

PARENTING

Author preaches good communication

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Back in the late 1960s, when Adele Faber was studying to become a teacher, she considered her psychology courses informative but essentially useless in terms of her future career.

"I learned about what rats did in mazes," she recalled during a phone interview from her Long Island home. "But nobody talked about the nitty-gritty of effective communication with kids."

A former high school and college teacher and a mother of three, Faber has devoted her life to finding out how to talk to children so they'll listen. With her partner in research, Elaine Mazlish, she has produced a body of work designed to help parents and teachers do just that. The women have written such books as *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*, which has sold more than 2 million copies. They co-authored *How To Talk So Kids Can Learn At Home and In School* with Lisa Nyberg and Rosalyn Anstine Templeton.

Catholic Family Center is bringing Faber to Rochester for a lecture on "How To Talk So Kids Will Listen," from 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 15, at Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St., Rochester. She also will conduct an "Engaging Cooperation" seminar at the church from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesday, Oct. 16. The seminar will consist of a lecture, discussion, role-playing and written exercise, and will teach participants skills to reduce conflict, invite cooperation and encourage children to assume responsibility.

Faber said her desire to learn how to talk to kids grew out of frustration with traditional methods of disciplining them in her classroom. Traditionally, she said, parents and teachers have concentrated on "nam-

ing, shaming and blaming" when trying to change their children's bad behavior. However, she said, parents and teachers often find that simply telling a child that what they are doing is wrong and punishing them doesn't have the desired effect of permanently changing their behavior.

Her method, however, consists in discovering the feelings behind the bad actions, and then helping the child find appropriate ways to express those feelings, and even move beyond them.

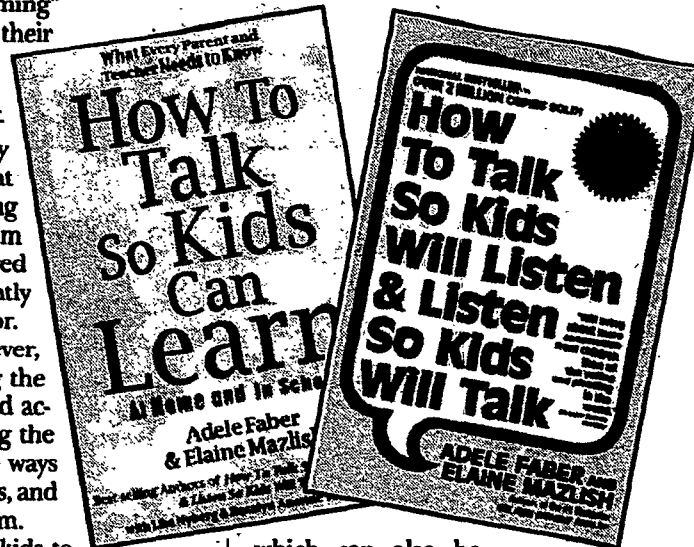
"It's a lot easier for kids to accept the limit when you accept their feelings," she said.

For example, she said, one mother she knew had to deal with an older son who shoved his toddler brother when the toddler grabbed a birthday card the older son was making for his brother. Instead of immediately punishing the older son, the mother had the older son sit down and think up ways to deal with his younger brother without shoving him.

"Put him in a dog crate," the older boy first wrote on a piece of paper. Then he wrote about putting on a video for his brother; putting the card on a high table so his brother couldn't get it; or working on the card in his own room with the door closed. In the end, the older boy also told his mother that he would no longer shove his younger brother.

"What punishment ... could have accomplished what this accomplished?" Faber asked rhetorically.

The flip side of discipline is praise,



which can also be used to nurture a child's good behavior if expressed in a thoughtful manner, Faber said. It's not enough to simply tell a child that he or she has done good; the parent should also explain exactly what was good about the child's action, Faber said. For example, she said, if a child cleans her room, describe to the child how she did so by telling her you noticed she picked up the clothes off the floor and put them in the hamper.

"Kids don't want evaluation," she said. "They want a description of their processes. It validates their process. It validates who they are."

On this note, Faber criticized the excesses of the self-esteem movement, which has stressed telling all children that they are special or wonderful without grounding such praise in fact. Children know they are not always special and wonderful, she said, but they will respond positively to descriptions of specific actions they take as such.

Faber acknowledged that her method may appear to be a lot of work, especially to parents who are used to using traditional methods of punishment and praise for children. However, she maintained that her research has found that her "long way" is really the "short way," because it gives children a sense of dignity about themselves, invests them in their own self-improvement and teaches them to empathize with others. Not to mention the fact that it can make life more pleasant for overworked parents who have limited time with their children at home.


"You want to make that time count," she said. "You don't want to spend it yelling at your kid."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Admission to Faber's Oct. 15 talk is \$25 in advance and \$29 at the door. Checks may be sent to Catholic Family Center, 547 Joseph Ave., Rochester, NY 14605. Admission for her Oct. 16 seminar, also at Downtown United Presbyterian, is \$35 in advance and \$39 at the door. A limited number of scholarships are available for both presentations. For information, call 585/423-9590, ext. 215.

Family Events


- **SEP. 20, 21** — Show: "Horseplay" — improv group turns audience suggestions into musical comedy show; Bristol Valley Theater, 151 S. Main St., Naples; 6 p.m., \$15 adults, \$7 children; 585/474-8818.
- **TUE, SEP. 24** — Concert: "Sound the Trumpet"; Niklas Erdlund, baroque trumpet; Kilbourn Hall, 26 Gibbs St., Rochester; 8 p.m.; free; 585/482-4040.
- **SAT, SEP. 28** — Canandaigua Lake: on foot and on water; two short morning hikes and then board steamboat, The Canandaigua Lady; for lunch and tour: 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.; \$45; call Mariana 585/271-7368.
- **SUN, SEP. 29** — Rail excursion: Fall Foliage Express Railroad Excursion: 1 1/2 hr. round trip leaves Ontario Midland Railroad, Rotterdam Rd., 1/2 mi. south of Rt. 104, Sodus, 11:30 a.m. & 2:15 p.m.; family fare day: \$11 adults, \$4 children; Ticketmaster 585/292-1900, National Railway Historical Society 585/987-1305; www.rochrrhs.org.
- **WED, OCT. 2** — Registration deadline for Oct. 6 Learn to Ice Skate program; Genesee Valley Park Ice Rink, 131 Elmwood Ave., Rochester; Sundays for six weeks; 5 p.m.-5:40 p.m.; 585/428-7888.
- **OCT. 12-14** — Exhibit: "Celebrating Native American Culture"; Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sun. noon-4 p.m.; Mon. 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; \$7 adults, \$6 seniors/college students, \$5 children ages 5-18, under 5 free; 585/271-4552, ext. 342.
- **MON, OCT. 14** — Film: "Ocean Oasis"; meet on-screen star Iliana Ortega Baermeister; RMSC Strassburgh Planetarium, 657 East Ave., Rochester; 2 and 4 p.m.; \$10 adults, \$8 students; for advance tickets call 585-271-4552, ext. 342.
- **SAT, OCT. 19** — Concert: Junior Wind Symphony; Al "Corky" Fabrizio, conductor; performance hall; Hochstein Music School, 50 N. Plymouth Ave., Rochester; 7:30 p.m.; free; 585/454-4596.
- **THRU OCT. 31** — Maze quest: cornfield maze adventure, find clues leading to buried treasure; Springdale Farms, 696 Colby St., Spencerport; 10 a.m.-10 p.m.; \$7 adults, \$5 ages 4-12; 585/352-5320; www.SpringdaleFarm.org.


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