

Tempers and Toddlers
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Houston, July 20

Houston's mothers group talks with a professional about ways to handle temperamental tots.

Why children misbehave was a theme of a mothers group meeting today. Guest speaker Ballard Burgher, a clinical psychologist and licensed social worker, fielded questions from parents and grandparents seeking how best to deal with children who have temper tantrums, and the most effective discipline for them other than shouting, threatening or spanking them.

"If parents want to teach their children how to communicate their needs through appropriate behavior, there are two things that must be done," Dr. Burgher said. "First, give children positive attention or praise when they act appropriately. Second, remove your attention from misbehavior. In other words, ignore it. This teaches them a new philosophy."

He also stressed that children's needs change with their growth and development. Therefore, effective parenting skills will vary from child to child. There are many other parenting techniques available, such as rewards and privileges, time outs and commands that parents may also find helpful, he said.

Andrea Batsche, mother of three, including two toddlers, said: "Dr. Burgher's emphasis on the use of constant 'correct praise' in rearing children is an important factor which allows them to develop a sense of respect for other people. I've attended many parenting classes in the past, but this one was a lot more personable, and I could have my concerns addressed. I like the idea that the SGI is beginning to tackle the parenting issue."

Two-year-old Noel Reyes' father, who is Catholic, asked Dr. Burgher what impact having parents who are of different religions has on a child's upbringing. "Parents need to agree on the values they want to impart to their children," Dr. Burgher said. "Furthermore, having parents of different religions can teach the child to appreciate differences."

Tonya Ayers, mother of two active boys, had this to contribute: "As a Buddhist and a mother, I realize that children misbehave in order to test our limits and because it is the nature of children. More important, children help parents do their human revolution. In turn, we help them build the foundation for their practice and future. This parenting session gave me some new insight into methods of problem-solving, and I'm glad I came."

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