

# The Parent Page



FALL 2012



## Laughter in the Family

by Betsy Mann

Children laugh easily and often, some say more than ten times as often as adults do. Children's laughter is a precious gift that can lighten our hearts and, studies show, even improve our health when we laugh with them. At the same time, our laughter tells them what is funny and helps develop their sense of humour, for their benefit and our own.

### Benefits of laughter

It's fun to laugh, which is reason enough to make space for humour in our lives, but if you need convincing, here are some of the benefits.

For **children**, a good sense of humour supports healthy development in several ways.

- **Cognitively**, humour develops the ability to see two sides of the same picture and think creatively.
- Exploring and playing with words improves **language** skills.
- Humour is also a **social skill** that helps children make friends and feel part of a group.
- **Self-esteem** and confidence grow when children see they can make others laugh and feel good.
- A sense of humour helps children take a step back from fears and disappointments to see the funny side. This builds the capacity for **resilience** in the face of difficult emotions.

It doesn't hurt **adults** to laugh either.

- Many health benefits are claimed for daily laughter: lower blood pressure, better digestion, greater resistance to illness.
- At the end of a hard day at work, laughing with your children can be the best stress reduction program around.

Finally, shared humour strengthens the **family**.

- Laughing together builds **family bonds** that will help carry you through other, more difficult times.

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Child Care Resource & Referral  
[www.ccrr.bc.ca](http://www.ccrr.bc.ca)

*"Your community's best source of child care information and resources"*

For Regional Child Care Resource & Referral information visit [www.childcareresource.ca](http://www.childcareresource.ca)

*the YMCA CCRR is funded by the  
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- Sharing jokes can take the edge off some of the normal tensions **between siblings**.
- Made-up jokes that come out of shared family experiences build **feelings of belonging**.
- Humour is a gentle way to **guide children's behaviour** and have fun while you're doing it. Instead of getting angry, try getting funny. Make a joke about where a sock goes. (On your nose? On your ear?) Your antics could turn an uncooperative toddler into one who's giggling and eager to correct your mistake...and get dressed in the process!

## Developing a sense of humour

Like every other aspect of development, a child's sense of humour goes through a number of stages. In the beginning, babies laugh in imitation of our laughter. They also respond spontaneously to **tickle games and bouncing rhymes**. (But be careful to watch their expression and stop at the first sign they've had enough.) Later, once children have learned a bit about how the world *normally* works, they laugh at the **unexpected** (like the sock on the nose). They also enjoy games that play on the **edge of anxieties**. Peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek awaken the fear of losing the parent...and then everyone laughs when the parent is found again.

Later still, children like to **play with words**. They enjoy silly songs, with lots of repetition. They like the surprise of substituting nonsense words in familiar rhymes. **Visual surprises** in picture books make them laugh too: a horse up in a tree, a duck on someone's head. **Slapstick** humour appeals to them as well.

Around age six, children start to turn their word play into **jokes and riddles**. At first, their delivery may fall a bit flat, but they'll be pleased if you laugh at their efforts. They discover that words that have two meanings can be a source of fun. (What's the best month for a parade? –March, of course!) Let them give you the punch line, even if you know it. This is a time when it's easy to allow them to feel they're in control of the situation.

## Setting limits

Occasionally, you will need to set limits on children's sense of humour. Four year olds often like to play with **bathroom words**. You probably want them to know that these jokes are inappropriate in polite company. Also, fun is **only fun if everyone's laughing**. Tickling you brother isn't funny when it starts to hurt. Saying mean things about someone else is *never* funny. Help children make the difference between laughing *with* someone else and laughing *at* them.. Preteens in particular are often so self-conscious that they easily think they're the target of other people's attempts at humour. They'll be able to get some distance on their experience when they're older, but during this phase, it's better to let them do the joking.

## A gift for life

Family life can be rushed and stressful, but it can also be full of moments for fun and laughter if you can step back and open yourself up to the funny side. These will be treasured memories for you and your children.

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## Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program

**A FREE parenting program for parents of children from birth to age five.**

Meet with other parents and share questions, concerns and ideas about being a parent. Learn about child development, safety, health and behaviour while you discuss real-life parenting situations and work together with the support of a trained facilitator to discover positive ways of parenting!

### New Westminister Family Place

93 Sixth Street, New Westminister

Mondays, Sept 17–Oct 22, 2012

7:00 pm

Please RSVP by phone at 604.520.3666 or  
[info@nwfamily.bc.ca](mailto:info@nwfamily.bc.ca)

### Burnaby Family Life

6140 McKercher Avenue, Burnaby

Mondays, Sept 24–Nov 19

7:15 pm

Please RSVP by phone at 604.659.2200 or  
[info@burnabyfamilylife.org](mailto:info@burnabyfamilylife.org)

## Did you know...

...that you can receive an electronic copy of "The Parent Page" by emailing [tricrr@vanymca.org](mailto:tricrr@vanymca.org) and request to be added to our email distribution list? Receive our quarterly newsletter and read about fun family activities, current parenting articles, training opportunities and resources that are available in your community!

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

## Eating Disorder Meal Support: Helpful Approaches For Families

For families who have a child with an eating disorder, meal times can be extremely difficult for youth, parents and siblings. Eating Disorders Meal Support demonstrates strategies supported by research that can help meal times go more smoothly.

Visit the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre website at <http://keltymentalhealth.ca/blog/2012/07/> to view online support videos.

## Legal Help For British Columbians

With the help of a team of volunteer contributors and reviewers, this popular guide has been updated and released in a new wikibook format. The guide provides information on 40 legal topics, including first steps, and where to go for more information and help. Visit the website at <http://clicklaw.bc.ca/resource/1968>

## Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Line

Help for grandparents or other relatives raising a family member's child. Province wide Monday through Friday Lower Mainland call 604.558.4740 or toll free anywhere in BC 1.855.474.9777.

BC Housing

## Rental Assistance Program

The Rental Assistance Program provides eligible low-income, working families with cash assistance to help with their monthly rent payment.

To qualify, families must have a gross household income of \$35,000 or less, have at least one dependent child, and have been employed at some point over the last year.

To apply visit [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org)

Brought to you by Thrifty Foods Pharmacy

## Baby Be Healthy

Sign up and receive Prenatal Vitamins, a Welcome Kit, E-Newsletters and Web Information all for free! Available at the Thrifty Foods pharmacies at the following locations:

Coquitlam (Austin and Mariner) 604.931.2616  
Port Moody (Ioco and Guildford Way) 604.949.4253  
New Westminster (E. Columbia, beside Royal Columbian Hospital) 604.523.2583

BC Council for Families

## Tip Sheets For Parents

Tip sheets are available to parents to provide information and practical tools about the impact of separation/divorce on children and positive approaches to becoming effective co-parents.

To download copies of the Co-Parenting Tip Sheets visit <http://www.bccf.ca/families/programs>.



Coquitlam Centre, the Coquitlam Public Library, School District 43 and the Tri-Cities ECD Committee present:

## Family Learn and Play Event

Imagine, play and learn through math, stories, song, art and more! For children 3–10 years old. Parental supervision is required.

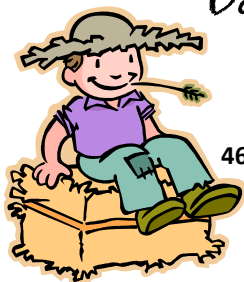
**When:** Last Wednesday of each month

**Time:** 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

**Location:** Coquitlam Centre Mall (by The Bay)

# Family Fun!

## Day at the Farm



**September 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**10:00–4:00 pm**  
**Westham Island**  
**4690 Kirkland Rd., Delta**

Located on a family farm on Westham Island in Delta, this community event showcases the diversity of farming in the Lower Mainland. The whole family can join the action on a real working farm—chat with local farmers, see live milking and draft horse demonstrations, and take a hay wagon farm tour. There will be agricultural exhibits, music, farm fresh produce and food for sale, live animals and antique farm equipment on display

For additional information call David Bradbeer at 604.940.3392 or email david.dfw@dccnet.com

[www.metrovancouver.org](http://www.metrovancouver.org)

## Paws for a Cause

**September 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**Port Coquitlam Walk for the Animals**  
**Lafarge Lake, 19299 Pinetree Way**

**Registration: 10:30 am – Begins: 12:00 pm**

Join the BC SPCA for a celebration with your four-legged friends on a walk around Lafarge Lake. Stay and enjoy fantastic entertainment and activities, all in support of your favourite furry friends.

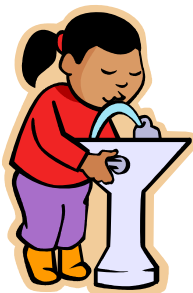
Visit [www.bcspca.ca](http://www.bcspca.ca) to learn more about how to participate.

## RiverFest - A Celebration of BC and World Rivers Day

**September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>**  
**Fraser River Discovery Centre**  
**788 Quayside Drive**

Celebrate Rivers Day along BC's longest and most magnificent river—the Fraser River. RiverFest will be presented free to the public and will consist of artists and artisans in all media displaying their work, environmental and conservation organization communicating their vision, live entertainment for all ages, and crafts and activities for children and parents.

[www.fraserriverdiscovery.org](http://www.fraserriverdiscovery.org)



## Salmon Come Home

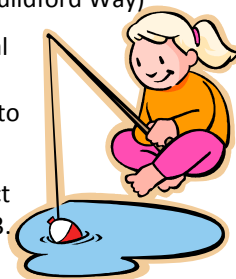
**October 21<sup>st</sup>**

**11:00 am–3:00 pm**

**Hoy Creek Fish Hatchery, Coquitlam**  
 (behind the City Centre Aquatic Complex  
 at the corner of Pinetree and Guildford Way)

Bring the entire family to this free annual event and join the City of Coquitlam and the Hoy/Scott Creek Watershed Society to welcome the salmon home!

For additional information please contact cselk@coquitlam.ca or call 604.927.3583.



## Pumpkin Patches

**Find a pumpkin patch near you!**

Visit [www.pumpkinpatchesandmore.org](http://www.pumpkinpatchesandmore.org) for corn maze locations, hayrides, seasonal recipes and fun family Halloween activities!

## Halloween on the Heights

**Burnaby's Hasting Street**  
**October 31<sup>st</sup>**  
**3:30–5:30 pm**

The Heights merchants are proud to be a part of this safe, fun, celebration of good spooking tradition.

Each year the heights get “haunted” with activities for all ages. Enjoy festive fireworks, trick-or-treating with Heights merchants, and a spooky train ride at Confederation Park's Burnaby Central Railway.

[www.burnabyheights.com](http://www.burnabyheights.com)

## 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Parade of Lights

**New Westminster**  
**December 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**4:00 pm**

Kick off the holiday season with the annual Christmas Parade of Lights in Downtown New Westminster.

Visit [www.hyak.bc.ca](http://www.hyak.bc.ca) for additional information