



ACROSS

Caregivers' Newsletter

ACROSS Social Services
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Greetings from Bee Barrett, Senior Social Worker of ACROSS

Hi to all our caregivers and ongoing thanks for the fantastic job you continue to do with our children. We could not do our job without you doing yours so it's fantastic to have you all on the team.

As you will no doubt be aware, there is currently fierce debate throughout the country about the Repeal of Section 59 Act. As you will also be aware, ACROSS has a no smacking policy, and I would like to take this opportunity to invite everyone, and not just our caregivers, to look at other strategies and ways of disciplining children rather than using smacking or physical discipline. There is always information, ideas and strategies available to parents and please contact us if you would like to see some of these or discuss any with us. There is also a lot of very good information on the Brainwave website www.brainwave.org.nz

Shu-Fei's Feedback from IFCO XV Biennial International Foster Care Conference

This was the 25th international conference held by IFCO (International Foster Care Organisation). It had been 22 years since an IFCO conference was hosted in NZ. It was great that NZFFCF (New Zealand Family and Foster Care Federation) was able to host this conference in Hamilton this year.

It was a great pleasure that I was able to attend the conference. At the conference, there were delegates from many other countries of the world, sharing their experiences and research findings from their involvement with foster care. The theme of the conference was "Fostering our Taonga (treasures)". With the flow of this theme, it lead us to explore the taonga within our everyday life—from looking after children, playing the role as caregivers, and accessing the resources within our communities. We often take them for granted and forget to cherish these treasures. Everyone in the end appreciated the taonga gained in the conference and expressed a desire to further develop them on returning to their home countries.

The value of respecting different cultures in New Zealand was greatly admired by many delegates from other countries. They enjoyed Maori Tikanga and Waiata introduced at the conference. Also thoroughly enjoyed being welcomed with a Powhiri in the opening ceremony and food cooked by hangi the fifth night of the conference.

We had good discussions around many issues arising from fostering, and not surprisingly, we found that many issues and concerns were identical across nations and cultures. We all agreed that caregivers/kinship carers should be better resourced and supported to help make their caregiving more satisfactory. As well, more resources and support needed to be available to assist parents and families to be able to look after their own children. Delegates at the conference had a vision of children being free from harm and abuse, and being cared for in safe and loving environment where they would be able to finally achieve their utmost potential and enjoy the life they deserve.

The conference brought a great deal of inspiration, encouragement and admiration for you as caregivers and many others involved in foster care. I thoroughly enjoyed the workshops and had a great time networking with other delegates.

New Zealand Herald Article — Feb 28 2007

Tapu Misa : Good parenting skills the most effective discipline

I have come to the inescapable and depressing conclusion, after immersing myself in innumerable emails to this newspaper protesting Green MP Sue Bradford's efforts to repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act, that, well, some of you need help. And I mean that in a caring way.

Not that I want to interfere with the inalienable rights of some parents to be less than spectacular at the job, having been somewhat lacking in that department myself. But, honestly, some of the arguments offered up for the continuation of the "reasonable force" defence for parents and caregivers are just plain silly. And don't say a lot for our so-called parenting skills.

For example, David, who wrote: "If I have a 2-year-old trying to shove a fork in a live powerpoint and it won't take NO for an answer I am going to smack it. See you in court." Oh, come on. Why not try removing the fork? Why not smack the person who left the fork lying around? And why does anyone with a 2-year-old not have childproof locks on their cutlery drawer and plastic guards for their power-sockets?

This isn't rocket science.

How hard is it to work out that fences and vigilance work better than a smack for a child in the habit of running out on the road - at least until the child is old enough to understand the dangers?

Or that it's best not to take young children to the supermarket if you can avoid it, and especially when they're tired and grumpy, but if you must, then you have to harden yourself to the disapproving looks of those who mutter threateningly about your child needing a good smack, rather than offering sympathy or help?

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Introducing ACROSS Team:

Director— Graeme Munford

Admin — Jeanette Conheoney

Heather Mansell

Jinny Andersen

Alison Dalglish (Volunteer)

Counsellors — Sharon Elkington

Rose Allan

Social Workers — Bee Barrett (Senior S/Worker)

Brian Annear

Kylie MacManus

Feiona Fraser

Wyllis Russell

Shu-Fei Lin (Fostering S/Worker)

Recipe—Mallow Balls

100g butter 1/2 Can highlander Condensed Milk

2 tbsp Baking Cocoa 1tsp Vanilla essence

1/2 cup Brown Sugar 2 Cups plain biscuit crumbs

10-12 Marshmallow Dessicated Coconut

Method: 1. heat the butter, cocoa, brown sugar and condensed milk in medium saucepan until the butter and sugar are just melted and the mixture is smooth. Stir constantly. Take off heat.

National Caregiver Training Programme

28 & 29 April

Legal Issues (Tokoroa)

Course details and application form can be accessed by visiting www.caregivertraining.org.nz or phone Shu-Fei Lin at ACROSS

A Workshop with Diane Levy (*author of "Of course I love you...Now go to your room" and "They looks so lovely when they are asleep"*)

Wednesday 9 May (9.00-12.00pm) & Tuesday 8 May (7.30 –9.45pm) for \$ 50, or \$15 for the workshop on 8th May. **Please contact Parentline on 355 1655 for more information.**

Manawatu Foster Care Association Monthly Meeting

Monday 27 March 2007 at 28 Shelton Pl, Feilding (Please phone Judy Williams on 323 5013 for further details.)

Manawatu Foster Care association provide support to caregivers. Please phone Judy Williams on 323 5013 for further information.

Sessions with Rose Allan — Improving Relationship with Our Children

Group starts 9.30 am on Wednesdays at ACROSS for 6 weeks during school term. Please phone Shu-Fei for further information.

2. stir in the vanilla essence and biscuit crumbs. Mix thoroughly. Leave the mixture until it is cool enough to shape.

3. with wet hands, shape some of the mixture around each piece of marshmallow forming a ball. Roll the balls in coconut and put on a tray lined with wax paper. Refrigerate until firm. Store in covered container and refrigerate.

ACROSS is continually looking for caregivers. Please inform or refer friends or family to ACROSS if they are interested in providing alternative care for children.

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"Can you imagine telling your 6ft son to go to his room?" I can't really, and I have one. But I can't imagine trying to smack him either.

"Kids today totally lack discipline since corporal punishment in schools was repealed." And "I'd be a criminal if I hadn't been smacked." I've been on a school board of trustees and I'd lay odds that most of the worst trouble-makers had been severely physically disciplined at home - as with the vast majority of those who populate our prisons.

"You only have to look at all those out of control children on TV programmes, like The Nanny." Yes, but the Nanny and her colleagues never smack, yet still manage to restore order and discipline. It's not the want of spanking that's the problem, it's the lack of parental spine, and the failure of parents to lay down consistent rules.

And let's not forget the biblical justification, the oft-quoted "spare the rod and spoil the child" from the Old Testament. Many Christians and Jewish people argue that the rod is a shepherd's crook, used to guide or nurture a flock on to the right path, not beat it into submission.

It's hard to imagine Jesus countenancing the smacking of infants and toddlers not old enough to speak, as advocated by a Family Integrity booklet, which says, "with infants and toddlers a wee smack to the forearm or leg or just a flick of the hand is effective".

This is as bad as the argument that children really want to be smacked, put forward by a foster parent, worryingly enough.

"At a very young age, children know when they deserve a smack. When it is not forthcoming ... it can even lead to a child feeling they are not loved."

And finally: "Parents have a right to raise their children any way they want, and most parents can tell the difference between discipline and abuse." But it's clear that many can't.

Under Section 59, adults have successfully argued that they were "reasonable" when they hit their children in the face, beat them with a horse-riding crop, a belt, a hosepipe, a piece of wood, a bamboo stick, or when they bound them in metal chains.

As Bradford says, "Most parents and step-parents who commit acts of gross violence against babies and children, do so out of theoretical goodwill, and in the belief they are carrying out discipline sanctioned by society."

Sweden removed the defence of "reasonable correction" back in 1957, and didn't move to ban smacking until 1979, a civil law that doesn't carry any legal sanctions. Bradford's bill would put us where Sweden was 50 years ago.

Despite attempts to paint Sweden as a haven for badly behaved children and rampant child abuse, Sweden came in second overall in the latest OECD report on child well-being in rich nations, and top for child health and safety. In 2003, it had one of the lowest child abuse rates in the OECD.

Of course, there's much more to child abuse than removing the defence of reasonable force. But if it changes attitudes to children, it's a good start.
