

big PLANS in print

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

Issue 18 January · February 2016

Family Connections Parent Link Centre

Helping to Develop Strong Caring Families in North Central Calgary

There isn't much you can get for free anymore; however, the Family Connections Parent Link Centre, is a treasure chest full of free drop-in and registered programs to meet the needs of all types of families with children under the age of six. Located in the Huntington Hills Community Centre (520 - 78 Ave. N.W. - Corner of Centre Street and 78 Ave N.W.), the centre provides a place where parents and caregivers can come and play with their children, as well as receive family supports, resources and referrals. The Family Connections Parent Link Centre believes in the development of strong caring communities and strong caring families and individuals, each considered necessary for the development of the other. As part of a network of Parent Link Centres funded by Alberta Human Services, they provide free drop-in and registered programs to meet the needs of all types of parents and caregivers.

Family Connections PLC works in partnerships with parents, childcare programs, schools and other key community stakeholders to deliver:

- **Early Childhood Development:** play based learning activities for parents and children
- **Parent Education:** formal and informal workshops and seminars
- **Family Support:** formal and informal activities to build on parents strengths; family counseling; parents meeting other parents to increase capacity
- **Information and Referrals:** connecting parents with programs, tools and resources that can help them raise strong, healthy, well-adjusted children

Activities offered:

- **Playgroups /week** (some attended by up to 85 participants/group) – including one every Thursday evening (registered) and one specific for parents of infants
- **Gym Time Program/ week** (gross motor skills drop-in playgroup)



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Parents Learning About Needs and Skills

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www.bigplans.org

Cover story continued next page ...

- Regularly running **ESL conversation program** w/ free child care
- **Parenting Classes running regularly** (Triple P, Terrific Toddlers) w/ free child care
- **Family Events**, i.e. Easter Egg Hunt, BBQs, Family Dances, Pot Luck Dinners, etc.
- Many **resources available** including: Talk Box (Speech/Language Resource), Feeding Your Baby, Car Seat Safety, etc.
- **Individual Parenting Support** by appointment
- Various **structured programs** periodically offered, i.e. Parent-Child Mother Goose (early literacy and attachment), infant massage, Soup from Back Home (for new immigrants)
- **Ages and Stages Questionnaires** (a developmental screening tool for parents) available and staff trained to interpret results
- **Partnerships with many organizations** to provide enhancements to Parent Link Centre Programs, i.e. Calgary Public

Library story times and information sessions, Alberta Health Services Speech/Language Pathologist and Nutritionist attend regularly, Southern Alberta Children's Hospital Community Education Service providing information sessions, and many other community collaborations

• **Community Outreach**

****Note**** All programs are free to participants (including childcare for parenting classes).

Families report feeling less isolated, making friends in the community, learning new things about parenting, and truly enjoy spending time at the Centre with their children.

For more information check us out on our website: www.weconnectyou.ca



Some Current Programs at the Family Connections Parent Link Centre

- **Me & My Dad; Trains, Planes and Cars** (begins January 30th) Free program - requires registration.
- **Just for Mom's - January 30th.** Winter is in full force! As the days get shorter and the nights get colder, even the best of us can get a little down. Come join other Moms for great conversation and snacks in a relaxing setting. We will be chatting about ways to stay happy and active in the colder months. We will also be making homemade soup and buns for everyone to take home. Childcare will be provided. Free program - requires registration.
- **Family Day Skate on Feb. 12th**
- **Gym Time - Drop-In Friday Mornings, 10:00 - 11:30;** Full of opportunities to practice hopping, jumping, balancing, ball throwing and all sorts of large motor skills! This program is most suitable for children from 1 -5 years of age (as long as they are stable on their feet).

AND MUCH MORE!

visit www.weconnectyou.ca/activities/plc.htm for more details and to register



**Children With Behaviour Challenges
Free Resources for Families and Educators**

If you're parenting a child with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, you know that the journey can be frustrating, draining, and isolating. It doesn't help that lots of folks are blaming you for your child's behavior. "Lives in the Balance" is a website with lots of free information and resources available to help. Not only will you find collaborative and proactive strategies listed on the website, but there is a Facebook Group, newsletter signup, and even a section just for educators or schools that work with behaviorally challenging students.

Visit www.livesinthebalance.org to access this free information.



Free Program for Young Readers

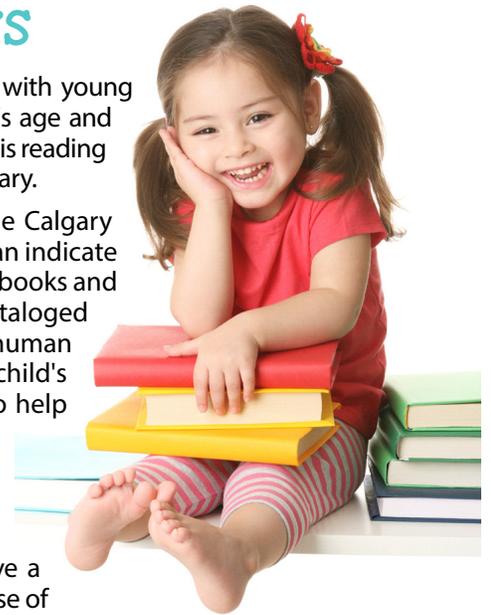
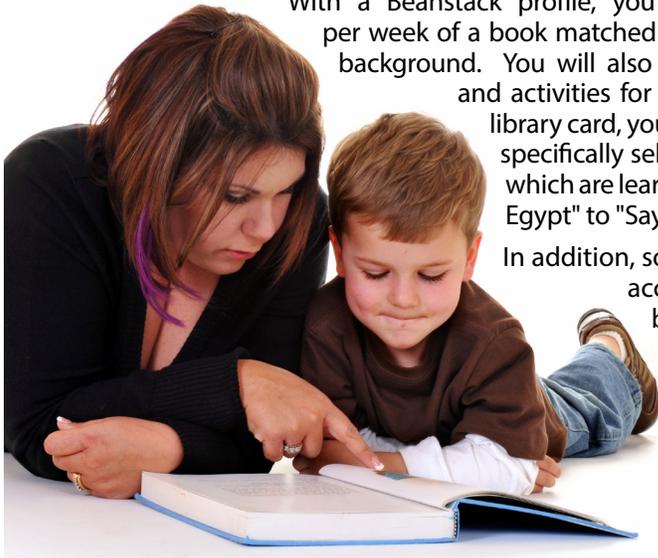
Beanstack is a personalized free service provided by your local library designed for families with young readers (ages 0-13). This service helps families discover books and apps based on their child's age and interests. The goal of Beanstack is to help prepare your child for school and ensure that he or she is reading at or above grade level by third grade. All books recommended are available for free at your library.

To sign-up for Beanstack, you just need to be a resident of the community served by the Calgary Public Library, you do not need a library card. You can sign up for more than one child and can indicate preferences, your child's age, interests and reading level. Beanstack only includes children's books and apps that have been selected by your local librarians. These books and apps have been cataloged using over 3,000 tags, like "Daring to be Different" or "Not So Pink Girls," that require a human being's expert consideration. Recommendations are then made based on each individual child's age and interests. Plus, each recommendation includes a learning tip to give you ways to help your child excel in school.

With a Beanstack profile, you'll receive one recommendation per week of a book matched to your child's age, interests, and background. You will also receive easy-to-use learning tips and activities for each book selected. If you do have a library card, you also gain access to the full database of specifically selected books and apps. You may also view themes, which are learning guides that include tips and activities on subjects ranging from "Exploring Egypt" to "Say No to Bullying!"

In addition, some books included on Beanstack have longer learning guides that you can access through your child's profile. These guides provide tips and activities for building literacy with your loved one. They include everything from STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) connections to arts and crafts projects. All guides are digital and optimized for viewing on mobile devices.

Sign up today at: calgarylibrary.beanstack.org



9 Calm Down Ideas for Kids

Here are 9 safe ways that children can resolve their big feelings without hurting themselves or others.

1. Go outside and kick a ball or run around: the physical activity is a great outlet for overwhelming emotions and nature is a great healer.
2. Punch a pillow: a safe way to let off steam when managing angry or frustrated feelings.
3. Listen to music or sing a song: one for children who find music comforting.
4. Close your eyes and think of a calm place: a great relaxation tool for kids, this is one to practice with them at other times (before sleep is a great time) so that they can call on it when they are struggling with emotions.
5. Draw a picture: encourage your child to use their creativity to symbolically represent how they are feeling, "Do you want to draw me a picture of how you are feeling?"
6. Write a letter or a story: again, this technique provides your child with a creative outlet for their feelings –

"Maybe you could write your brother a letter and tell him how you feel?" "Why don't you write a story about what happened. You could even make up a new ending."

7. Read a book: one for children who find reading provides a sense of relief from other pressures.
8. Talk to someone: I always call my husband or my mum when I am struggling with big emotions and your child might need that same exact support to process what they are feeling.

9. Ask for a hug: some children will find comfort in close physical contact when they are feeling overwhelmed.

In addition, childhood101.com has provided a free printable poster for families to use. This poster is not just for the child. It is also for the parent or significant adult helping the child manage these emotions. It is a tool to open discussion with your child about having a calm down plan and the poster can act as a visual prompt to help you (the adult) guide your child in that moment when they are struggling to manage. You know your child best and so while this process will work

well for some children, it may not work for others. In the same way, their effectiveness will depend on the age and development of your child. **The poster is available at <http://bit.ly/1JZQsKb> and full article is at <http://childhood101.com/2015/03/9-calm-down-ideas-for-kids>**

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PRINT YOUR COPY AT CHILDHOOD101.COM



Bedtime and Naptime

Many families find bedtime and naptime to be a challenge for them and their children. It is estimated that 43% of all children and as many as 86% of children with developmental delays experience some type of sleep difficulty. Sleep problems can make infants and young children moody, short tempered and unable to engage well in interactions with others. Sleep problems can also impact learning. When a young child is sleeping, her body is busy developing new brain cells needed for her physical, mental and emotional development. Parents also need to feel rested in order to be nurturing and responsive to their growing and active young children.

Here are a few proven tips for making bedtimes and naptimes easier for parents and children:

Making Life Easier: Bedtime & Naptime

- ★ Make sure your child gets plenty of **exercise** during the day.
- ★ Develop **regular times** for bed and naps and stick with them.
- ★ Develop a bedtime and naptime **routine**.
 - Do and say the same things before naps and bedtime.
 - Establish a predictable place for sleeping.
 - Help your child understand the steps in the routines (e.g., use "first, then" statements, picture schedule).
 - Tell your child what might happen when she wakes up.
 - Let your child carry a favorite transition object to bed.
 - Provide your child with calming and rest inducing activities, sounds, or objects in the routine.
 - Put your baby or child down for sleep while she is still awake. Say, "Good night." and leave the room.
- ★ Give your child your undivided and unrushed **attention**.
- ★ **Avoid certain foods** and drinks six hours before sleep (i.e., sodas, chocolate, fatty foods).
- ★ Try **breast feeding** or offering a warm bottle just before bed.
- ★ Provide **choices** whenever possible.
- ★ **Reduce noise**, light, and distractions in and near your child's room.
- ★ Keep a **sleep diary** so you will know what's working (or not).
- ★ **Celebrate** the little successes along the way.

Is my child getting enough sleep?

Age	Nighttime	Daytime
1 – 3 Months	8½ hrs -10 hours	3 naps (total of 5 – 7 more hours)
6 – 9 months	11 hours	2 naps (total of 3 – 3.5 hours)
12 – 18 months	11¼ hours	1 or 2 naps (total of 2 – 2.5 hours)
2 years	11 hours	1 nap (90 minutes – 2 hours)
3 years	10½ hours	1 nap (90 minutes – 2 hours)

* *Your child will probably transition out of naps between 2-5 years of age.*

Download full article here: <http://bit.ly/lkwn7d4>
For more great resources like this one, visit www.challengingbehavior.org