

# Tips for the Care and Feeding of Your Child's Brain

## BRAIN-BUILDING FAMILY RECIPES

Dr. Linda Karges-Bone, a professor in the School of Education at Charleston Southern University, in Charleston, S.C., spoke to parents of children in Winter Park Consortium Schools recently about ways to raise smarter children.

The session was held at Glenridge Middle School and sponsored by Brookshire Elementary School with support from its Healthy School Team, Parent Teacher Association and the Whole Foods Market. Winter Park Health Foundation financial support helped make it possible.

Dr. Bone explained gender differences in the brain and discussed things parents can do to help nourish their child's brain and optimize learning.

### Here are 10 of Dr. Bone's tips:

1. Make sure that your child gets adequate sleep. Teenagers actually need more sleep than younger children. Minimum: 8 hours.
2. Physical exercise pumps glucose and oxygen to your child's brain. A physically active child has a cognitively active brain.
3. Choose brain-friendly foods that boost energy, neural activity, "brain cleansing" and natural enhancement.
4. Keep stress to a minimum so that cortisol, the stress hormone, cannot attack the brain.
5. Use music to help the left side of the brain work more effectively.
6. Learn your child's preferred "learning style" and use it to assist with homework and projects.
7. Use scents such as peppermint and spearmint to keep children alert while they study and take tests.
8. Use bold-colored index cards and scented markers in your homework center to keep the brain alert. Keep flowers in the home environment to increase neural activity.
9. Create a language-rich environment. Provide lots of books. Good conversation. Read aloud to children daily. Words literally help to grow brain connections.
10. Avoid television and video games. They over-stimulate the right side of the brain and can contribute to ADD and other disorders.

### Salmon Patties

*A good source of Omega-3 fats that the brain loves*

#### Ingredients:

- 2 small cans of boned, skinless salmon (flaked and drained)
- ¼ cup skim milk
- 1 beaten egg
- ¾ cup bread crumbs
- Salt and pepper

#### Directions:

Mix all ingredients into a dough. Pat into thin patties for browning. Brown patties in olive oil until done.

### No Bake Blueberry Yogurt Pie

*Blueberries are brain food!*

#### Ingredients:

- 8-inch graham cracker crust
- 2 small cartons of blueberry low-fat yogurt
- 1 regular sized container of fat-free whipped topping
- 1 cup fresh blueberries (drained)



#### Directions:

Mix two cartons of yogurt, the fat-free whipped topping and blueberries.

Fold the mixture into the crust and top with more berries.

Chill at least 3 hours before serving.

The recipes were provided by Dr. Linda Karges-Bone, a professor in the School of Education at Charleston Southern University, in Charleston, S.C. (See adjacent story) Find more about Dr. Bone at [www.educationinsite.com](http://www.educationinsite.com)

**For more healthy recipes—updated weekly—as well as news stories and tips focused on the health of children and families, go to [www.healthykidstoday.org](http://www.healthykidstoday.org), a website developed and supported by the Winter Park Health Foundation.**

## Safe Zone Provides Help for Teens Facing Typical Adolescent Issues

High School students facing troubling issues like relationship difficulties, stress and risk taking behaviors commonly seen in adolescence are being provided new sources of help through a "Safe Zone" project developed for Winter Park High School by the school's Healthy School Team (HST).



### Call 2-1-1 for Help

The current unsettling economy can make it difficult for families to cope, but a call to the 2-1-1 free information and referral telephone service can connect you to community resources that can help.

Operated by Heart of Florida United Way and established through the support of the Winter Park Health Foundation, 2-1-1 includes information on 743 agencies throughout Central Florida. The top services requested focus on utility bill payment assistance, rent payment assistance, food pantries, transitional housing/shelter and community clinics.

For help, just dial 2-1-1. The service is free, confidential, multi-lingual, and available 24 hours a day.

Orange • Osceola • Seminole  
**2-1-1**  
 Get Connected. Get Answers.

Knowing that students often don't know where to go for help on these problems, the HST has created a network of teachers and administrators who are prepared to listen to problems and then help direct the students to the appropriate services.

Chris Watson, RN, nurse and Healthy School Team co-leader at Winter Park High School, said there are about 30 teachers, guidance counselors and administrators participating in the program. Those participating have a sign with the Safe Zone logo, created by a WPHS web design class, on the door to indicate to students that the location is a safe place to come and seek help on any issues.

Teachers and staff aren't expected to be able to answer all of a student's questions, but they are able to listen and refer the student to an appropriate source of help.

Ms. Watson and Vietka Jones, WPHS CHILL Counselor, are visiting classrooms and school clubs to spread the word about the Safe Zone program.

# Healthy Kids Today

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Middle & High School Edition

# Healthy Kids Today

### Spring 2008

- Parents Are Key in Helping Children Cope With Peer Abuse
- Local Schools Focused on Winning Governor's Fitness Challenge
- Safe Zone Provides Help for Teens
- Choking Game Can Be Deadly
- Tips for the Care and Feeding of Your Child's Brain
- Brain-Building Family Recipes
- Call 2-1-1 for Help

**Healthy Kids Today** is published by the Winter Park Health Foundation especially for students and families affiliated with schools in the Winter Park Consortium of Schools—Aloma, Audubon Park, Brookshire, Cheney, Dommerich, Hungerford, Lake Sybelia and Lakemont elementary schools; Glenridge and Maitland Middle schools; Winter Park 9th Grade Center; Winter Park High School and Winter Park Tech.

[HealthyKidsToday.org](http://HealthyKidsToday.org)



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## Parents Are Key in Helping Children Cope With Peer Abuse

The "Queen Bees," the "Plastics" and the "Barbies"—nicknames for the self-appointed cool girls in any school—have strutted the hallways serving up torment for as long as there have been schools.

Few women don't wince at the memory of being victimized at one time or another, whether it involved being excluded from a cafeteria lunch table, not being invited to a party or being talked about in notes passed in a classroom.

Today's high tech tactics, that involve cell phones, text messaging and the Internet, have ratcheted up the pain for victims to new heights.

And there is more of it than ever occurring at younger ages, as young as preschool, according to mental health experts. This makes it more important than ever for parents to know how they can help their daughters learn to cope.

*continued inside*



## Local Schools Focused on Winning Governor's Fitness Challenge

Winter Park Consortium elementary schools will all participate in Gov. Charlie Crist's newly announced 2007-2008 Governor's Fitness Challenge, an eight-week challenge which kicked off in March encouraging elementary school students and their schools to participate in physical activity.

After the Fitness Challenge is piloted in Florida's elementary schools this spring, it will be expanded to include middle schools in the 2008-2009 school year. The kickoff for the 2008-2009 program will take place during the Governor's Fitness Challenge Awards Rally to be held in September.

Participating elementary schools in the spring challenge have a chance to win \$5,000 or \$10,000 worth of sports or fitness equipment or a

*continued inside*

Name calling, gossiping and exclusion are just a few examples of this type of behavior called “relational aggression.” According to Dr. Nicki Crick, Director, Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota and a researcher on the subject, relational aggression is “emotional violence and bullying behaviors focused on damaging an individual’s social connections within the peer group.” It can happen once, or be repeated over and over. And it is the repetition that is of greatest concern.

Seen more commonly in girls than boys, relational aggression has short and long term consequences for both the person inflicting the pain and the victim, (as well as bystanders) including poor self esteem, feelings of powerlessness, loneliness, isolation, anger, depression, eating disorders, poor academic performance, suicidal thoughts, or at its most extreme—school violence.

It also can drive students to avoid school. The National Association of School Psychologists reports that 160,000 students each year fail to attend school out of fear of relational

aggression. The group estimates that 22 percent of children between fourth and eighth grades report academic difficulties due to peer abuse.

### So what is going on?

Developmentally, girls are at a stage where life is all about peers—which is why they all want to shop at the same place and feel like they have to fit in, explained Sandee Nebel, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, who operates the White Picket Fence Counseling Center in Winter Park. She has spoken at a variety of area schools on the issues associated with relational aggression. (Ms. Nebel specializes in eating disorders and related issues and works with adolescents through adulthood.)

Relational aggression is getting more attention now because there has been enough research to show that while some students move through this phase of development relatively unscathed, others will be hurt and in pain which could lead to problems like eating disorders, drug abuse or even suicide, she said.

### It affects both the bully and the bullied.

“Both parties need to learn appropriate ways of assertiveness, conflict resolution, empathy, and other personal/social effectiveness

insights and skills,” according to the introduction to a recent conference on relational aggression held in Orlando.

The tough part for parents may be figuring out the best time and how to get involved because girls may be friends one day, enemies the next and then friends again.

This makes it important to be a good listener—and observer.

Beware, Ms. Nebel said, when the phone stops ringing, or the child stops sending and receiving text messages or emails and is isolating. This should raise some red flags.

But many students say they don’t want parents to jump in and solve problems. And if they do, it can get in the way of kids learning some coping skills.

Ramey Wood, M.A., CHILL counselor at Maitland Middle School, recently met with a group of sixth and seventh grade girls to talk about this type of bullying.

The girls said the exclusion they face frequently is related to material things, such as clothing and brand names, according to Wood.

“When the girls were discussing text-bullying, they said it happens frequently because it is easier to say something to a person when she is not in front of the person’s face,”

Wood said. “When texting or instant messaging, people are unable to see emotions attached, which can make it easier to say hurtful things.”

The girls credited their parents as being the reason they could deal with the bullying in a positive way. “It was very apparent to me how vital the parents’ role is in helping their child with these experiences,” said Wood.

But at the same time, nearly every girl feared that if she told her parents about being “bullied” at school, they would feel the need to “take care” of the situation for her. The girls emphasized that if parents try to resolve the issue for them, the situation could be worsened, Ms. Wood said.

Parents naturally want to look for a way to remove pain from a child being teased at school and solve the problem. But it is “important for parents to help empower their child and help teach her coping skills that can be used throughout life,” Wood said.

When the girls were asked the best way for their parents to help, they said that having their parents support them and help them explore ways to deal with the situation together would be effective.

Wood offered these other suggestions for parents:

- Help normalize the experience for the child and let her know that many other people at school are having similar

experiences. Perhaps parents can share how they overcame similar experiences.

- It can be helpful to assist the child in identifying what “friend” means and what qualities she wants in a friend.
- Another thing parents can say is that often when people “bully” others it is because that person feels insecure and wants to fit in with others.

- Help the child identify a “safe place” or “safe person” at school to talk with (i.e.; teacher or counselor) if needed.

Ms. Nebel pointed out it is also important for parents to model healthy behaviors. Parents who gossip a lot and talk about others negatively set a poor example.

She also suggested parents try to get their children involved in activities where they feel comfortable, such as a drama class, a sport, a church activity or volunteer opportunity. Helping others is a good way to build self esteem.

Self esteem, empathy and kindness are good tools for youths to have to cope now and in the future.

## RESOURCES

If you would like more information about relational aggression, contact the CHILL Counselor at your child’s school.

### Books:

**Girl Wars: 12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying**  
by Cheryl Dessasega, et al.

**Mean Chicks, Cliques and Dirty Tricks: A Real Girl’s Guide to Getting Through the Day with Smarts and Style**  
by Erika V. Shearin Karres, Ed.D

**Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls**  
by Rachel Simmons

**Queen Bees & Wannabes**  
by Rosalind Wiseman

**Surviving Ophelia: Mothers Share Their Wisdom in Navigating the Tumultuous Teenage Years**  
by Cheryl Dessasega

### Websites:

[www.girlsempowered.com](http://www.girlsempowered.com)

[www.clubophelia.com](http://www.clubophelia.com)

[www.relationalaggression.com](http://www.relationalaggression.com)

## Governor’s Challenge

from page 1

visit from a Florida professional athlete or Olympian. They also have the opportunity to be designated a “Governor’s Fitness Champion School.” The Winter Park Consortium/Coordinated Youth Initiative (CYI) elementary schools are perfectly poised to set the standard for this challenge,” said Debbie Watson, vice president, Winter Park Health Foundation.

“We’ve already been recognized by Gov. Crist for the work we are doing together with our school health programs,” she said. “Now, the Governor’s new Challenge gives us a chance to show him what we already do, can do, and what is possible in our schools when it comes to school wellness and student fitness,” she added.

The elementary school program will last eight weeks and focus on five activities that can be completed during or after the school day. Participating schools commit to dedicate two 45-minute sessions or three 30-minute sessions per week for the duration of the Governor’s Fitness Challenge so that students can work on the five activities of the Governor’s Fitness Challenge or from a selection of other activities.

Watch for more information about the middle school pilot.

**For more information, go to [www.governorsfitnesschallenge.com](http://www.governorsfitnesschallenge.com)**



## Choking Game Can be Deadly

Kids in Central Florida and around the country have experimented with the “Choking Game” which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in February said caused at least 82 deaths nationwide since 1995.

The game, known by a variety of names including the Pass Out Game, Airplaning, the Blackout Game and the Flatliner Game, involves children and teens choking each other or themselves to get a brief high, according to the CDC.

Participants either choke each other or use a noose to choke themselves, and after a short time, the participants can pass out which might lead to serious injury or even death from hanging or strangulation, CDC officials warn.

The game has been around for generations under different names, but in recent years the game has become more deadly as youths began to use ropes and belts as nooses and play the game alone. This has brought international attention, according to Games Adolescents Shouldn’t Play (GASP), an international not-for-profit association formed to educate parents about the issue and put an end to the game.

Here are signs children may be involved in the choking game provided by the CDC:

- Discussion of the game or its aliases
- Bloodshot eyes

- Marks on the neck
- Wearing high-necked shirts, even in warm weather
- Frequent, severe headaches
- Disorientation after spending time alone
- Increased and uncharacteristic irritability or hostility
- Ropes, scarves, and belts tied to bedroom furniture or doorknobs or found knotted on the floor
- The unexplained presence of dog leashes, choke collars, bungee cords, etc.
- Petechiae (pinpoint bleeding spots) under the skin of the face, especially the eyelids, or the conjunctiva (the lining of the eyelids and eyes)

Health officials say it is essential that parents talk to children about the dangers of the game. They should explain that each time the child plays the game, he or she risks the death of brain cells or themselves.

If the child is participating in the game, health officials recommend parents alert parents of children’s friends and alert school staff such as the nurse or counselor, because it is likely more than one student will be involved.

For further information, contact the CHILL Counselor at your school.

