



LISA BURTON-SMITH

Spreading Joy in Children & Adults

by Nancy Cohen

"Joy is our goal, our destiny. We cannot know who we are except in Joy. Not knowing Joy, we do not know ourselves."

Marianne Williamson

Lisa Burton-Smith, an educator, entrepreneur, and advocate of creating joyful relationships, sees joy as something that is limitless and already present in every moment. Though what defines joy may be different for everyone, she believes if a space is created in which the mind becomes quiet enough, whatever resonates for each individual can be revealed. In addition to having already founded All Children's Learning Center in North Haven (for ages six weeks to eight years), she created the Positively Empowered Parenting Institute last year, the mission of which was nurturing positive relationships between parents

and children. It has since evolved into its current (and recently launched) incarnation, TheOneJoy.com. With this new endeavor, Burton-Smith is expanding her offerings to teachers and individuals (as well as parents and children). She intends to help participants deepen their ability to perceive, evaluate, and manage emotions in order to enhance their lives and relationships.

Among other experiences, Ms. Burton-Smith considers her years working in education and as an occupational therapist "a petri dish" which has enabled her to see adult/child interactions in new ways and develop

her current methodology. Her approach to working with children, which she has titled The OneJoy Child Guidance System™, is a holistic learning style aiming to offer students the opportunity to experience mind-body connection and master emotional skills that can be used throughout life. Distress is viewed as an attempt to communicate unmet emotional needs in a particular mo-

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ment. TheOneJoy.com helps children learn language with which to identify their feelings and needs in order to find ways to alleviate problems and achieve greater comfort. Staff supports students with tools to ascertain, acknowledge, and express emotions in a mutually respectful way. Adult participants learn ways to guide children to express their feelings and determine what may be needed in that moment to accomplish optimal interaction and learning.

Burton-Smith's philosophy and OneJoy Child Guidance System™ are based on The Seven Power Concepts™ which she defines as the powers of: Knowledge; Focus; Gratitude; Your Word; Beliefs; Self-worth; and, Practice. These concepts are rooted in such work as neuroscience, human development, psychology, and spirituality. The idea is that embracing them fosters a more conscious lifestyle which culminates in a life-affirming expansion of joyous energy.

When confronting moments of challenge or disquiet, Ms. Burton-Smith suggests asking questions such as: Does the child feel unsafe? Are they hungry or tired? Do they need

to experience more choice? Do they need to feel more love or compassion? Do they need to be better understood, or allowed greater self-expression? She put together a four-step tool, The Mindful Model™, which incorporates ideas that can help adults halt temper tantrums and quickly dissipate power struggles.

STEPS

1. **Pause, breathe, and accept the situation as is without judging the child's behavior.**
2. **Help the child identify and label the possible unmet emotional need, while simultaneously offering empathy:** "It looks like you want to continue painting and you are feeling frustrated that we have to clean up now."
3. **State your needs:** "I know you really want to continue painting, but now it is time to clean up because we have to leave/go to bed/go to the store" etc.
4. **Provide a firmly guided solution:** "Do you want to save the paints to finish later, or do you want to help me hang up your picture to dry?"

Burton-Smith suggests this technique is beneficial to everyone. It can model lessons for children while creating awareness within adults. Communication happens not only through words, but also vocal tone, body language, and energy. These steps can help: shift interactions to a place of



non-judgment, empathy and compassion; end power struggles; and, introduce potential solutions with options that meet adult's needs while empowering children to make choices and intentionally affect outcome. When modeled by adults, children learn to experience control over their emotions, rather than letting their emotions control them.

Ms. Burton-Smith also incorporates tools into her classes which help with organizing, relaxing and improving focus, such as work with acupressure points, delicately tuned chimes announcing transitions, and comfort baskets. Comfort baskets are used to foster awareness and empathy, and teach children how to "self regulate," making their own determination as to what will soothe them. They contain items that tap into different senses, such as a stuffed

animal, book, tissues, hand lotion, band aids, etc. One child at a time is designated caretaker of the basket. When they notice a classmate is having a difficult time – upset about such events as parents leaving them at class, or an inability to go first in an activity – the caretaker brings the basket to that child, offering items to help diffuse their distress. The dismayed child can then choose what they feel will best provide a sense of comfort. This technique can easily be used at home and children may also delight in defining what goes into the basket based on their own wisdom about what they find placating.

TheOneJoy.com programs include workshops, coaching and retreat opportunities. Parents can learn about cultivating joy and engaging in conscious parenting techniques. Teachers can hear about activities and systems for creating harmonious and compassionate classrooms in which students learn self-regulation and conflict resolution skills. Individuals may find tools to enhance clarity, vitality and peacefulness. Believing emotional mastery can eradicate bullying, TheOneJoy.com offers after-school clubs for grades K-5, called PowerUp For Peace! Clubs offer "hands-on" curriculum teaching emotional intelligence skills. Students can earn merit badges in: creative arts, planetary or nature studies, community service, goal setting, Native American traditions, money management, and conflict resolution.

Ms. Burton-Smith has worked with individuals, parents, and children for over 20 years. She draws on her experience as a pediatric occupational therapist, educator, associate polarity practitioner, student of several master teachers, and mother, in creating environments where, as Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote "And Joy is everywhere..."

For more information, including upcoming workshops in Greater New Haven, call 203.804.0024, or visit www.theonejoy.com. See ad on page 51.

