DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILDREN'S CENTERS

DBCC NEWS

DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILD CARE, Inc.
Park Avenue Center, 806 Park Ave., Baltimore, MD 21201-4807 • 410-669-1010
University Center, 237 Arch Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-1526 • 410-659-0515

February, 2007

DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

by Susan Sandstrom

It was Alice's birthday and the children were looking forward to a birthday party. Parents generally bring in cupcakes or a sheet cake for a small birthday celebration at snack time. I suddenly realized (and too late) that there was no cake. Alice was having parties at home and at her grandparents so I'm sure her parents figured she could do without the school party. Unfortunately, the children, including Alice, expected a party. It was time for some teacher creativity. The school kitchen had nothing suitable and then I spied a lone banana. I peeled it and stuck four candles in it. The banana was brought in with a flourish and the candles were lit. We all sang Happy Birthday and Alice blew the candles out with a big grin on her face. Then the banana was sliced and we each had a piece of banana. It was one of the most successful birthday parties ever! The children loved the "banana cake" and it was talked about for days afterward. In fact, several children said they wanted a banana party too! [The next day I put a bunch of bananas in the dramatic play area and a box of birthday candles (no matches!) and the banana party was replayed over and over again.]

I reported to Alice's mother about the successful party but she was not amused. Alice's mother was angry because I had not cued her to bring a cake in to school. Birthday parties are not included in school policies and Alice's mother felt uninformed. She was afraid that Alice had been disappointed (which was also something I was trying to avoid) and she sprang to her child's defense. Parents, understandably, do not want their children to be disappointed.

It is the parents' job to be an advocate for their child and to save them from unnecessary pain. Here lies the problem. Where is the line between advocate and enabler? It is not an easy line to find! It is so hard to watch a child emotionally crushed by something that is avoidable. Yet, at what point do we stop shielding a child and allow some exposure to disappointment? Is a young child equipped to handle disappointment and if not, how do we help him gain the necessary skills so he can handle it?

Years ago the center received a dozen or so cot sheets. These sheets were plain white sheets and were brought into one of the older rooms without

(Continued on p.2)

Andrew, Niles, Noah and Ethan

Photo by Melissa Yarbrough

RAY LEWIS WATCH OUT!

Come out and swing at the annual DBCC Spring Fling **Saturday, March 10, 2007 at the Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute & Cultural Center**

More details on back page

©DBCC News, February 2007

DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

(Cont'd from p. 1)

much fanfare. Some of the children had their own sheets but the cots were arbitrarily selected to receive the new cot sheets. There, of course, was much discussion among the children about who got a new cot sheet and who did not. One of the parents came into the office the next day and complained bitterly because his child had not received a new cot sheet. He said his son was very upset because he did not receive a new cot sheet and had to nap on his old Power Ranger sheets.

Again, this father felt his son was disappointed and the thought of his child being disappointed was almost too much for him to bear. As an advocate, parents make sure their child is not being victimized, taken advantage of, or being denied what is rightfully his or hers. That is a parent's job. Again, at what point do we decide to allow the child to deal with a modicum of disappointment?

I think we can all agree that it is inevitable--despite an adult's best efforts-for a young child to be disappointed from time to time. It is certainly something that all human beings experience and children need real life experiences, both positive and negative, to grow into emotionally healthy adults. Children need coping skills and these do not develop without experience. Adults want to shield young children and to some extent it is appropriate. But young children need to feel some pain, sadness, disappointment, rejection, anger and grief with enough adult support to help them deal with it and develop appropriate responses. It is important to find a balance between protecting a child from emotional discomfort and allowing a child to experience some uncomfortable feelings.

An interesting aspect of human development is that little children don't share adult reactions to events. Adult feelings are filtered through their own experiences and their reactions don't necessarily reflect what children are feeling. This is what makes young children so frustrating sometimes and so easy other times. They may dissolve into tears for something inconsequential to an adult--a wrinkle in a sock, green beans touching the potatoes or the wish for a piece of candy--and what may seem devastating to an adult may appear to be inconsequential to a young child. A child may have a curiously detached response to grandfather's death or the house burning down. She doesn't understand the concept of death or the ramifications of a fire but is interested (or maybe scared) by everyone else's response to it.

One afternoon I was watching a soccer game where 7 and 8 year olds were playing. One of the children was devastated because his team lost the game and he had to literally be carried off the field kicking and screaming. This poor child was unable to deal with the disappointment. One of the jobs of the adult is to teach a child how to get through disappointment and other negative experiences. Here are some simple suggestions to help you find the right balance for your child:

• Allow your child to be disappointed sometimes. When an adult is running interference and preventing all negative experiences the child is not allowed to grow emotionally. It is also important to let the child know that everyone feels disappointment at times. Telling personal stories sometimes helps.

• It is helpful if the adult labels his/her feelings. "I am feeling very sad. We won't see Grandpa again and I will miss him." It is okay to cry in front of your child.

• Validate your child's feelings. Allow the child to have feelings. Trying to jolly a child out of feeling bad is not always appropriate. "I know you are sad."

• Allow your child to vent without rushing in to fix the problem. Children need to vent just like adults. Children get very interested in the reactions of adults and, be careful--an older child can get very good at setting up adult reactions.

• Model appropriate emotional responses and children will eventually adopt them. It is important for children to see a spectrum of emotions. Mommy gets angry, happy, sad, annoyed, frustrated, etc. It is unrealistic for a child to see happy, loving Mommy all the time--besides, it is impossible to maintain!

• Talk about feelings when your child is calm and help your child develop a vocabulary of feeling words. Read a story aloud very dramatically with lots of emotion. Cry, laugh and get angry in imitation of the characters in the story and children will turn from the book and watch your face with rapt attention. Children are fascinated by emotional expression. Put a mirror in your child's room and your child will curiously look at himself in the middle of a tantrum. Identifying other people's feelings is another important skill and one that can be practiced while looking at books or playing a game in front of a mirror- "Now let's make an angry face." This will also help your child develop empathy.

• Talk to your child about what is happening in your family--even toddlers need basic information about family events. They may not understand it all but it is important to include them. Talking helps the child process information and eventually they will understand. Don't be surprised if you have to tell the story over and over again.

• Know your child! In other words, understand where your child is developmentally. Read your child's clues. Be careful not to give your child too much information. That can be very confusing and anxiety producing to a young child.

While many people are worried about their child learning academic skills, there are other more challenging lessons to learn that will directly impact academic and social success. Coping skills help a child become emotionally resilient and better prepared for all of life's challenges. These vital lessons start at birth when a baby receives emotional support from parents and then learns to self-comfort. These lessons continue throughout life until the child is launched as a young adult. Young children need the support of parents and teachers as they learn about their uncomfortable feelings and, of course, it is important not to overwhelm a young child. Our job is to find that line between protecting our children and allowing our children to grow emotionally. Will your child be prepared?

SCRIBBLING IS OK! by Lorien Walley

Scribbles are more complicated than you might imagine. When children scribble, they are experimenting with writing. They learn to hold the marker, to draw and to recognize the different types of marks: thick and thin lines, curved and straight lines and lines that cross-all characteristics found in conventional writing. With scribbles children learn to organize print, and to recognize organized print in their environment. If you watch children scribbling over time, you will see letters and letter-like shapes emerging on the page. It takes a lot of practice to crack the writing code!

Often, the first letters a child writes are the letters in her name. This is an important, valuable milestone. After all, our signatures are a defining and powerful symbol of who we are throughout our lives. Personal experiences that are meaningful and relevant to a child, such as the early scribbling of one's name, are always where the best learning takes place.

Many children who can write their name will continue scribbling in other contexts. This is OK! In Much More Than The ABCs, Judith A. Schickedanz outlines how writing conventional alphabet letters requires a lot of knowledge:

1- a good visual image of each letter (knowledge of how the letter looks)

2- knowledge of the line segments used to form each letter

3-knowledge about the sequence in which the lines are put together to form the letter

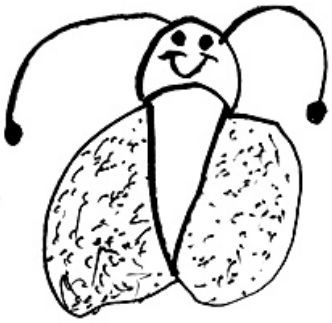
4- knowledge about the direction in which to draw each of the lines

Scribbling is the key to all of these.

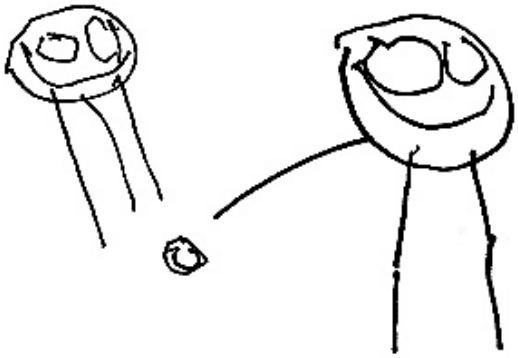
When I was in the sixth grade I took a Japanese language class. My teacher recounted an anecdote of a wise Japanese professor who studied English passionately. He could read any English text and analyze and interpret it as well as any native English speaker. After many years of study, he decided to relocate to England. Upon arrival in the country, he discovered that all his studying was for naught. He had only learned part of the language. He couldn't use it in any practical sense... he couldn't speak to express himself. Like this Japanese professor, children who learn the alphabet in isolation or before it is developmentally appropriate don't understand the connection of writing and speaking. As children move from the natural progression of scribbling to letter formation the meaning of this code emerges.

Children need to scribble. They need to experiment and learn on their own terms. Scribbling is writing in its most unique form: marks to make something new. One day these early scribbles will become conventional letters for children to use and take new ideas out into the world. Let them scribble!

[*Lorien is the Park Avenue Four-Year-Old Teacher.*]



Butterfly by Lyndsey Brown, age 4



"Mommy and poppy and me" by Harry Zimmerman, age 3

People, drawn by Zola Litt-Reddy, age 4

CHILDSPEAK

☺ **Brionna White**, age 3, has a unique situation in her classroom. Her teacher is also her mother. Brionna noticed that she was missing out on the goodbye routine that the other children experienced daily. Brionna never needed to say good-bye to her mother because she spent the day with her. Wishing to have the full experience of school, Brionna now insists that her mother drop her off and walk outside to the "good-bye window" just like all the other parents. She says good-bye to her mom and then mom comes back inside as the teacher.

☺ **Charlie Meisner**, age 3, had a runny nose. The teacher asked, "Do you know how to blow your nose?"

He nodded.

"Then why don't you get a tissue and blow your nose.

Charlie said, "No, don't worry! It'll just dry up."

☺ **Ben Southworth**, age 2, was having his diaper changed. He had a rash and fussed a little when the teacher put ointment on it.

Claire Pupa, age 2, was watching the whole scene while sitting on the toilet. "I see you have a radish," said Claire.

"Yes," said Ben, "That's why I'm crying because I have a radish."

☺ **Brionna White**, age 3, was at the art table working with Charlie. Charlie was liberally sprinkling glitter on his paper much to Brionna's dismay. Brionna complained to the teacher, "Charlie is too muching!"

☺ **Jake Horwitz**, age 4, told the teacher he had a pirate band that didn't sing love songs. They sang mean songs!

☺ **Nicholas Janczak** age 3, was listening to his mother tell a story. They were in the grocery store and the man behind the cheese counter started teasing Nicholas. He said, "Why should I give you any of my cheese?"

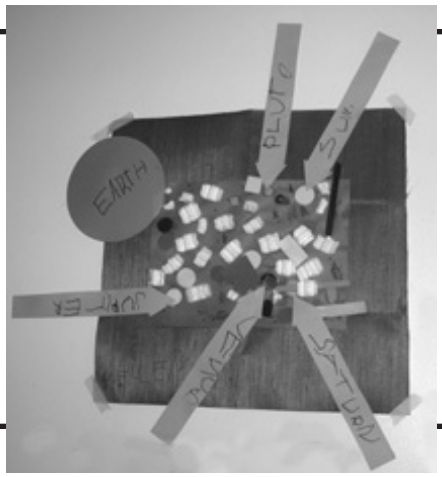
Nicholas pointed to his chest and said confidently, "Cause I'm the MAN!"

His mom finished telling the story and looked at Nicholas and said, "That's right, Nicholas. You said, 'I'm the MAN!'"

Nicholas said, "No Mommy. I'm the man! You're the man-girl!"

[Parents-please send us your own Childspeaks and we'll print them in an upcoming DBCC Newsletter. Send them to UC@dbcckids.org and put Childspeak in the subject line]

The solar system
by
Kellen, age 4



Pinkee and the Pirates

By Jake Lamason

This is my old school. I was about to drop off the monkey bars when I saw Pinkee. Pinkee was a mouse. He lived in a hole which went underground into my school.

One of my teachers was going on a trip. Pinkee wanted to go with her. He started to jump into her pocket, but saw a mousetrap and threw it out because he didn't want to get trapped. His enemy who was chasing him got trapped instead. She put her suitcase in the back of the car and drove away.

The stars lit up the car. It seemed like a load of gold on it.

While she was watching the dolphin show Pinkee swam to a pirate ship.

He started to fight a pirate. Pinkee dressed up in a very scary costume and stabbed both of the pirate's ankles.

It made him drop his gun into the water. The gun shot out bubbles. Another pirate was waiting to fight Pinkee.

Pinkee had tied up some other pirates and he had beaten up a long pirate with lots of swords. A shark was eating a pirate that Pinkee made walk the plank. A crocodile was waiting to eat another pirate.

Pinkee had hanged up another pirate with chains because he didn't have enough rope and all his weapons had broke. He then chewed up some red wood.

Pinkee made a red boat with the red wood he had chewed up. A giant octopus was rocking the boat but he liked it. Pirates that were hiding in the big ship came out and they were lonely. They died of loneliness.

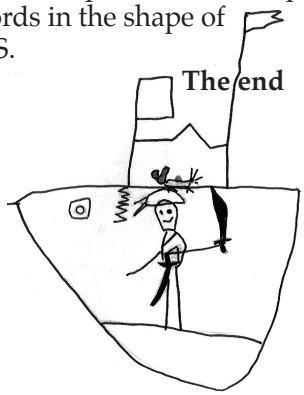
Pinkee made his boat bigger and he had a big fishing rod. He caught two fish because there was two bits of string on it. He also had a bird trap on the fishing rod. It had trapped the pirate's parrot.

The pirate ship sank because before Pinkee's weapons had broken he had made a hole in it. A shark was swimming by. He was fat because he had eaten the two last pirates. Pinkee put two motors on his ship. While he was looking out of his new crow's nest a waterfall came by and Pinkee's ship got a little hole. He looked down, saw the hole and ran down to fix it.

He lowered the anchor and went onto an island.

Coconut milk fell down into his mouth. Pinkee made a house. He put a board out and put a statue of a pirate on it. There were two swords in the shape of an X on it for NO PIRATES.

The end



[Pinkee stories were started two years ago with the four year old children at University Center. Last year the kindergarten children were still asking for Pinkee stories. Jake, now in first grade, wrote and illustrated this story at home.]

Ask Aliceanna. . .

Dear Aliceanna,

My child is a toddler and is very attached to his blanket (which is now a rag). I'm unsure about how to deal with the tantrums when the lovey is forgotten or misplaced. What do you think?

Signed
Lovey Burn-Out

Dear Lovey,

You poor thing. I imagine you jump through hoops making sure your child's blankie is always within reach. This is a typical pattern for many parents. The child has an emotional melt down and the lovey is absolutely vital to shortcut the tantrum.

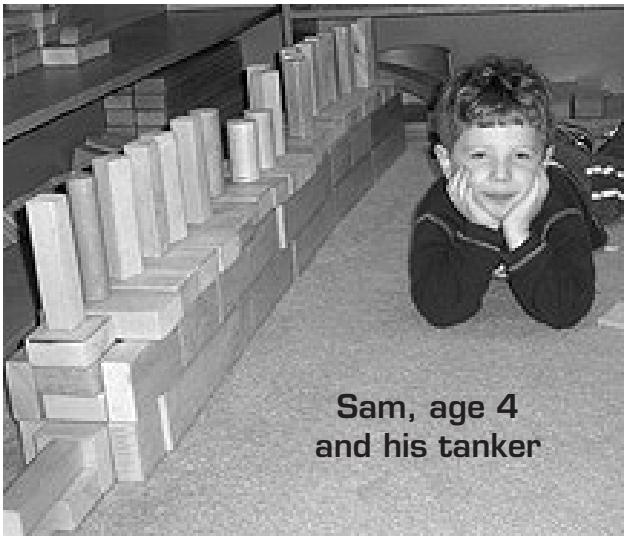
I worry about the message you are giving your child. You cannot possibly survive without your blanket (pacifier, teddy bear, etc.). In fact, it is so important that I will do anything to make sure you have it.

Here's a better message: You can live without your blanket. There are other ways to soothe yourself and I'll be there for you, too.

If you leave the blanket at school you can expect some tears but I think you will be surprised at how well your child does without it. Reassure your child: I know you want your blanket but it is at school. We'll get it on Monday. Say it very matter of factly. I know you are sad. Try and change the subject or offer a substitute. Maybe you could use your teddy bear instead. No? Well, I know you'll feel better very soon.

Now, don't cave. Don't run to the store and buy a new lovey. Be firm. Hang in there. Life will be better in the long run.

Aliceanna loves to hear from you. You can email her at uc@dbcckids.org and put Aliceanna in the subject line.



Frank Lloyd Wright, in memoirs, claimed kindergarten was the only definite influence on becoming an architect,
"The smooth shapely maple blocks with which to build,the sense of which never afterward left the fingers, as form became feeling." *Wright, 1932*

IT'S A BOY! ☺ IT'S A GIRL!

☺Alumni Jake, Dylan and Leah Balter have a new brother! **Samuel Gideon Balter** was born on October 18, 2006 and weighed 7 lbs. 6 oz. Congratulations to Kathy, Joe, Jake, Dylan and Leah!

☺☺Eli is a big brother! **Luka Kekoa Cole** was born on November 11, 2006 and weighed 6 lbs. 7 oz. **Owen Ikaika Cole** was also born on November 11, 2006 and weighed 4 lbs. 12 oz. Congratulations to Kathy, Bob and Eli!

☺Nenad is a big brother! **Bojan Zivkovic** was born on November 9, 2006 and weighed 8 lbs.6 oz. Congratulations to Snezana, Ljubomir and Nenad!

☺Teacher Barbara Harris is a grandmother! **Derek Andriko Wilkes, Jr.** was born on November 22, 2006 and weighed 8 lbs. 5 oz. Congratulations to Derek, Trina and Barbara!

☺Alumni Elias Ramos is a big brother! **Benjamin Craig Bunkley** was born on November 29, 2006 and weighed 6 lbs. 1.6 oz. Congratulations to Elias, Jennifer and Darrell!

☺Alexa is a big sister! **Isabella Nicole D'Alesandro** was born on November 28, 2006 and weighed 7 lbs. 14 oz. Congratulations to Krissy, Greg and Alexa!

☺Teacher Roxanne Barker is a grandmother! **Pricilla Alexis Badger** was born on December 9, 2006 and weighed 7 lbs. 6.4 oz. Congratulations to Candace, Mark and Roxanne!

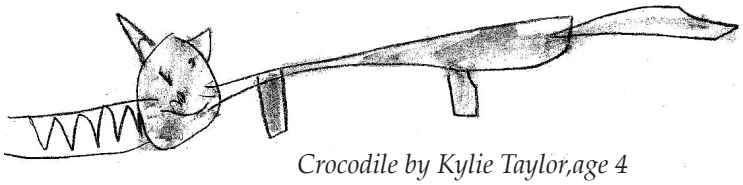
☺Katelyn is a big sister! **Ann Meredith Nemoy** was born on December 18, 2006 and weighed 8 lbs 1 oz. Congratulations to Katelyn, Lucia and Jason!

☺Benjamin is a big brother! **Margaret Sue Southworth ("Maggie")** was born on December 25, 2006 and weighed 8 lbs. 10 oz. Congratulations to Karen, Jim and Benjamin!

☺Director Evelyn Owens and teacher Virginia Edwards are grandmothers again! **Saleigha Justyce Fennel** was born on January 26, 2007 and weighed 8 lbs. 8oz. Congratulations to Techa, Carl, Evelyn, Ronnie, Virginia and Dennis!

☺Elyse is a big sister! **Michael James Gallagher** was born on January 27, 2007 and weighed 8 lbs. 15.5 oz. Congratulations to Karen, Christopher and Elyse.

☺Felix is a big brother! **Kirby Wingard Bookhart-Tsai** was born on January 29, 2007 and weighed 8 lbs. 2 oz. Congratulations to Kellee, Davis and Felix!



Crocodile by Kylie Taylor,age 4

DBCC

DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILD CARE'S ANNUAL SPRING FUNDRAISER

LIGHT FARE

MUSIC

SILENT AUCTION

Spring Fling 2007

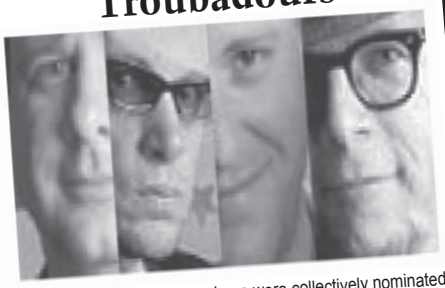
SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2007, 6 pm - 10 pm

at EUBIE BLAKE NATIONAL JAZZ INSTITUTE & CULTURAL CENTER

847 N. Howard St., Baltimore

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

The Rhodes Tavern Troubadours



The Rhodes Tavern Troubadours were collectively nominated for 11 Washington Area Music Awards, including Songwriter of the Year and Vocalist of the Year

Proceeds from the Spring Fling will help DBCC meet its commitment to provide early education and child care services to a diverse population.

Ticket prices:

Earlybird (before 3/2/07)
$40-individual
$75-couple

After 3/2/07:
$48-individual
$90-Couple

To view some of the more amazing Silent Auction items ahead of time, go to our website after Feb. 27: www.dbcckids.org

SWING OR DEDUCT!
If you don't come out and swing, save us the catering expense and get a tax deduction.

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Childhood should be a journey, not a race.