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Published quarterly since 1970, Transition is widely read and offers a balance of accessible, insightful views and timely information on families and family-related issues. To subscribe and begin receiving Transition at your doorstep or by email, call 613-228-8500 or 1-800-331-4937, ext. 211, or go to www.vanierinstitute.ca (“Resources” tab).

About the Cover

Growing Strong Roots for Success
Sophie Peters, Markham, Ontario

A student at Black Walnut Public School in Markham, Ontario, Sophie has been interested in art from a young age and was recently accepted into the Visual Arts Program at Unionville High School in the York Region District School Board. She also enjoys music and sports, and she is very active as vice-president of the student council at her school.

Contribute to Transition

If you would like to submit articles or cover art for the magazine, please read our Contributors’ Guidelines, available under the “Resources” tab at www.vanierinstitute.ca.
Researchers at the Vanier Institute analyze families, family life and family experiences, expectations and aspirations. In her regular column, CEO Nora Spinks looks at how the Institute uses a balanced and strength-based approach to understand how families intersect with social, economic, environmental and cultural forces.

In our first feature article, “Putting the ‘F’ in EFAP: The Evolution of Workplace Mental Health Supports,” Craig Thompson describes the evolution of Employee and Family Assistance Programs from the 1950s to today. As a growing number of employers now take psychological health and safety in the workplace seriously and, as interest and investment in EFAPs and employee well-being grows, families will most likely remain a central component.


The wide adoption of social media is a fact of life in our families, and parents see their children using various platforms to stay connected, sharing what they do with friends and family. Yet, participants in MediaSmarts focus groups with youth say that they value their privacy. Matthew Johnson explores this contradiction and more in our second feature article, “To Share or Not to Share: Online Privacy and Publicity Among Canadian Youth.”

In “Caring Canines: Therapy Dogs and Well-Being,” Paula Cayley, a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog volunteer, introduces us to Diva, her small dog with a big personality, and provides insights into the world of therapy dogs and the extraordinary caregiving resource they are.

Nicole Kennedy reads between the lines when she reflects on what a child’s crayon scribbles mean with respect to Early Childhood Education’s emergent curriculum approach in “Marking a Moment in Time.”

Seeing double? Twins, triplets and higher-order multiples are on the rise in Canada. Find out more in this issue’s “Facts and Stats” on multiple births.

Your suggestions and comments are always welcome. If you have ideas for future issues or would like to submit something you’ve written – including first-hand perspectives on family-related issues or even artwork for the cover – please contact us at editor@vanierinstitute.ca.
FROM THE CEO

NORA SPINKS

At the Vanier Institute, while we are non-policy-prescriptive, our work does inform policy discussion, program design and further research. We analyze data, synthesize information, organize resources and mobilize knowledge about families, family life, family experiences, expectations and aspirations. Through the lens of the 200-year present,1 we use a balanced perspective and take a strength-based approach to learn from and about families.

We are collaborative, inclusive, respectful of diversity and non-partisan. Our resources and events are broadly available and accessible. Our strength-based approach shapes how we translate and transfer knowledge through various forms and formats, including in print, online, in the media and in person.

Regardless of the form or format knowledge mobilization takes, our observations, conversations and presentations are non-judgmental in nature. Rather than framing family experiences, circumstances and perspectives as “problems to be solved” or “challenges to be overcome,” we frame them as “realities to understand.”

By leveraging strengths and assets and sharing creative and innovative stories, we are able to identify key elements required for a family to engage and thrive in caring and compassionate communities.

We explore leading and promising practices that are evidence-based or evidence-informed. As we seek to understand families in all their complexity and diversity using this frame and approach, we learn how families create and seize opportunities, grow and develop, and interact with and have an impact on social and economic forces.

Some people see the glass as half full while others see the glass as half empty, but we don’t focus on evaluating the vessel – we focus on understanding the content. In other words, if you take the water out of the glass, notions of “empty” and “full” become irrelevant. The same amount of water in a different glass can be interpreted differently; it’s no longer about “good” or “bad” – it just is.

This is not to say that we ignore the reality that some families in Canada may face adversity. We examine the relationships between families and social, economic, environmental and cultural forces, focusing our work on what in any given experience can be leveraged, built on or learned from. We believe that change is inevitable and that families aspire to succeed and contribute to their community.

Understanding and appreciating the present is only part of the process. We also apply a balanced perspective and strength-based approach to anticipate and plan for the future. Not only do we report on family experiences, but also on family expectations and aspirations (e.g. expecting an education will lead to a good job; wanting the next generation to have opportunities for success).

A strength-based lens makes it possible for us, as family researchers and educators, to mobilize knowledge, communicate our findings, build our networks and engage in inclusive meaningful conversations.

We believe that teaching and learning is an exciting, collaborative and participatory process. We look forward to engaging Canadians in the further exploration of families and family life while respecting and honouring the past, understanding and appreciating the present, and preparing for the future.

1 See “The 200-Year Present” in the 43-3 edition of Transition under the “Resources” tab at www.vanierinstitute.ca.
Over the past several decades, mental health has become an increasingly popular topic in public discourse, fuelled in part by our increased understanding of the many ways it affects all levels of society. When a person experiences changes to their mental health, their family members – always at the “front lines” – are typically the first ones to feel the effects. Family is society’s most adaptable institution. Families respond by adjusting to meet the needs of their members as best they can. In light of this, a growing number of organizations have offered assistance to employees and their families through Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAPs) to manage mental health in the workplace. By looking at the evolution of these services, we can learn how and why the “F” in EFAP first emerged, and how it has grown in importance over time.
The early years
Occupational Alcoholism Programs (OAPs)

Occupational Alcoholism Programs (OAPs) were first introduced in Canada in the late 1950s. Predecessors of the EFAPs, they were focused primarily on alcohol and the devastating impact alcohol has on the health and well-being of employees who experience dependency. These programs were typically delivered through the occupational health and medical departments of large industrial organizations in the manufacturing sector.

Employees would sometimes seek out these services through their own initiative, but more often than not were assisted or referred by their manager, supervisor or union steward. The focus of assistance was almost solely on the individual and the alcohol, and did not include the family. The dependent employee would be put on a strict program that included attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and their compliance would be closely monitored. If the individual relapsed after this treatment, it would usually lead to termination and no further support was provided by the employer. Their future would then depend solely on what level of support their family members could muster – if they were still around.

The formative years
Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

During the 1970s and mid-1980s, employers expanded the scope of these programs beyond alcohol, and they became known as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Previous research on occupational productivity had shown that alcohol dependency was just one of many issues that could have an impact on a person’s performance, productivity and health in the workplace.

Although alcohol addiction was still seen as a problem, it became increasingly clear that workplace programs could benefit from including support for other issues that can affect productivity, such as other addictions, mental illness, serious health conditions or major life events such as births and deaths. More employers began to understand the value of offering EAPs and, as a result, mid-size, regional, national and global companies introduced programs in their organizations.

EAPs would typically offer short-term, solution-focused counselling, paid for by the employer, with either an average number of sessions or a predetermined maximum number of sessions allotted. EAPs were never intended to provide longer-term care, but when that was necessary, the provider would make a referral to an affordable and appropriate resource. EAPs were increasingly managed by human resources (HR) instead of occupational health and safety or medical departments.
Some employers also started to understand the importance of families in the equation of employee attendance, concentration and focus. Emotional distress, family/personal relationships, child care, elder care and health care started to get employers’ attention. Many began reaching out directly to family members at home to increase awareness and usage, and to help mitigate the negative impacts of these issues on performance and productivity. Communication materials were specifically designed for spouses and dependants, and creative methods were used to reach out to family members. Program eligibility was further expanded to include eligible young adults and family members who were attending post-secondary education.

At first, utilization of these programs and services by families remained low, prompting further attempts to increase awareness and usage. One of the factors that limited their use was the fear that personal information would be shared with a counsellor or EAP practitioner and have consequences for the employee at work. Although EAP services were confidential (and remain so), the concerns about confidentiality and privacy protection understandably impaired users from taking advantage of services. During this period, 5% to 7% of the employee population accessed EAP services on any given year, with less than 1% attributed to family members.

While the first generation of EAPs was delivered by internal staff (usually MDs and occupational health nurses), this new generation of programs was typically outsourced to external firms that provided a broader range of professionals and specialty practitioners, including psychologists, counsellors and other health providers. This contributed to broadening the legitimacy of EAPs; however, these programs were still being offered primarily by larger companies and therefore were not yet mainstream. As a result, those who did not work for these firms were typically underserved.

The growth years
Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAPs)

The late 1980s through the mid-1990s were marked with important progress in this field. First, EAPs started providing an ever-expanding array of services, including responses for addictions, family/marital relations and psycho-emotional issues. These “broad-brushed” EAPs also recognized the importance of providing services for work relationship issues, financial, legal, aging parent and other non-work-related concerns. With this expansion in scope, EAPs began to take greater hold across a broad range of industries, sectors and workplaces.

Over time, a growing body of research was demonstrating that investments by employers in EAPs resulted in various cost benefits, including reduced absenteeism, lower turnover, fewer medical costs and overall higher employee productivity. With this data, EAP providers were able to engage an increasing number of employers of various sizes in other industries to implement an EAP. The level of acceptance grew considerably and, with it, thousands of families and individuals gained access to resources and care.

Providers began offering toll-free 24/7 access to counsellors to eliminate barriers to reaching assistance if and when it was needed. Increased efforts to reach out to the homes of employees did increase family member utilization; however, in most programs, dependant use averaged 5% to 10% of the total utilization. Attention was also now being given to prevention and health promotion through the provision of resource materials, workshops and seminars. Stress management workshops were a central part of the education efforts, with the goal of giving participants the knowledge and tools to remain healthy and productive at work. EAPs also expanded to include services related to dealing with conflict in the workplace, managing workloads realistically and communicating effectively.

Current EFAP Referral Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage of calls received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital and family problems</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological (depression, anxiety, self-image)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related problems</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse/alcohol abuse</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal trauma/crisis</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another major step during this phase was the rebranding of Employee Assistance Programs to Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAPs). Although most programs had already included the family, this formal change explicitly identified the family as a key stakeholder in the provision of services. Credit needs to be given to the stewards of the MacMillan Bloedel EFAP for having the wisdom and vision to be this apparent and inclusive. They were the first to coin this term, which has become the standard reference for these types of services in Canada. This simple insertion spurred on greater interest in program enhancements for the family into the next phase of evolution.

**The maturing years**

**Today’s EFAPs**

From the mid-1990s to today, EFAPs have grown in popularity to the extent that most large and mid-size employers offer some form of program. Even smaller employers (i.e. fewer than 50 employees) have started to offer programs through group plans or community initiatives. This has been largely due to the partnerships that have developed between EFAP providers and group insurance providers in which the group plan can include the EFAP as another option for employers to offer. A range of counselling models (assessment and referral, short-term counselling, etc.) surfaced, varying depending on the organizational culture, industry and program in question. Employers had more models to choose from. During this phase, a wider range of services was made available by telephone, face to face or, more recently, online.

Online services increased accessibility, as they could be reached outside of the workplace from mobile devices and personal computers. This mode of access has increased the use by family members, and future expansion is expected. Online resources such as educational modules on parenting, communicating emotion, enriching relationships and dealing with aging parents are all now common offerings and can be accessed at home or on the road.

Prevention and health promotion has recently expanded to include wellness. A growing number of employers are assisting employees (and their families) to take charge of their overall health, including emotional, psychological and physical well-being. Health risk appraisals (HRAs) have become increasingly available; individuals can benchmark their current health risks and learn how to reduce those risks. Many employers are taking a holistic approach to employee health and wellness, and they are recognizing the importance of the family unit in

Although it is difficult to anticipate what the future of employee assistance may look like, families will likely remain a central component of future approaches.
maintaining and enhancing healthy choices and decisions. Overall employee health is increasingly seen as a vital part of an organization’s “bottom line” thanks to a growing body of research demonstrating direct links between employee well-being and rates of engagement, absenteeism and productivity.

Current and emerging legal requirements are now compelling greater numbers of employers to ensure that their workplaces are psychologically safe and built on relationships of civility and respect. In 2013, the federal guidelines for the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace were introduced to help organizations actively work toward creating psychologically healthy and safe environments for employees.

This standard was developed using evidence-based research from a variety of scientific and legal disciplines; it outlines existing knowledge on the psychological health and safety of workers, and provides guidelines and recommendations for promoting and maintaining healthy workspaces. While the standard is voluntary, there is still an obligation for employers to provide some degree of care based on current and evolving legislation and case law. As Dr. Martin Shain, who has written extensively on psychological safety in the workplace, says, “A psychologically safe workplace is no longer a nice to do, but is now a must do.”

The future of EFAPs

In the early days, when services focused on alcoholism, employers could readily fire an employee for non-compliance. In today’s climate, whether in response to legislation or regulations, or in compliance with voluntary standards, more employers are providing access to professional assistance and treatment to address the myriad of mental and physical conditions that may disable or impair an employee. After an employee reaches out seeking treatment, employers are taking greater steps to accommodate their return to work. As the dialogue on the reduction of stigma surrounding these issues grows in volume and intensity, more workers, families and communities are getting assistance.

The evolution of EFAPs demonstrates a growing interest within organizations to integrate care for the employees, ensuring that family circumstances are considered and enabled. Whether the result of legal obligation or efforts to increase performance and productivity, or out of care for employee well-being, a growing number of employers now take psychological health and safety in the workplace seriously. As interest and investment in EFAPs and employee well-being grows, further breakthroughs are bound to occur. Although it is difficult to anticipate with great accuracy what the future of employee assistance may look like, families will most likely remain a central component of future approaches.

Craig Thompson, MEd, MBA, has been a clinician, business developer, account manager and business leader in the field of EFAP and Disability Management for nearly three decades. Over this period, he has worked with thousands of employers and employees and their families with a purpose of improving their lives and enhancing workplace effectiveness.

M-O-M-S. Moms as breadwinners, moms as caregivers, moms as cooks, chauffeurs and playdate organizers. As we all know very well, moms take on many roles – at home, at work and in the community. *Mogul, Mom, & Maid: The Balancing Act of the Modern Woman* focuses on moms and all the roles, titles and to-do lists that come along with being a mother in today’s world, economy and society. Delving into the work–life conversation, author Liz O’Donnell, founder of the award-winning blog *Hello Ladies*, looks beyond the statistics and tells the stories of women who are managing their various roles in the workforce, in the household and with their children.

O’Donnell shares her journey speaking with 100 women from across the United States from diverse professions and from all stages of life, trying to gain insight into the realities facing modern moms. She explores women’s experiences in the paid labour force, the importance of their contributions to family finances and the expectations (whether their own or those of others) that often accompany these roles. O’Donnell also considers the positive responses to these realities and how mothers adapt to meet changing needs, whether it’s through part-time work, flexible work arrangements, job-sharing, self-employment or entrepreneurship. She also contemplates the negative responses, such as stress, the struggle to do it all in little time and late-night emails, phone calls and deadlines.

The stories O’Donnell shares reflect the challenging households mothers manage. With increased participation in the paid labour force, her interviewees discuss not being available for housework, child care and eldercare. She also hears about the changing roles of men in the household. She describes how cooperation from spouses, employers and schools is required for women to achieve their aspirations and reach their full potential.

Their success may be impacted by stigmas and assumptions about women who are managing many different roles. Such stigmas include the notion that if a woman is a mom and an employee, then she must be a bad mother or a bad performer, or both, and that there is no way that women can be hard workers and good mothers without either her work or her children taking a back seat. O’Donnell’s interviewees also discuss what work, life and family means to them, as well as their expectations and aspirations.

O’Donnell uses stories and statistics, combining quantitative evidence, anecdotes and personal reflections to convey the various realities faced by today’s mothers – and what it all means in the 21st century. Meant as a cautionary tale of “why women are key to the future and what we must do to support their choices at home and at work,” O’Donnell is hopeful that her collection of ideas and stories about women navigating home–life and work–life realities will inform the conversations about women in all of their roles. *Mogul, Mom, & Maid: The Balancing Act of the Modern Woman* is ideally suited to anyone interested in better understanding modern families and the complexity of modern motherhood.
Participants in MediaSmarts youth focus groups in 2012 said that they valued their privacy highly.

To Share or Not to Share

Online Privacy and Publicity Among Canadian Youth

MATTHEW JOHNSON

Canadians rely more than ever on technology to stay connected, but the near-universal embrace of social media by youth has sparked an interest in their online privacy. Participants in MediaSmarts youth focus groups in 2012 said that they valued their privacy highly, despite being enthusiastic participants in platforms and activities that adults see as being about nothing but sharing and broadcasting. With a survey of more than 5,000 Canadian students in Grades 4 through 11, light can now be shed on this apparent contradiction: young people may not care that much about what we think of as privacy, but they care very much about control – control over who can see what they post, who can know where they are and, especially, how other people share information about them.

One thing that can safely be said about young people’s online experience is that it is social. This study confirmed that many of the top websites among students either are social networks such as Facebook and Twitter or contain features for sharing content. But socializing is not necessarily the same thing as sharing. People don’t, after all, share everything about themselves with people they meet offline. Instead, people learn early on to be selective, avoiding items that might give a bad impression or provoke conflict and offering up only those specifics they believe will make others think well of them.
Protecting their privacy

Things are no different online: many students said that they take active steps to manage their online image, such as deleting something they had posted themselves (an activity reported by 77% of Grade 11 students) and asking someone else to delete something about them (reported by 66% of Grade 11 students).

It’s interesting to look at who these students were trying to hide things from: while it’s easy to assume youth are hiding their online activities from parents or other authority figures, in fact they are as likely to delete content to hide it from their friends (22%) as from their families (21%), while far fewer had hidden content from teachers (7%) and current or potential employers (9%).

Sharing personal information online with family and friends

For younger students, social networks are largely about family: 80% of Grade 4 students said their families should be able to see what they post on social media, while just 61% said the same about their friends.

As they get older, however, the balance shifts. The tipping point, where friends and dating partners become more accepted audiences than family, is Grade 9; by Grade 11, almost all students (95%) say their friends should be able to see their posts. This is in keeping with developmental theories that suggest that children begin to seek space to individuate and separate from family as they enter their teen years.

Even at that age, though, family members remain an important audience, with 56% of Grade 11 students saying their parents should be able to see what they post. More than one-third of students feel that anyone who knows them should have access to their online content, suggesting that they prefer to rely on controlling individual items rather than limiting access to their profiles.

The students’ use of privacy settings supports this as well. Nine out of 10 reported having used the privacy settings on their social networks, but while half of students had used privacy settings to block strangers, the group most often blocked after that is friends (31% of students had used privacy settings to block a friend). These are not former friends or dating partners being blocked – just 20% of students had blocked former friends and 10% had blocked exes. This suggests that students are not only using the privacy settings to block other users entirely, but also making individual items visible only to some of their contacts.

Taking control of their image

When it comes to managing how we are seen online, not all forms of media are equal. Photographs are a particularly sensitive topic for students: almost all

Rather than being unconcerned about privacy, youth are as careful in what they share with their friends and peers as with their families. In fact, more students have asked someone else to delete something in hopes of hiding it from their friends than from their parents (21% and 16%, respectively).

Students were as likely to want to hide content from their friends as from their families.
students said they would do something to get rid of a picture of them that they did not like (only 3% of students said they would do nothing in this situation).

The two most popular strategies for dealing with an unwanted photo were to ask the person who had posted it to take it down (80% of students said they would do this), followed by untagging the photo (49%). Telling parents (35%) and reporting it to the social network provider (17%) were the next most popular responses, followed by telling a teacher or principal (14%), breaking off the friendship (11%) and going into the person’s account and taking it down (11%).

While girls and boys reported the same top two strategies for controlling images, these strategies were more popular among girls than boys. This suggests that boys are more likely than girls to prefer approaches that don’t involve direct communication and social negotiation. Given that the most popular strategies rely on social negotiation, it also shows the importance of promoting positive social norms among youth about respect for others’ privacy.

Many sharing features, such as tagging, are double-edged: while having a photo tagged with your name notifies all of your friends that you are in the photo, it also notifies you that the photo has been posted. As well as expecting that friends would take down a photo if asked, students also expected their friends to ask them before posting a photo, whether it was a bad or embarrassing one (nine out of 10 students said they expected to be informed) or a good one (half of students expected to be asked).

As students aged, however, they were more likely to take action after a photo had been posted rather than counting on friends to check with them before posting: by Grade 11, only 27% of students expected their friends to ask them before posting a bad or embarrassing photo.

Opening access to their accounts
Other technical means of managing privacy, such as passwords, have a social dimension as well. A password is the key to all of a person’s personal content and data, but a majority of students (59%) nevertheless said they would share the password to their social networking account, email account or cellphone.

Girls were also more likely to share passwords with their parents than boys (45% compared with 36%). However, students in general felt that parents should be allowed to read what they post on their social networking pages: not surprisingly, the youngest students feel this most strongly (84% of Grade 5 students agreed with this), but even in Grade 11, 56% still want to be visible to parents and family members.

Would you share your password to your social networking account, your email account or your cellphone with these people? (Percent answering “yes”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/girlfriend*</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other friends</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher or principal</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer/prospective employer*</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn’t share passwords with anyone</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Grades 7–11 only

Girls are generally more willing to share with their parents than boys.
Girls are generally more willing to share with their parents than boys: 72% of girls said that their parents or other family members should be allowed to read what they posted on their social networking pages, compared with 65% of boys. Girls were also more likely to share passwords with their parents than boys (45% compared with 36%).

Given that girls were also more likely to use privacy settings to block strangers from seeing their posts (55% compared with 45% of boys), this may be related to the greater number of household rules for girls and the greater perception among girls that the Internet is unsafe.

Giving away their personal data
Students showed little awareness of the data collection practices of the programs and platforms they use: while three-quarters would like more control over what companies do with the photos and information they post, 39% of students think that “companies are not interested in what I say and do online.”

This may be because the education they have received has focused largely on controlling what they publish rather than how their data is collected: 82% of students have learned how to use privacy settings (which are used to control who sees what you publish), while only one-third have had someone explain a site’s privacy policy (which lists the personal information the site collects, how they use it and to whom they disclose it). Perhaps as a result of this, 68% of students mistakenly believe that a site with a privacy policy will not share users’ personal information with others.

Parents were the main reported source of privacy education for students. More than four in 10 (41%) said they had learned about how to use privacy settings from their parents, compared with 27% who learned from peers and just 15% learning from teachers. This may explain the focus of students’ education on controlling access to content rather than data.

Defining online privacy and publicity in their terms
Canadian youth do care very much about privacy, and are willing to learn and use both social and technical tools for managing it. As they expressed in focus groups and the Young Canadians in a Wired World survey, these students employ a number of strategies to manage their online presence, including being selective about what they post, managing who can see what about them with privacy settings and being careful about who they share passwords with – strategies that affect how they interact with friends and family. Their decisions and strategies will inform social norms about online behaviour as they evolve.

While they were quite knowledgeable about content management, the students in this study were less knowledgeable about data privacy. Education about data privacy, however, could help inform their decisions about how they interact with others through social media and the Internet generally, as well as prevent privacy invasions. Parents, teachers and peers can play a role in keeping each other informed about online privacy, broadening the conversation beyond safety concerns and fostering positive social norms – at school, at home and in the community – about the value of personal information and the importance of treating other people’s with respect.

Matthew Johnson is the Director of Education for MediaSmarts, Canada’s centre for digital and media literacy. He is the designer of comprehensive digital literacy tutorials and has contributed blogs and articles to websites and magazines as well as presenting MediaSmarts materials to parents, journalists, academics and government bodies in Canada and around the world. A collection of his short fiction, Irregular Verbs and Other Stories, will be published in June 2014. For more details, see http://bit.ly/1r6i8IL.

Adapted with permission from material originally posted on www.mediasmarts.ca on February 19, 2014 and from the full Online Privacy, Online Publicity report, available at the link below.

Available at MediaSmarts, http://mediasmarts.ca/ycww

1 This may in part be because students have little contact with their teachers or employers online.
In my professional life as a senior executive in the Health and Productivity field and now in the role of consultant, I am aware that our health care system is stretched beyond capacity in responding to the complexities of an aging population. Families and society are struggling with multiple demands, with knowing what resources are available to assist them and with how to navigate the intricacies of the system.

In my personal life, I know well the challenges of long-distance caregiving, having supported my father and mother through my mother’s cancer. I recall the exhaustion of numerous trips “home,” frequent medical appointments, hospital admissions and the eventual palliative care visits. My personal journey interacting with our burdened health care system was challenging. But, at the end of my mother’s life, one of the brilliant lights that shone during that sometimes dark time were visits to her bedside accompanied by my companion, Diva.

Diva is a miniature schnauzer – a small dog with big personality. Diva, sometimes just called D to give her some street credibility, was often the perfect “tonic.” When a dog visits a care facility with you, its presence has an immediate impact on the environment. The relief and refreshment of spirit that the dog evokes is evident to everyone. It is as if a window has literally opened and a breath of fresh air has rolled into what is often an overheated setting and situation. You can see the sense of play that emerges from both staff and residents/patients.

I was aware of studies demonstrating that stroking and touching a dog lowers blood pressure and can calm people who are agitated, but little did I know that, at end of the lead, I had an extraordinary caregiving resource for someone at the end of her life.

The experience of bringing my companion D to visit my mother taught me many things and prompted me to explore the opportunity of the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program. Sure, maybe I was a snob about credentials but, I have to tell you, with my professional background, I thought calling the visiting dog program “therapy” was a bit grandiose. However, when D and I went through our assessment to be certified to visit people who would benefit from regular contact with a dog, I was nervous. Would “we” pass? We were evaluated as a team and, after successful completion of the five-step process, we began to “work” at a local retirement residence.

Returning to visit the elderly in a caregiving setting reminded me of the good things about visiting my mother. D was then and is now in her new role able to brighten the lives of many elderly people in their...
twilight years. She provides enrichment, a hope to others at a time when life is perhaps smaller than it once was.

One resident talks to D and tells her that she is better than a hundred pills. In these situations, I am clearly, as they say in the business, the dope at the end of the rope. No business suit or white coat here, I am on the floor putting the dog in a position so the residents can experience the benefits of a therapy dog. D enjoys the attention, the treats and the laughter she evokes, and appears to totally accept the circumstances and challenges of all of her visits. D is an example of authentic compassion. She gives hope to others at a time when life experience may be limited. Therapy dogs are completely accepting of people, and being with a dog is grounding for residents or patients.

Dogs provide service in reading programs with children, hospice, police work, search and rescue, guiding and, more recently, with veterans suffering with post-traumatic stress. I imagine asking Diva a question like “What do you enjoy about your work?” And she responds, “Bow wow” – translation: “Well I am just a little dog but, just the same as you, I like being in community, part of a pack, making a difference in the lives of others. I believe in community service and, while it sometimes looks like I am just in it for the treats, it gives me an opportunity to make a contribution. Making people smile, engage in life, is important ruff. Ruff ruff.”

Accompanying my dog as she does her work has a positive impact for me, too. I have had the opportunity to meet many caregivers, residents and their family and friends. To know that D’s contributions make a difference is reason enough to continue. Being part of the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program gives Diva and me a new leash on life.

Paula Cayley is a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog volunteer. Professionally, Ms. Cayley consults in the areas of health and productivity and is an active member of various administrative tribunals.

What Are Therapy Dogs?

- Therapy dogs are used to provide service and comfort to people in a variety of situations, including people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, libraries and rehabilitation units; to children with disabilities; or even to people enduring high stress, such as those at disaster sites.

- The terms “therapy dogs” and “service dogs” are often used interchangeably, but they refer to different roles. Whereas service dogs provide services directly to their disabled handler, therapy dogs work for a handler who may not have a disability and provide services to other people instead.

- “Therapeutic Visitation Animals” are the most commonly employed category of therapy dogs. These dogs are privately owned (i.e. family pets), “shared” by the owner with the public and are used to improve morale generally or provide comfort.

- “Animal-Assisted Therapy Animals” differ in that they are trained specifically to support physical rehabilitation or therapeutic recovery programs. They can help to encourage patients to improve motor skills, balance and interactive skills.

- “Facility Therapy Animals” perform similar roles as Therapeutic Visitation Animals, but differ in that they are typically owned by and live at their place of employment.


St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program

- The St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program is a community- and volunteer-based service that started in 1992 in Peterborough, Ontario.

- The program has since grown, with more than 2,700 therapy dog teams and their handlers now providing help across the country.

- In 2012, the Therapy Dog Program provided more than 190,000 hours of service to Canadians.

Source: St. John Ambulance
As a Registered Early Childhood Educator, working at Today’s Family, within an Ontario Early Years Centre, at the neighbourhood location in Mohawk College, I have the pleasure of working alongside children and their families. Our program philosophy is based on “emergent curriculum.” Emergent curriculum develops an educational environment in response to children’s observed interests and needs rather than pre-developed plans.\(^1\)

Re-evaluating our notions of our views of what Early Childhood looks like today is an integral part of our focus. As part of professional development, I had the opportunity to contribute to the Embracing the Early Years Conference held in November of 2013. As a member of one of the conference committees, we decided to develop a token of appreciation to present to the conference speakers. We chose a bookmark as a representation of “a moment in time.”

At our interactive parent/child play time program, I see many different children and their families. During the week that we were to make the bookmarks, a child named Alijah (age 2), his mother, Amy, and his baby brother, Anderson, attended the program.

The blank bookmarks were placed on a table. For days the bookmarks were not touched. Eventually, one day, Alijah approached the table and reached for the blank rectangle-shaped paper. Alijah showed immense concentration as he worked, carefully meeting the crayon with the paper. I was beginning to think that Alijah would not want to part with his new creations. After he was finished, he left his work on the table and walked away. I asked Alijah if I could keep them. Alijah replied, “Sure,” showing no interest in them at all. In that moment, I realized that Alijah’s work represented something bigger. Alijah reminded me of relationships – as if I were the blank bookmark and Alijah were the crayon.

An important element of emergent curriculum is reflection. Reflecting on Alijah’s work with Kathy Cope, a colleague working with the Artists at the Centre Project, we thought carefully and deeply about the importance of Alijah’s work. We engaged in an intense dialogue around the notion of Early Childhood and the importance of thinking critically about our program and professional practice.

Another key element of emergent curriculum is documentation of the process. In a traditional mode, Alijah would have been encouraged to focus on the creation of a product. Instead, Alijah’s work represented the connection between theory and practice. One might view the marks he left on the paper as the outcome of the activity, but after reflecting on the documentation, it became evident that a more complex notion emerged. He reminded me of the importance of valuing the process over the product.

That moment in time served as a reminder of the cycle of inquiry and reflective practice. If we view Alijah as a representative of all children, the meeting of the crayon would represent them. If we view the paper as a representative of the adults working alongside the children, the bookmarks represent the collaboration.

We are all richer for the experience.

Nicole Kennedy is a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) and a graduate of Mohawk College and Charles Sturt University with an Honours BA in Early Childhood Studies. With special thanks to Kathy Cope, BSc, an artist in the Artists at the Centre Project providing a community perspective, with an expertise on emergent curriculum/Reggio Emilia, for her insights and assistance.

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Multiple Births in Canada

12,543 Number of multiple births in Canada in 2011

2.1% & 3.3% Proportion of all births in Canada that were multiple births in 1991 and 2011, respectively

4.1% & 2.0% Highest and lowest multiple birth rates in Canada in 2011, recorded in Yukon and Northwest Territories, respectively

5x Amount by which mothers of multiples are more likely to experience postpartum depression compared to mothers of singletons

36% & 77% Estimated proportion of twin births and triplet/higher-order births, respectively, between 1998 and 2011 that resulted from conception assisted by fertility treatments in the United States

400x Estimated amount by which mothers are more likely to have triplets or quadruplets if they undergo fertility treatments

39, 35 & 31 weeks Average gestational age for all babies, twin babies and higher-order multiples, respectively, in Canada

28% Proportion of Canada’s low birth weight infant population that are multiple births

55% Proportion of multiple births that are of low birth weight

4.8x Estimated amount by which the hospital costs of each baby in a multiple pregnancy are more expensive than their singleton counterparts

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1 Statistics Canada, Live Births and Fetal Deaths (Stillbirths), by Type (Single or Multiple), Canada, Provinces and Territories (CANSIM table 102-4515), accessed February 25, 2014, http://bit.ly/1f3GCWu.

2 Ibid.

3 Northwest Territories excluding Nunavut.

4 Ibid.


11 A baby born with “low birth weight” weighs less than 2,500 grams (5.5 lb.).

12 CIHI, 2009.
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