



# Parenting Plus

Funded by the Interagency Early Intervention Committee

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## Reason, Season and Lifetime

People always come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. When you figure out which it is, you know exactly what to do.

When someone is in your life for a REASON, it is usually to meet a need you have expressed outwardly or inwardly.

They have come to assist you through a difficulty, or to provide you with guidance and support, to aid you physically, emotionally, or even spiritually.

They may seem like a godsend to you, and they are.

They are there for the reason you need them to be.

Then, without any wrong doing on your part or at an inconvenient time, this person will say or do something to bring the relationship to an end.

Sometimes they die. Sometimes they just walk away.

Sometimes they act up or out and force you to take a stand.

What we must realize is that our need has been met, our desire fulfilled; their work is done.

The prayer you sent up has been answered and it is now time to move on.

When people come into your life for a SEASON, it is because your turn has come to share, grow, or learn.

They may bring you an experience of peace or make you laugh.

They may teach you something you have never done.

They usually give you an unbelievable amount of joy.

Believe it! It is real! But, only for a season.

And like spring turns to summer and summer to fall, the season eventually ends.

LIFETIME relationships teach you lifetime lessons; those things you must build upon in order to have a solid emotional foundation.

Your job is to accept the lesson, love the person/people (anyway); and put what you have learned to use in all other relationships and areas in your life.

It is said that love is blind but friendship is clairvoyant.



## Parent Group for parents of children with special needs – Morrison County

The Morrison County Parent Group meets every third Tuesday evening of the month at the Mid-State Education Building in Little Falls. It is open to parents who are raising a child/children with any type of special need and any age. Most months we have a guest speaker as well as discussion time. The group is co-sponsored and facilitated by Arc Midstate and the Parent Partnership Project.

For questions or more information, please call 320-631-2504 or 1-877-251-7272.

If you no longer want or need to receive this newsletter, please call (320) 631-2504 to be taken off the mailing list.

# The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Parents Raising Children with Special Needs

by Sharon Gabison

1. **Be Proactive.** You will end up becoming your child's best specialist and your child's best advocate. To be your child's best advocate, you need to learn what it is you need to advocate for. Educate yourself. Become an expert. No two children are the same. Do your homework. Research. Do not believe everything you read and hear. Familiarize yourself with local services available to you and your child.

2. **Begin with the end in mind.** The "end" can reflect the next 10-minutes, the end of the day, or 20 years down the road. Regardless of where the "end" is, plan. You would never venture out on a road trip without a map. A map is a plan. The future, whether immediate or long term is a ride that needs a plan. Plan ahead for the long term future. Preparing a will, taking out life insurance and planning for our children's education is something that most parents consider once they become parents. When raising children with special needs, this is more important. The natural course in life is that our kids will grow up, move out and have a family of their own. When raising a child with special needs, we may need to think of their adult living arrangements well before they are adults. Exploring future living arrangements is something that we may not consider when our children are young, but a vital necessity in anticipation of lengthy waiting lists.

3. **Put First Things First.** Try to maintain a sense of "normalcy" as best as possible. Your life does not have to be completely defined by your child's disorder. You are still a family. Don't forget other family members. Siblings need to feel some sense of "normalcy". It is easy for parents to encourage siblings to "help out". It is not uncommon for younger siblings to assume a super-ordinate role in the care of their older sibling. Children need a childhood. It is not fair for adults to expect children to take on adult responsibilities, nor is it fair to deprive a child of their childhood. Don't let anything stop you from doing family things. Don't forget your spouse/partner. Have regular dates with your partner. Go out and do adult things. **Don't forget the "others" in your life.**

4. **Think Win/Win.** Learn how to get what your child needs by helping others understand how helping your child will help them. If others understand how they will benefit by helping your child, then they may be more apt to help.

5. **Seek first to understand then to be understood.** You can't expect others to understand and help you or your child if they don't understand the disorder. You may need to educate other parents/family members and those interacting with our children on a day to day basis. Many parents of children with special needs feel that others, including parents with "neurotypical" children just "don't get it". Your child may not participate like other children at parks, birthday parties and other functions. If you are open enough to discussing your child's needs, then do so. There is nothing to be embarrassed about. Not only will it help to inform them, but you may find that they are surprisingly supportive. Educate, educate, educate. If you work, your employer and co-workers may not understand your need to be on constant "call". The numerous appointments for specialists and therapists requires flexibility in your work schedule. Hopefully, you may be lucky enough to have an understanding employer. **If you need to educate a stranger, than you have educated one more person in this world.** There are many well intentioned individuals who may provide you with "good advice" on how to manage your child in the middle of a meltdown. There are some people who would like to help but just don't know how.

6. **Synergize.** Connect with other parents/families. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. You are not alone, and should not feel alone. There are other parents out there who are experiencing the same fears, frustrations and sadness that you may feel and longing for a connection. There is no need to be alone. Local parent groups can be a vehicle to get connected with other parents.

7. **Sharpen the Saw.** Take care of yourself. Look after yourself spiritually, mentally, physically and socially. Life is busy and hectic. If you are unable to look after yourself, then who will? Your need to maintain a healthy lifestyle including good nutrition, regular exercise and plenty of sleep is vital to optimum functioning. In order to maintain your sanity, you need to keep yourself some regular weekly or twice weekly "me time" in which you can refuel.





# The Special Education Teacher

Do you ever wonder about your child's teacher - why he or she has chosen to teach children with disabilities, what his or her qualifications are, or what kind of training he or she was given to become a special education teacher? Most of us have, yet few of us know the answers. This article will serve to expand your knowledge of the special education teaching profession and will hopefully give you a greater appreciation for the people who are committed to helping improve the lives of children with disabilities.

There are several different reasons why an individual would choose to become a special education teacher. Some make the decision because they had a relationship with someone who had disabilities as they were growing up, while others choose the career because they feel they have a mission to help children. Whatever the reason may be for deciding to become a special education teacher, they do so because they are individuals who want to make a positive contribution toward helping children with special needs reach their fullest potential.

Statistics show that 10% of all teachers are special educators. Most special education teachers are younger than teachers in the general education sector and most are female. It is also known that more special education teachers have attained a master's degree or doctorate than those teaching general education, although, they tend to have fewer years of teaching experience.

Most schools that offer special education programs are at the bachelor's degree level. That is, most states require at least a bachelor's degree to receive a special education teaching license, some require a master's degree. What is required in all states, however, is that students wanting to become special education teachers must receive coursework that focuses on the following:

- Learning the history of special education in the United States and the laws that mandate special education services for children with disabilities.

- Understanding the differences between children with and without disabilities, how the various disabilities affect the children (i.e., cognition, emotional needs), how medications can affect behavior, and the different types of communication patterns seen and used with children with disabilities;
- Screening, assessing, evaluating, and monitoring progress of children with disabilities;
- Adapting curricula, learning environments, and teaching styles for the different learning styles of each individual, and learning about life skills instruction related to independent, community, and personal living and employment;
- Managing the classroom with theories, methods and techniques specifically for children with unique learning styles;
- Providing positive behavioral support for a safe and positive learning environment, and maintaining effective strategies for crisis prevention and intervention;
- Communicating and collaborating with students, parents, and other school personnel and learn the roles of each individual in the IEP process ;



- Serving as a model for students and fully understanding the ethics of confidentiality;
- Having field experience with children with disabilities by observing local classrooms first and then completing approximately 8-10 weeks of student teaching.

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Most states also require the teacher to continue their education after graduation to improve their skills, increase their knowledge, and maintain the validity of their license.

The role of the special education teacher varies depending on the types of disabilities and ages of the children they are teaching. However, all special education teachers have the following three responsibilities: direct teaching (providing instruction to match the learning abilities, strengths and special needs of each child), preparing reports and other paperwork (IEPs, progress reports, and placement reports), and collaborating with other professionals (speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, school psychologists, and general education teachers) and parents.

Since the passage of the IDEA, there has been a shortage of qualified special education teachers to meet the large number of children covered by the law. The greatest shortages are for teachers of children with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and multiple disabilities. Part of the shortage is because approximately 11% of special education teachers leave the field each year, some transferring to general education and some leaving the teaching profession altogether.

Special education is a very demanding profession with many challenges, especially for the first- or second-year teacher. Those who are unable to continue teaching special education leave within the first five years of teaching. Special education teachers have many of the same stresses that general education teachers have such as discipline concerns, parent difficulties, or insufficient materials. However, in addition, they also have the challenge of IEP requirements, supervision of paraprofessionals (teaching assistants), and additional paperwork. Other causes of stress for special education teachers is the lack of support from administrators, isolation from other school faculty, and overwhelming individual student needs.

Despite the many challenges that special education teachers must face, most of them who stay within the profession love their jobs. Teachers enjoy developing relationships with the child and his or her family, they are rewarded by knowing that their efforts have a substantial impact on the lives of children, and they are often excited by the unique challenge of teaching children with disabilities.

As parents, it is important for you to be able to establish and maintain a good working relationship with your child's teacher. Aside from knowing your rights as a parent, there are other things you can do to foster a positive relationship, such as establishing open communication, using creative problem-solving techniques together, offering to volunteer or help, and providing praise and encouragement to those who are working with your child.

Special education teachers are very special people. They have patience, creativity, and determination to help children with disabilities. They provide children with special needs hope, love and, most important, belief in themselves.



Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare's outstate conference, **Children Who Have Special Needs**, will be held October 21 and 22, 2008, at Madden's on Gull Lake. The family-focused evening seminar on Tuesday October 21<sup>st</sup> will have topics regarding sleep disorders, building self esteem and parent-physician communication.

The full-day professional conference on Wednesday October 22<sup>nd</sup> will have topics on mild brain injury, orthopaedic management of the ambulatory child who has cerebral palsy, neurological concerns in young children, palliative care, feeding and vision concerns and mental health issues. Parents are also welcome to attend these sessions.

For more information or to receive a brochure, please contact Cynthia Smith at 218-237-3020 or email, [csmith@gillettechildrens.com](mailto:csmith@gillettechildrens.com).

You may also view the brochure and register online at [www.gillettechildrens.org](http://www.gillettechildrens.org).



The Success Program recently received a new bicycle for the students! This is a Ricksycle, a tandem recumbent bicycle for two. The Ricksycle combines the tandem bicycle, the tricycle and the rickshaw. Two people can ride side-by-side, either can steer, and either one or both riders can pedal. The students will enjoy the exercise and fresh air.

It is one of the beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.  
-Ralph Waldo Emerson



### A book review...

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### **Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide by Pete & Pam Wright**

Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy, second edition will teach you how to plan, prepare, organize and get quality special education services. In this comprehensive, easy-to-read book, you will learn your child's disability and educational needs, how to create a simple method for organizing your child's file and devising a master plan for your child's special education. You will understand parent-school conflict, how to create paper trails and effective letter writing. This book includes dozens of worksheets, forms and sample letters that you can tailor to your needs. Whether you are new to special education or an experienced advocate this book will provide a clear roadmap to effective advocacy for your child. You will use this book again and again.

This book is available to borrow from the Lending Library

