullying"*.

### April 9, 2007

Author Amy Zabin presents *"How to Protect Your Child from Child Abuse"*.

### May 14, 2007

*"Your Child and Sports: Finding a Healthy Balance"*, a presentation by psychiatrist Nicole Danforth.



GCCUD

### Saturday, January 6

#### Parents' Forum/Fathers' Forum

*"The Influence of Fathers on Children Today,"* a presentation by Kyle Pruett, MD, Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine.

Location and time TBA

### Saturday, February 10

#### Fathers' Forum

*Kids Panel* at the Boys and Girls Club from 8 AM - 10 AM.

## Community Notes

### SummerFare '07

Wednesday, January 24 (snow date: Thursday, January 25)

6-9 PM

Greenwich High School  
10 Hillside Road, Greenwich

Free Admission

Refreshments on sale

The 18th annual SummerFare '07 features more than 100 summer programs offering diverse activities for teens, from traditional camps and sports training to adventure travel and educational endeavors, at home and abroad. Admission is free to this GHS PTA sponsored event; snacks and beverages will be on sale. Not to be missed, Summerfare offers your teen a chance to speak with program representatives and explore summer options with everything all under one roof. Come plan the summer and support this important school function. For further information, please contact:

Suzanne Diddel, [suzdid@gmail.com](mailto:suzdid@gmail.com) or  
Ellen Keats, [ellenkeats@aol.com](mailto:ellenkeats@aol.com)

*This issue of Parents Together Newsletter was made possible by the donations of generous supporters.*



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