

# ☺ The Family Zone News ☺

This month, I want to share with you an article from my friend Wes. Very thought-provoking and might not be something you want to hear. For me, for the most part, I do agree with him. Read on and please email me your comments - would love to hear your feedback on his view of child 'safety'...

## Child Safety = Child Abuse



We're abusing our children with too much safety. Not only that, we're creating incompetent children who become incompetent older people. They don't know how to take even basic care of themselves in a strange or potentially dangerous situation, whether that situation is in a dark part of a city, on a trail in the woods, or on a snowy street in traffic.

How does this happen? Simple: we want our kids to be safe, so we protect them from exposure to hazards. The problem occurs when we lose sight of what's a true danger and what is necessary for their growth. Blinkered or even blinded by our fear, we deprive them of experiences that we had (or maybe we didn't – this has been going on for at least two generations now) and benefited from. I've seen kids eight years old who were competent with knives and who knew whose responsibility it was when they cut themselves, and I've seen kids whose awareness of their own bodies was so limited that they couldn't walk on uneven ground, and who tended to blame someone else – anyone except themselves – when they experienced discomfort or pain as a result of their incompetence.

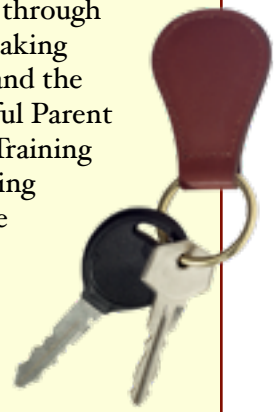
I've also seen kids move from incompetence, to competence, to skillful and confident as they were exposed to opportunities and expectations that developed their abilities with tools such as axes, knives, and matches, or as they learned how to climb trees or find their way through unfamiliar territory while blindfolded.

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### Relationship Building

Sue is an expert in her field. She has years of experience as a teacher, leader, speaker and supporter of strong, cohesive parent-child relationships. Her unique ability to truly listen to and connect with people is her special gift that fosters understanding, education and growth. Her unfailing belief in parents is evident in her passion to help them make a positive difference in the lives of their children.

Sue inspires parents to succeed in their role. She offers support through her books, speaking engagements and the highly impactful Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.) parenting course that she facilitates.



Do you have a question? or Would like more info?

Call Sue at 780-490-1048 or visit the website.



I remember kids coming to school when I was that age with casts on their arms or bandages on various parts, and displaying those wrappings like a badge of honour. Hurting yourself was part of the adventure, and there was always a story to go with the badge.

Jean Liedloff, in a book with the somewhat imposing title *The Continuum Concept*, describes a Venezuelan tribe who let even their smallest children do things that would have people in our society calling 911: handling sharp tools, wandering in a jungle where predators hunt, and in one instance which she describes with great clarity, playing unsupervised at less than 2 years old on the edge of a drop that would have killed the child had it fallen over the edge. Her book describes how this works for them, and in [www.continuum-concept.org](http://www.continuum-concept.org) there is a good description of the concept and an invitation to join a network of interested people.

I'm not suggesting that we try to become like those Venezuelan people. We're not ready for that. At the same time, we need to expose our kids to experiences that develop competence and confidence rather than dependence and fear.

This process can begin with recognizing and talking to our kids about some of the sources of fear in our society. Much of it is well-intentioned, but the effect is cumulative: when we are exposed to many different messages of fear, we will, unless we are continuously examining what we are exposed to, become fearful.

Consider these examples:

- Fear of bacteria and viruses ("germs") from television commercials that suggest that sterility equals good parenting, from government and medical "authorities" who want to protect us from H1N1 or Legionnaire's Disease or SARS.
- Fear of dark places from movies and tv shows.
- Fear of the outdoors from tv (news and fiction) and movies

(television and movies, by the way, are the dominant sources of behaviour modelling for young people, along with peers).

- Fear of people who look or behave differently from us, again from television and movies, and also subtly from governments.
- Fear of being out of control, at the same time as more and more control is being taken away from us by government in various forms.

Gavin de Becker has written several excellent books about fear, including *The Gift of Fear* and *Protecting the Gift*, which addresses how parents can protect children. He offers some ideas that run counter to what we're told, including "Don't talk to strangers!" (which in fact we do all the time). De Becker says that we need to be realistic about this, and teach our kids how to talk to strangers safely and confidently.

And in our everyday lives, we need – our children need for us to do this – to provide our kids with opportunities to become more aware, more competent.

When you let your children go to a new experience or even a familiar one, don't tell them to be careful. Don't warn them that they will hurt themselves (because they will, if you say so). Tell them to pay attention. Invite them to identify the hazards with you, then tell them to have fun. Let them know that you have confidence in them.

We learned from our own painful experiences, and we need to let our young people do that too. And when they hurt themselves, we help them learn from that.

We owe it to them. It's part of our job as parents, teachers, uncles and aunties, and members of the community in which these future adults are growing up.

- Wes Gietz

(The opinions expressed in this article are definitely those of the author, Wes Geitz.)

## Calendar

### NEW!!

Parent Effectiveness Training Course

June 6 - July 11, Sundays 1:00 to 5:00pm

This session will be starting right away so if you are interested in attending, please contact me as soon as possible to secure your spot.

Fee:

Reg.: \$399

SPECIAL FOR THIS PROGRAM: \$299 p/p

### P.E.T. Follow up for Grads -

Sat, June 19, 7-9pm, Sue's Place

Free event! Please bring a small snack to share and please RSVP your attendance. For PET grads only :- )

## About Wes

WES GEITZ



Wes has studied and practised natural skills and beliefs for over forty years, with pauses as required

by the necessities of love and life. He has been taught by Tom Brown Jr. and Native teachers the skills of survival and living, awareness, and philosophy, the ceremonies of daily life, and the ceremonies and responsibilities of the sweat lodge. He honours them by using these ways and keeping them for the generations yet to be born, and has taught them in workshops and at gatherings since 1993.

Wes also practises and teaches EFT, a technique for healing emotional disturbances, phobias, addictions and a variety of physical problems.

[www.windwalker.ca](http://www.windwalker.ca)