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ST PETER'S GIRLS PREP SCHOOL

Weekly Newsletter of the Girls JP

FROM THE HEADMASTER

At last year's Prize Giving I spoke briefly about the 'Myth of Effortless Perfection.' The essence of the message was that many girls spend their lives trying to be effortlessly perfect. An article, sent to me recently in this regard, resonated with me.

HOW EMPOWERING GIRLS TO CONFRONT CONFLICT AND BUCK PERFECTION HELPS THEIR WELL-BEING

(An adapted article written by Katrina Schwartz on Simone Marean, CEO of [Girls Leadership](#), a non-profit organisation working to help girls find and raise their voices).

Girls have always grown up with cultural and societal stereotypes swirling around them. Despite the unparalleled access to opportunities that young women have today compared with the past, many are still absorbing strong messages about how they should look, act and be. Many of the most powerful influences come from the media, but young girls could find relief among the real people in their lives. Social media has changed the game, requiring teachers and parents to also change strategies to help girls navigate complicated waters.

A growing percentage of girls feel pressure to please everyone in their lives. Studies show the rate of depression and anxiety increasing more rapidly among girls, and social media culture has heightened the sense among many girls that they must be perfect, presenting a pleasant, well-behaved, curated persona to the world.

While social media has the potential to amplify damaging messages about bodies, perfection and beauty that have long existed, it would be too simple to ban digital devices. Marean points out when educators and parents act from a place of fear they tend to go to extremes, alienating the girls they love in the process.

Instead, Marean advocates to navigate these spaces with a different script. She says it's crucial that adults start helping young girls to engage in productive conflict, acknowledge and grow from mistakes, develop emotional intelligence and take responsibility for the role they each play in social situations.

"Relationships are integral and foundational to mental health and wellness," Marean said. "When relationships are struggling there's no way to take care of the next level of thinking." Middle school teachers know this better than anyone -- when students are dealing with social drama, they have a lot less mental space for academics.

"Girls can't express how they feel effectively until they take time to notice and name their feelings". Marean says girls know they are supposed to feel happy, calm and confident, so they disrespect their other emotions. Many don't even have the language to talk about more complicated, nuanced and less sunny feelings. But when girls name how they feel

in a situation, they can recognize that it's the situation, not them, that's the problem. That opens up a wider range of options for how they handle that situation.

One way parents can help girls to develop an emotional vocabulary and give permission to feel less than "perfect" feelings is with role modeling. When girls hear that the important adults in their lives also feel excluded or jealous or hurt, it normalizes those complex feelings. And, when a girl comes home talking about a difficult social experience, adults can help her build empathy by asking how the other person might have felt in that interaction.

"Girls need to find their voice and say who they are. They need to talk and think about what choices they're making on social media. They have choice in what they look at and what they put into the world."

Girls need to see conflict as an opportunity for change. "What we see in our girls is they lack a script to have direct conflict," Marean said. "They literally don't know the words. They also lack the permission; they feel like something is wrong with the friendship if they have conflict."

Girls from third grade through high school say the same thing about what it means to be a friend: like all the same things (or hate the same things), do everything together and never fight. That's an unrealistic expectation for friendship and it doesn't help equip girls for feelings of jealousy, anger or hurt that are regularly part of healthy relationships.

"Conflict is going to happen all the time," Marean said. "Conflict is part of a normal, healthy, functional relationship. This is how we get things to change." The challenge is helping girls to see it that way, to not be afraid of it. She cautions that if kids don't learn how conflict can lead to positive change from the adults in their lives, they'll learn about it from friends online. And online there's no eye contact, no tone of voice, and things can get nasty.

"Role play is the only way to talk about the how of communication," Marean said. When a girl comes home upset about something that happened at school, it's a normal parental reaction to want to take away her pain and get angry on her behalf. But that doesn't help her develop the skills to deal with the situation.

Instead, Marean suggests offering empathy and asking questions about what she wants to do next. At this stage, many younger girls aren't good at immediately articulating the result they hope for; instead they often go straight for what they want to do. This is where an adult can help them think through how a gut reaction might play out. Role-playing the situation gives the girl a chance to try out the words and debriefing solidifies it.

"The number one fear I hear from parents around teaching their girls to have a voice is that what if she does it all and she doesn't get what she needs? What if her voice is not heard?" Marean said. Her answer: that's all right; her voice won't always be heard. But the experience of expressing it can be empowering and it's a first step.

Have a wonderful weekend! Nibe nempelasonto emnandi!

Darrel Webb
(Headmaster)

FROM THE JP HEAD

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Community Outreach at St Peter's has really gathered momentum over the last few years. We have programmes running in Diepsloot Combined Schools (DCS) and Sefikeng Primary. St Peter's Prep have interns and parent volunteers who travel to DCS every Tuesday to work with the children in Grades 0, 1 and 2 from the entire community. The Interns who volunteer at Diepsloot, are funded by CIDA and, are interns who are tasked with teaching second language lessons. These Interns are from both the Boys and Girls Schools; Phono-Graphix, arts and crafts form the basis of the programme offered to the Grade 0 - 2 children.

The programme run at Sefikeng is also based on the Phono-Graphix Reading and Spelling Method. Every Wednesday, a teacher and interns from the Girls School, as well as volunteers, work with small groups of Grade 1 children, focussing on Literacy and development of phonics. There is also a wonderful Grade 0 programme driven by parents, focusing on perceptual and gross and fine motor development.

Jenny Taylor who started 'Read for Africa' is very involved in both schools and has been invaluable in terms of training and guidance for all volunteers. She is actively involved in skills development, enterprise as well as social development. She supports the teachers at DCS and Sefikeng, as well as the parents, interns and teachers from St Peter's. Jenny is passionate about Literacy and Reading. She recently ran a Phono-Graphix workshop for interested volunteers and interns and this was well supported. After the training Jenny had this to say:

Last week, felt like the vision of the last five years come together so nicely in one room with everyone so excited and all the range of people from interns, to the St Peter's volunteers and then my usual volunteers and even some DCS teachers. 'Read for Africa' turns 18 on Wednesday, (14 March) and I feel that now, after 18 years, we're ready for 'adulthood' and have our 'drivers' license' to proceed and really take things to the next level and teach AFRICA to read!

We want to say thank you to Jenny, for her commitment, to helping us and a huge 'thank you' to all teachers, volunteers and interns - for their constant support and enthusiasm: together we touch lives.



CONGRATULATIONS

We are thrilled to welcome new babies into the St Peter's family. Congratulations to the following families:

- Aimee Ntsebeza has a new baby sister.
- Reatlegile Mokhou has a new baby brother – Leruo
- Kaeya Vandayar has a new baby sister – Mila

10 TIPS FOR RAISING RESILIENT CHILDREN (By Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S.)

While adulthood is filled with serious responsibilities, childhood isn't exactly stress-free. Children take tests, learn new information, change schools, change neighbourhoods, get sick, get braces, encounter bullies, make new friends and occasionally get hurt by those friends. What helps Children in navigating these kinds of challenges is resilience. Resilient children are problem solvers. They face unfamiliar or tough situations and strive to find good solutions. Resilience isn't birth right; it can be taught. Parents need to be encouraged to equip their children with the skills to handle the unexpected, which actually contrasts our cultural approach.

"We have become a culture of trying to make sure our children are comfortable. We as parents are trying to stay one step ahead of everything our children are going to run into." The problem? "Life doesn't work that way." Anxious people have an especially hard time helping their children tolerate uncertainty, simply because they have a hard time tolerating it themselves. The idea of putting your child through the same pain that you went through is intolerable, so anxious parents try to protect their children and shield them from worst-case scenarios. A parent's job isn't to be there all the time for their children; it's to teach them to handle uncertainty and to problem-solve. Below, are some valuable suggestions for raising resilient children:

1. Don't accommodate every need.

Overprotecting kids only fuels their anxiety, whenever we try to provide certainty and comfort, we are getting in the way of children being able to develop their own problem-solving and mastery. A dramatic but not uncommon example is a child gets out of school at 3:15. But they worry about their parent picking them up on time. So the parent arrives an hour earlier and parks by their child's sports field so they can see the parent is there.

2. Avoid eliminating all risk.

Naturally, parents want to keep their children safe. But eliminating all risk robs children of learning resiliency. The key is to allow appropriate risks and teach your children essential skills. "Start young. The child who's going to get his driver's license is going to have started when he's 5 [years old] learning how to ride his bike and look both ways [slow down and pay attention]. Giving kids age-appropriate freedom helps them learn their own limits.

3. Teach them to problem-solve.

Let's say your child wants to go to sleep-away camp, but they're nervous about being away from home. An anxious parent, might say, "Well, then there's no reason for you to go. But a better approach is to normalize your child's nervousness, and help them figure out how to navigate being homesick. So you might ask your child how they can practice getting used to being away from home. In other words, engage your child in figuring out how they can handle challenges. Give them the opportunity, over and over, "to figure out what works and what doesn't."

4. Teach your kids concrete skills.

Children need to be given the specific skills they'll need to learn in order to handle certain situations. One needs to ask your children "Where are we going with this [situation]? What skill do they need to get there?" For instance, you might need teach a shy child how to greet someone and start a conversation.

5. Avoid "why" questions.

"Why" questions aren't helpful in promoting problem-solving. If your child left their bike in the rain, and you ask "why?" "what will they say? I was careless. I'm an 8-year-old," Rather ask "how" questions instead. "You left your

bike out in the rain, and your chain rusted. How will you fix that?" For instance, they might go online to see how to fix the chain or contribute money to a new chain.

6. Don't provide all the answers.

Rather than providing your children with every answer, start using the phrase "I don't know," "followed by promoting problem-solving," using this phrase helps kids learn to tolerate uncertainty and think about ways to deal with potential challenges. Also, starting with small situations when they're young helps prepare kids to handle bigger trials. They won't like it, but they'll get used to it.

7. Avoid talking in catastrophic terms.

Pay attention to what you say to your children and around them. Anxious parents, in particular, tend to "talk very catastrophically around their children." For instance, instead of saying "It's really important for you to learn how to swim," they say, "It's really important for you to learn how to swim because it'd be devastating to me if you drowned."

8. Let your kids make mistakes.

"Failure is not the end of the world; it's the place you get to when you figure out what to do next." Letting children mess up is tough and painful for parents. But it helps children to learn how to fix slip-ups and make better decisions next time.

9. Help them manage their emotions.

Emotional management is key in resilience. Teach your children that all emotions are OK. It's OK to feel angry that you lost the game or someone else finished your ice cream. Also, teach them that after feeling their feelings, they need to think through what they're doing next. Children learn very quickly which powerful emotions get them what they want. Parents have to learn how to ride the emotions, too. You might tell your child, "I understand that you feel that way. I'd feel the same way if I were in your shoes, but now you have to figure out what the appropriate next step is."

10. Model resiliency.

Of course, children also learn from observing their parents' behaviour. Try to be calm and consistent; you cannot say to a child you want them to control their emotions, while you yourself are flipping out. Talk about different ways to handle a circumstance in the future.

Resiliency helps children navigate the inevitable trials, triumphs and tribulations of childhood and adolescence. Resilient kids also become resilient adults, able to survive and thrive in the face of life's unavoidable stressors

Have a super week!

Heather Kissack

BIRTHDAY CHAPEL

On Tuesday, 27 March the following Birthday girls will receive her birthday card and a blessing in Chapel at 8:00. We hope to see the parents there.

L Ponting
M Dijkstra

M Ho
R McGhee

ECO NEWS: CELEBRATING EARTH HOUR – SATURDAY, 24 MARCH

We suggest that the St Peter's Family joins millions of people across the world and switches off all lights, for an hour, on Saturday from 20:30 - 21:30 - to raise awareness for the planet!

Earth Hour is a worldwide movement for the planet organised by the WWF to encourage individuals, businesses and governments around the world to take positive action by turning off their lights for a designated 60 minutes.



At school, we will support this movement on Friday from 08:30 – 09:30. We have challenged all departments to turn off as many electrical devices that they can during that hour and find creative ways to avoid the need to use electricity during this hour. Use this event as an educational opportunity to discuss environmental issues as a family.

Cathy Linnell (*HOD: Science*)

ST PETER'S WINTER WARMERS 2018 – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Due to popular demand, *Winter Warmers* is back on the St Peter's Prep 2018 calendar. We are looking for a group of parents to organise this function.

Please click on the following link to volunteer <https://goo.gl/forms/wQ54pY8AFIW4FmoD2>

There will be a 'kick off' meeting at 07:15 at the Mvukuzane Pavilion on Thursday, 29 March.

Many thanks.

St Peter's Prep Schools PA

GIRLS SCHOOL TRAFFIC FLOW

Please be advised that the traffic flow through the Girls School Senior Prep carpark, on the school side of the centre island, is for 'Drop and Go' only, during peak times.

When leaving the school, you will be able to take a left turn as you pass the Aftercare facility in the JP carpark. (see map below – red beacons) This will mean that you can avoid the 'Bottleneck', which occurs on the narrow road past the JP hall. The left turn will take you onto Grieff Road where you will exit the main school gate, as normal.

Should Witkoppen Road be congested, Grieff Road could also still be backed up, however.



FORTHCOMING WEEK

Please check the Calendar section of Communicator St Peter's for the forthcoming week's activities.



JP APRIL HOLIDAY CLUB GRADE 0, 1 AND 2 GIRLS



Mrs Buck, Mrs Steyn, Mrs Montagu and Ms Peake are excited to be running a holiday club in the April school holidays. Come and join us for lots of baking, crafts, a treasure hunt and a bike day. Girls may sign up for all days or selected days on the sign-up sheet that can be found on the Holiday Club board at the JP. Please can parents include their email address with their child's name and take a sign-up sheet and information letter. Payments by EFT to Mrs Buck by the end of term.

Cost: R220 per day and the club runs from 8:00 – 12:00.

Dates: 12-13 April; 16 – 20 April; 23-24 April

Limited numbers. Register soon!

