

# Family Services à la famille Ottawa

## Newsletter

FALL 2009

### The Best Medicine

By Dr. Timothy Simboli, Executive Director

The true start of the year always feels like it should be in September not January. This is an immediate reality if we are attending school or parenting school age children. Even as adults we are conditioned by years of school attendance to see the cycles of our lives starting and ending with the school year. With the return to school there is often an increase in anxiety and stress; What will my new school be like? Will I succeed or fail? Will my friends be the same? Will I be accepted? Compounding the problems this year is that much of our community is still reeling from an economic crunch that's damaged our financial stability and confidence. And looming ahead is the spectre of H1N1 and the unknown we face there. All this is to say that we may be pretty vulnerable in the coming months.

But we are not helpless or hopeless. As a society and a community we are pretty resilient. Living well and wisely, and managing our fears and reactions can protect us for the times ahead. The best answers are often the simplest. H1N1 precautions are an excellent example of this; simple hygiene and common sense seem to offer the best defense. Sneezing into your arm, regular hand washing and staying home when you feel sick can contain the spread of this disease; so simple and easy to do. And so it is with other life stresses that we face; eat well, sleep well, breath deeply, get exercise, laugh, challenge yourself, have supportive people, and ask for help if you need it. These are things we all know but don't apply. What is often missing is the awareness of our own state; what is our body telling us? What do we need? Where and when do I feel weak or at risk? We call this self monitoring and its the first step in building and maintaining our strength.

We can sense when we're in good shape. We stand taller, think more clearly, are more alert, and respond faster. We have an optimism for the future and handle pressure calmly and appropriately. We laugh. Sometimes simply acting healthy allows us to be healthy. And the really special part of this is that the more we put ourselves in this position the stronger we get. Good mental, physical and emotional health builds and replenishes itself. So, if you're not there now, then figure out how to get there, do the things that make you feel healthy and whole, get help if you need it, and embrace the life you live. Laugh.



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## Back to School

By Stephanie Piovesan, Communications Officer & Fundraiser

The new school year is approaching and back to school ads are everywhere. A favorite, shows a parent gleefully romping through a store to “its the most wonderful time of the year”, while the children sadly drag behind. With the lazy days of summer and holidays behind them, families now prepare for the return to a more structured routine which includes early mornings, homework and extracurricular activities. This time is both exciting and stressful. New clothes, school supplies and reconnecting with friends are usually the things kids look forward to. Starting a new school, homework, and “fitting in” can all be sources of stress and anxiety.

Depending on the age of the child, their worries and apprehensions will vary. A survey of 600 teens by Teen Health from Nemours reports that the top three worries for teenagers are school issues, social issues and appearance issues. Nemours also polled 965 children (9-13) and found that 35% reported that on most days they disliked school.

Kindergarten aged children are starting a new adventure of “firsts” - the first time away from their parent or sitter; the first time on a bus; the first time having to ask to go to the bathroom. Grade school children are often concerned about a new teacher and if they will have a friend in class? High school students worry about starting a new school, having the right clothes, increasing demands and difficulty the academic year may bring. As a parent how can you help?

### “Getting Started”

- Explain your “rules” for the school year (i.e. bedtimes, homework; curfews). Knowing what is expected of them will help to ease them back into a routine. Discussing and understanding the “rules” now may lessen future arguments .
- Explain what will be expected of them at school. For example, having a locker and using a combination lock is new for a 7th grader; getting a snack from their bag may be a challenge to a child in kindergarten. Explaining and having them practice will help them feel more prepared.
- Remind them of the good things about starting school such as seeing old friends and focus on the positive memories and experiences from years past. For students starting a new school or kindergarten highlight the positives such as the opportunity to meet new people; field trips and extracurricular activities.
- Practice walking the route to school, or to the bus stop. If they are taking a city bus take a few trial runs.
- Encourage your child to read; it will help get them back into the swing of school and homework. If they are concerned with a particular subject work with them on it before the year begins.



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- Have them participate and take some ownership in the “back to school” preparations, such as shopping for school supplies, creating a calendar for extra curricular activities and cleaning their room. This will help them develop organizational skills and to gain personal responsibility.

**“The Back to School Shopping Trip”**

Take a trip to your local mall and you will see the flustered mother, the sulking teen and the tearful ten year old. Fitting in, not being the oddball or outcast is a worry from grade school to high school and is often measured by having the right clothes, shoes or backpack. It’s important to teach and reinforce the importance of character, kindness and of being yourself. Unfortunately this is a lifelong lesson that can not be taught when your 16 year old is convinced a pair of skinny jeans is the answer. How do you and your children survive this ?

- Go through closets and drawers and move out the items that no longer fit or that they will no longer wear.
- Make a list of items that are needed, for example, shoes for gym class; socks or a new jacket. ( A growth spurt over the summer may require a lot of needs). Make a list of wants, for example that pair of \$200 jeans or the “new” bag that everyone else has.
- Set a budget.
- Sit down with your lists and budget and explain to your child that this is the money you/they have to spend. Doing this before you hit the mall will help to lessen the in store struggle and provides your child with guidelines while helping to teach the importance of budgeting and the value of a dollar. When possible and appropriate have them pay with cash, this will help them understand the “real” cost of items.

**“First Day Jitters”**

- Explain that many of their classmates are probably just as nervous.
- Encourage them or help them to find someone that they can walk to school or take the bus with.
- Drive or walk them to and from the bus stop or school the first day. (Respect the fact the older children may be uncomfortable with their parents escorting them to school or to the bus stop).

**“The Homework Battle”**

Once the first few days are past , homework, projects and tests begin. It seems like parents are as stressed out by *homework* as the kids. Work with your children to establish a homework routine. Determine what works for them. Some kids need a break when they get home; others want to get it “over with” and work on it right away. If they are involved in an extracurricular activity in the evening they may need to have their homework completed before dinner. Establish your household rules; for example no texting or WII until their homework is completed. Always monitor their use of the computer and internet.

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If they need help, work with them; doing an assignment or project for them isn't helpful. If a particular subject is very difficult for them or they can not grasp it, consult with their teacher to create a plan of action. If necessary look into a tutor or an after school tutoring program or school.

**“Social Studies”**

As important as the academic part of school is, quite often it's the social aspects that cause the most anxiety and stress. If your child is having difficulty academically there are several ways to help. But what do you do if the challenge your child faces is making friends; eating lunch alone or getting bullied? The issue here isn't about being popular or having dozens of friends, its about how these interactions teach children social skills, which are as important in life as the subjects they take. As a parent this is difficult and heart wrenching to deal with. The following may help you to help your child.

- Keep the lines of communication open with your child by asking open ended questions and encouraging them to share the events of their day. Allow them time to respond. Avoid interrogating them. Find a time that your child is most receptive and willing to talk, for example in the car, over dinner.
- Listen and let them know that you understand and recognize their worries, fears and anxiety are real to them.
- Work with them to find solutions, for example, joining a club or team may help them to meet other people with the same interests.
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities and foster relationships with non-school teammates and friends.
- If they seem to be struggling, are very unhappy or never want to go to school, contact their teacher to discuss what the problem may be. They can often shed light on the “social scene”.
- Step in or seek professional help when your child is at risk, and /or is exhibiting changes in behaviour and attitude, for i.e. eating and sleeping patterns, frequent physical complaints, such as headaches, a drop in grades; and changes in how they communicate with you—children that once shared their thoughts and feelings is now withdrawn and shut off.

Although you cannot solve all your children's problems, fears and worries, providing a nurturing refuge at home, open communication and having a knowledge of available resources will provide the support they need to work through the difficult times.



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## **Fall Parenting Series**

Family Services à la famille Ottawa presents our fall series of PARENTING EDGE workshops. Learn from our dynamic team of Parenting Edge workshop leaders who bring a wealth of experience in helping parents become more confident and successful. Share the joys and challenges of raising kids with others who are experiencing the same.

### **Anger management... especially for parents.**

Tuesday's, October 6 to November 10, 2009, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**How can I avoid “blowing my top” at my children?  
How can I channel my anger into effective discipline?  
Are there any “good” ways to express my anger?**

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### **Discipline that doesn't hurt... anyone.**

Monday's, October 19 to November 16, 2009, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Why do children misbehave?  
What's the difference between discipline and punishment?**

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### **On Middle Ground... parenting 6 to 12 year olds.**

Tuesday's, November 17 to December 15, 2009, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**How can I continue building a positive relationship with my child?  
How can I help my child build self-esteem?  
How can I set reasonable behaviour limits for my child?**

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**Where:** Family Services à la famille Ottawa, 312 Parkdale Avenue

**Cost:** \$125.00 (5wk. course) \$150.00 (6wk course)

Subsidies are available

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### **Just for Dads... parenting when you're single.**

Wednesday's – September 16 to November 4, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**Are you a dad parenting by yourself and feeling that you're alone?  
Are you looking for concrete and practical ways to build your child's self-esteem?  
Do you wonder how to set reasonable behaviour limits for your child?**

Family Services à la famille Ottawa, 312 Parkdale Avenue  
There is no charge for this workshop.

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**For more information and registration for any of  
The Fall Parenting workshops, please contact us at  
613-725-3601 extension 207.**

## Funder Profile

### The Ministry of Community and Social Services

By Linda Merali, Director of the Anti-Violence Program

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has been a long standing and staunch funder of this agency's Anti-Violence Program since 1987 in its commitment to ending violence against women and their children. This funding has enabled us to provide group, individual and family counselling to women and their children who are fleeing from an abusive relationship or healing from the trauma of partner abuse.

*It has been a pleasure to work with an organization that has always demonstrated the highest degree of professionalism and an unwavering commitment to the clients ... Our relationship has been a very positive one because of your responsiveness, competence and flexibility ..."*

*Nancy Nourry - Program Supervisor  
Ministry of Community & Social Services*

Services are available to any woman who identifies herself or is identified as having been physically, sexually or emotionally abused by her partner or significant other or those who are adult survivors of sexual assault or woman abuse. There is no fee for this program and child care and transportation costs are subsidized. Services focus on support, education, and advocacy, as women struggle with issues of poverty, lack of affordable housing, the court system, and parenting children who have been traumatized by the abuse.

Over the years, the Ministry has highlighted issues around increased accessibility and reducing barriers to service for multi-ethnic and aboriginal groups, always respecting the needs of the agencies it supports. It has continued to increase funding to us on a regular basis to ensure that our service level and quality of service to remain high.

### VAW Funding at work ... a clients story

A mother and her two children were referred to the Anti-Violence Program . Having fled their homeland they were now trying to adapt to life in Canada while healing from the abuse they suffered. As a result of this abuse the eleven year old daughter has physical and significant cognitive impairment. Through the Anti-Violence program this family was involved in individual and family counselling, received advocacy services and was connected to community resources. One such connection for the daughter was to a very special dance troupe of diverse young women with a broad range of abilities. The young women in the troupe all brought issues about which they were passionate and wanted to share with their community. This year the troupe danced the story of this young girl and her family – how they suffered incredible violence, came to Canada and created a new life. Staff at FSFO wrote a letter of support to grant permission for the grandparents to come to Canada for a visit. They arrived on the day of the performance.



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## Employee Profile

### Merelie Kemp, Children's Counsellor

By Stephanie Piovesan, Communications Officer & Fundraiser

Merelie Kemp has been a member of the FSFO team for 23 years, primarily as a counsellor in the Anti-Violence Children's Program. She first became interested in counselling youth while working as a crisis counsellor at the Ottawa Y Residence. After completing her MSW at McGill University in 1978 she worked in variety of settings including; National Defense Medical Center, Ottawa General Hospital and Montfort Hospital. In 1991 she moved to FSFO Children's Program, she said "It felt like coming home to my roots, working with the youth who had originally inspired me to become a social worker."

Merelie co-wrote the Building Bridges Manual , based on the FSFO Anti Violence concurrent group program for mothers and their children and she co-led a province wide series of training workshops (sponsored by the Ministry of Community and Social Services) on this approach. Working in partnership with Immigrant Women's Service Organization, she developed a group to address issues of parenting in Canada. She facilitates this group with the help of interpreters (7 different languages) and says "it was a steep learning curve." Merelie also participates on the Violence Against Women Agencies and Children's Aid Society Liaison Committee, a two year pilot project has been developed to deliver better service to women and children where the children may need protection because of their exposure to woman abuse.

Away from work, Merelie enjoys a change of pace, spending time with family, friends, reading, music and staying active by downhill skiing and biking. Her next project is to get a dog after losing her beloved companion two years ago.

Merelie appreciates FSFO's "encouragement to continue to learn about our changing community and to develop new ways of working. This openness to new ideas is a challenge to grow that keeps me very engaged in the work and finds inspiration in the courage and creativity of the children she serves and in the strength and hope of the mothers, particularly of women who have crossed the world to make better lives for their families."

## Upcoming Events ...

### Juke Box Mania 2009

Friday October 23rd, 2009.

### Putting the FUN into fundraising!

For more information or to register a table please contact Stephanie 613-725-3601 ext. 113 or by email at spiovesan@familyservicesottawa.org.



Visit our newly updated sites at [www.jukeboxmania.org](http://www.jukeboxmania.org)

For more information on all our groups and workshops, please visit us at: [www.familyservicesottawa.org](http://www.familyservicesottawa.org).

## YES! I would like to Help...

Please accept my:  One-time donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Monthly donation of  \$10  \$25  \$50  \$100

I'd like to pay by:  Pre-Authorized payment (please attach a void cheque)  
 Cheque or post-dated cheques  
(payable to **Family Services à la famille Ottawa**)  
 VISA  Mastercard Card  
# \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy)  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
(Of Name on card)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address City Province Postal Code

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

- I have left a gift to Family Services Ottawa à la famille in my will.
- I would like information on leaving a gift in my will.
- Please send me your newsletter  By mail.  By email.

Alternatively, visit  
[www.familyservicesottawa.org](http://www.familyservicesottawa.org)  
to make your donation online.  
**PAYPAL available.**

Tax receipts will be mailed for donations over \$20 to the name and address on this form.

Charitable registration # 107376147RR0001



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