Issue 14: Positive emotions | 2022

Triple P – Positive Parenting in NC

Positive emotions

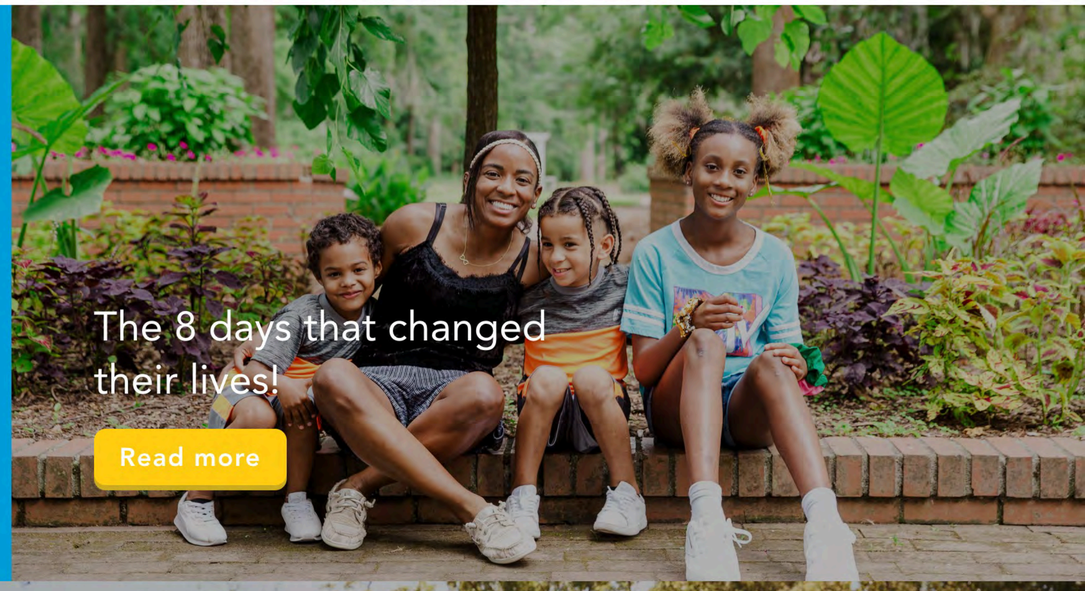
The 8 days that changed their lives!
A change of focus was just the start, says mom

Opening up new worlds
Hola, yassou, ciao and a whole lot more!

NC kids helping to flush away poverty
Positive action makes everyone feel good!

Positive parenting in North Carolina

Thanks to NC Health, every parent and caregiver in NC has free access to a range of positive parenting support, classes, tools and programs, including online courses, that are all part of the world-renowned Triple P - Positive Parenting Program. Read real-life stories of what it is and how it works, useful and interesting articles, and much more.



The 8 days that changed their lives!

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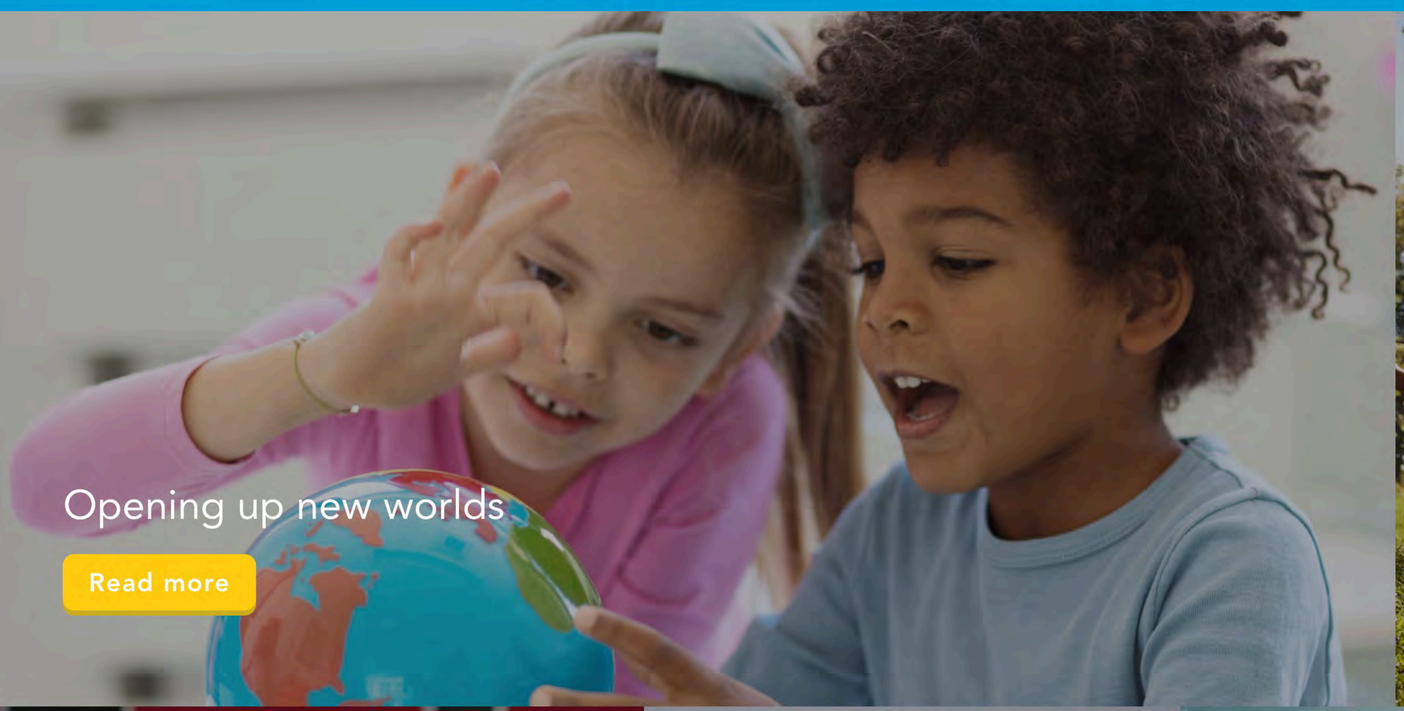

Opening up new worlds

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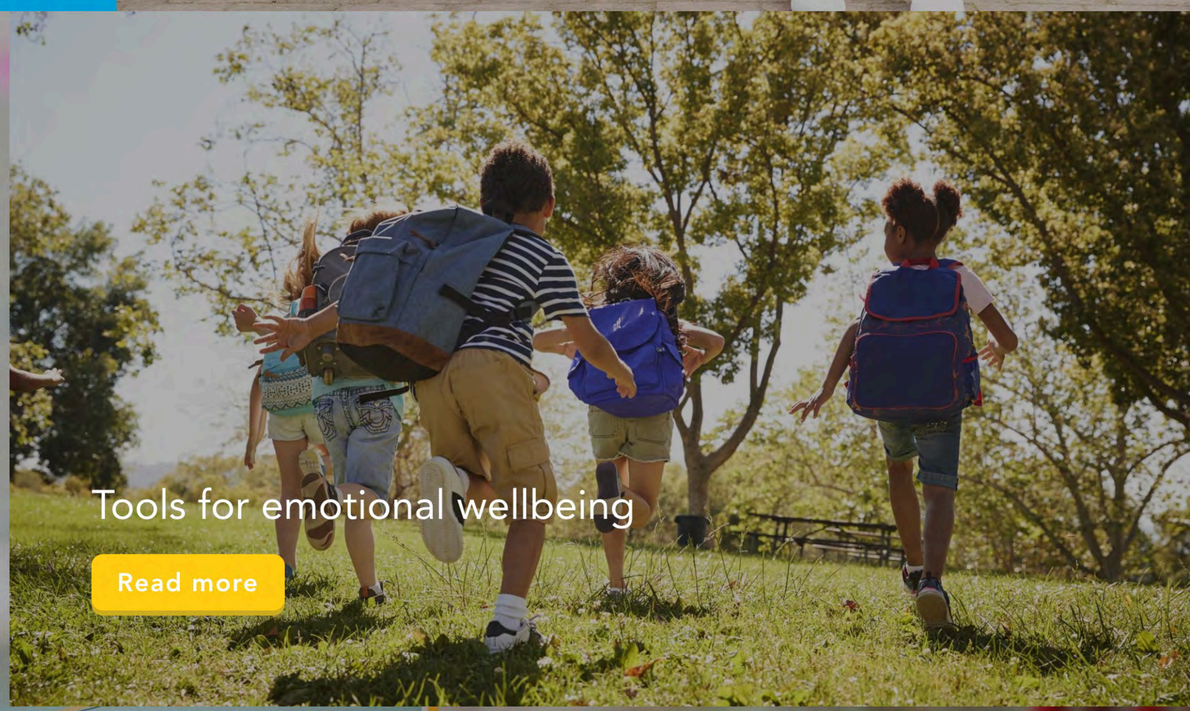

Tools for emotional wellbeing

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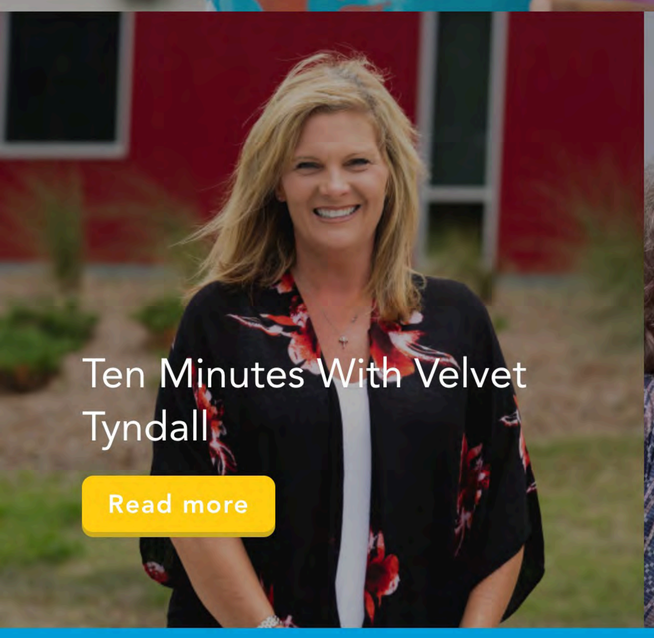

Ten Minutes With Velvet Tyndall

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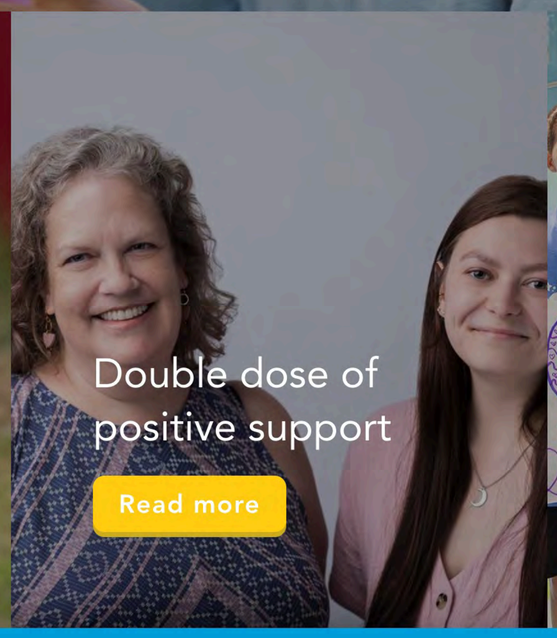

Double dose of positive support

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NC kids helping to flush away poverty

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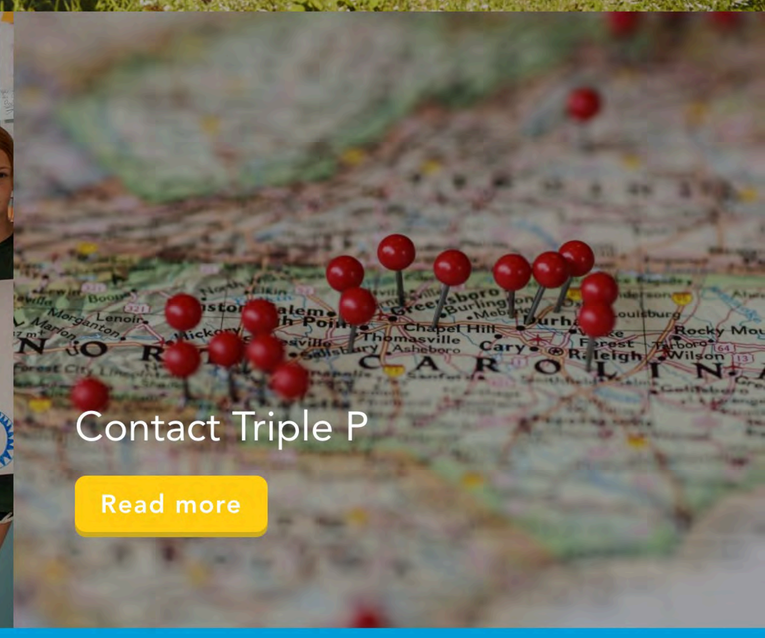

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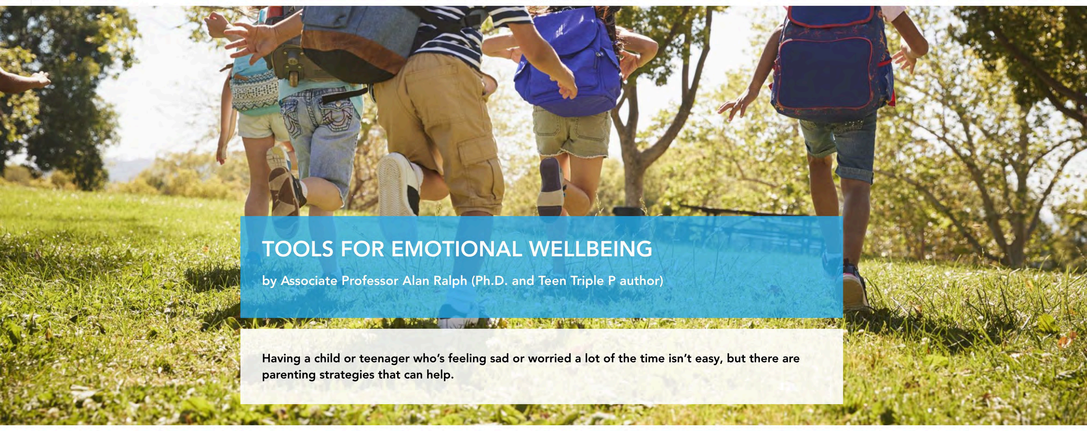


TOOLS FOR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

by Associate Professor Alan Ralph (Ph.D. and Teen Triple P author)

Having a child or teenager who's feeling sad or worried a lot of the time isn't easy, but there are parenting strategies that can help.

People often talk about how teenagers are prone to mood swings. But we now recognize that younger kids may also feel extra worried or sad. However, there's good news too. Parents, families, and communities can take practical steps to help support children's and teenagers' emotional wellbeing.

It's not just hormones that can make kids feel emotional – stress, peer group problems and family and school changes can all play a role. Unhealthy sleep schedules and past traumatic events can put an emotional burden on kids.

But knowing that they can count on their family's support, being able to share feelings, and wider social acceptance all boost children's and teenager's ability to cope in a crisis. Kids do better when they feel like they belong, and that they're a worthwhile and valued member of the family and community.

Many young people (and adults) benefit from individual psychotherapy (CBT or interpersonal therapy). Even when this is not immediately or readily available, other strategies can also support healthy change.

What kind of family environment supports emotional wellbeing?

We can encourage the following, all of which are research-supported ways to support children's and teenagers' emotional wellbeing:

- Close family relationships
- Feeling 'connected'
- Healthy habits (sleep, exercise, nutrition)
- Realistic thinking (being able to tell when one is 'catastrophizing' or thinking the absolute worst will happen, even when that's very unlikely)
- Being able to express emotions
- Being able to cope with setbacks and think 'helpful' thoughts about how to persist in the face of difficulties
- Minimizing conflict but still helping parents set reasonable limits

These things don't always come naturally to parents, so it can help to learn particular positive parenting skills, such as by doing a program like Triple P. This makes it much easier for parents to:

- Get positive family conversations to happen more often, and more naturally
- Get young people involved in activities that increase their sense of self-worth and connection to others
- Improve communication and emotional literacy, and making it easier to share emotions
- Encourage new behaviors, goal-setting, and better sleep, diet, and exercise patterns
- Resolve conflict with kids and teenagers in ways that are calm, consistent, and respectful
- Teach kids problem-solving and coping skills and how to regulate emotions in a healthy way

Thoughts lead to feelings

Children as well as adults can suffer from distorted thinking about current stressful situations and self-worth. ("I can't do this"; "I'm useless".) They can also lose perspective and think that a current painful or difficult situation will 'last forever'. So, from a young age if possible, we want to teach them basic emotional literacy skills – learning to recognize when a thought isn't realistic, for example.

Flexible thinking helps kids understand that there's more than one way of thinking about a situation, and that new perspective also changes how we feel. Let's say a child is convinced they're going to fail an exam. Is this definitely going to happen, or are they blowing the risk out of proportion? Even if it did happen, is it the 'end of the world' or would it just mean coming up with a different plan (like doing a supplementary exam or changing subjects)? Thinking about problems differently is a skill that takes practice.

Teaching kids to see the difference between helpful and unhelpful thoughts, and learning to change one to the other takes time and coaching. But it can make a huge difference to their ability to manage their emotions.

Having a child who is often sad or worried does affect the whole family. It helps when strategies that recognize and treat problems are available to every family. This helps create healthier, happier families who can cope better with tough situations.

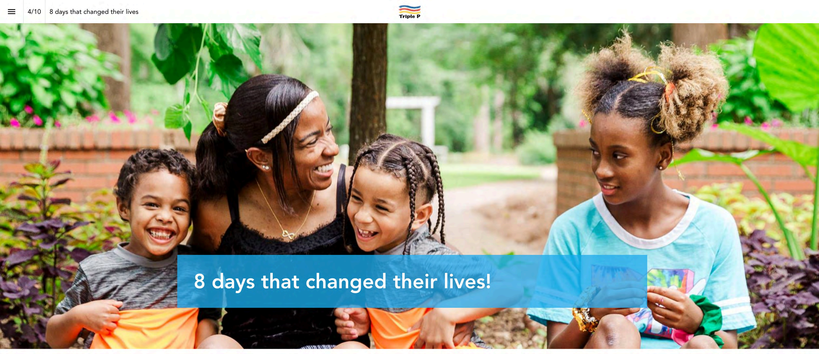
Triple P and Teen Triple P programs help parents and caregivers develop skills and knowledge so they can confidently use strategies that help boost children's and teenagers' emotional wellbeing.

Some of these can be used from early childhood, some in adolescence, some at all ages.

Support is also available in North Carolina here: www.triplep-parenting.com

When to seek extra help:

If a child or teenager is feeling sad a lot of the time, families can get caught up in a cycle. Help and advice being offered by the parents and rejected by the child, who then feels worse; sometimes parents become reluctant to offer help and this is interpreted by the child as not caring. It's not uncommon for parents' relationship to suffer and for them also to start to feel depressed. For these reasons, if you feel this cycle is happening in your family, seek outside help to change the dynamic.



8 days that changed their lives!

Juggling the demands of three children can be challenging even on a good day, so when Freeda T. started noticing more and more 'not-so-good' days happening in her family, she knew something needed to change. Her sons Greyson (who was 5 at the time) and Ryder (then 6), and her (then) 11-year-old daughter Emma were constantly bickering and arguing, and Freeda and her fiancé Bobby didn't know how best to handle the battles.

"I started realizing the problems I was having with the kids were actually getting worse," says Freeda. "My little boys in particular would whine a lot, and I started thinking there's got to be something better than what I'm doing, because it's not working."

Freeda began searching for parenting classes and soon came across Triple P's online program, which immediately caught her attention. Not only could she go through the classes on her own time and at her own pace, but she could pick and choose which areas to focus on based on her kids' particular behaviors.

"It would give me examples and videos of what to do"

"I was surprised by the individualism of it, and that I could actually check off exactly what problems I was having, and it would give me examples and videos of what to do and what not to do."

Eager to learn more information, Freeda jumped right in, and before she knew it had completed the program in 8 days. Excited to put what she learned into practice, she and Bobby began making changes in their home right away, such as setting up a smiley face chart for good behavior and having the kids help create a list of house rules. The couple's new goal became focusing more attention on the good things their kids would do instead of any unwanted behaviors.

"Something I saw on one of the video clips that I actually wrote down and put on my fridge so I can look at it all the time is the saying 'the behavior that gets the most attention is the behavior they're more likely to repeat,' and that's what we go by now," says Freeda. "We still correct them when they're wrong, but we put more emphasis on 'oh, that's the right way to do that! Thank you so much for walking and not running in the house! That's awesome, thank you so much for sharing with your brother!'. It's one of my favorite things I've learned that's helped me the most."

Freeda and Bobby started seeing positive changes right away, from the kids being less whiny and frustrated to being more accepting of discipline. She felt a shift in her relationship with her kids, who seemed happier, and that made being their parent more enjoyable.

"I've been making sure I spend more time with the kids, listening to them and getting more feedback about what's affecting them," she says. "They have a better understanding of why I'm disciplining them or why they get rewards, and I have a better understanding of what I'm doing wrong and what I can improve on and do better."

Freeda says another big improvement she's noticed is in her children's ability to problem-solve and cope with their emotions. Before Triple P, outings would oftentimes turn into outbursts when she would say 'no' about buying new toys or getting to do certain things.

"Now, it's like, 'okay, I understand I can't have that toy right now, but maybe if I get enough smiley faces and I keep being good, I can probably get it later,' and it's not such a devastating bit of information to hear," says Freeda.

I've been making sure I spend more time with the kids, listening to them and getting more feedback about what's affecting them"

Freeda encourages any parents unsure about giving the program a try to simply take a chance. She says she didn't think adding a bit of positivity into her family dynamics would have such a large impact on her parenting skills, but she's very grateful for everything she's learned from Triple P.

"I'm so happy I ran across it, and that I started and finished it," says Freeda. "It's made a difference in the life and happiness of myself, my fiancé, and my children."

Freeda did Triple P Online free, and you can too – thanks to NCLC support, you can too. Find out more.

TEN MINUTES WITH...
Velvet Tyndall

Velvet Tyndall is a Parents as Teachers educator with the Lenoir County Center. She is also a Triple P provider, delivering support to groups of parents who'd like some new ideas on guiding children's behaviors. We asked her some questions about how positive parenting can make a big difference in understanding and supporting children as they grow.

What are the most common problems parents talk to you about?

The problems parents talk to me about vary. With Parents as Teachers the focus is from pre-natal to age five, so I get a lot of questions about issues with potty training or tantrums, but since I'm also trained in Level 4 Triple P Group Teen, I also get questions regarding risky behaviors and substance use, such as tobacco use.

Do parents realize how common these problems are, or do they think they're the "only ones?"

I think parents realize the issues are common but oftentimes feel like they're the only ones going through it within their family structure. Many times, parents are embarrassed or scared to reach out because they think they're going to be made to feel that they're a bad parent. I do my best to convey to them that they're not a bad parent, just as their child isn't a "bad" child. There may have been some less-than-great choices made with parenting their child, but we work on some strategies to help in reducing or eliminating those unwanted behaviors.

"They honestly can't believe how much that changes the family dynamics positively."

Do you think learning about children's and teenagers' development helps parents understand better why kids behave in certain ways?

I definitely think learning about children's and teenagers' development helps parents understand better why their children "are acting like that." Even with teenagers, oftentimes parents need to be reminded that their teenager's brain is still developing and that there are reasons for their actions. It's just finding out what's going on and how to communicate with their child to better understand why they're acting out.

How can positive parenting help children's emotional wellbeing?

I love this question! I hear a lot of parents say how much they were unaware that their own actions, or lack there of, affect their children. I hear from parents who they think they're communicating effectively with their children, when it's all going "in one ear and right out the other." It amazes me when talking with parents of younger children that many don't think of getting at eye level when talking to them, because just that small change can be a huge help in better communication.

I also hear this from the parents of teens when discussing positive parenting, and how small changes can aid in the betterment of their child's wellbeing. We discuss in Triple P Group Teen about family meetings, and I have so many parents who think it's a waste of time at first, but then when they do it and it's effective, they honestly can't believe how much that changes the family dynamics positively. It seems that when teenagers are given the opportunity to "have a voice," there's a dramatic turnaround in behaviors towards not only parents, but a change with attitude and demeanor towards authority figures in general, especially at school.

What do you like most about Triple P?

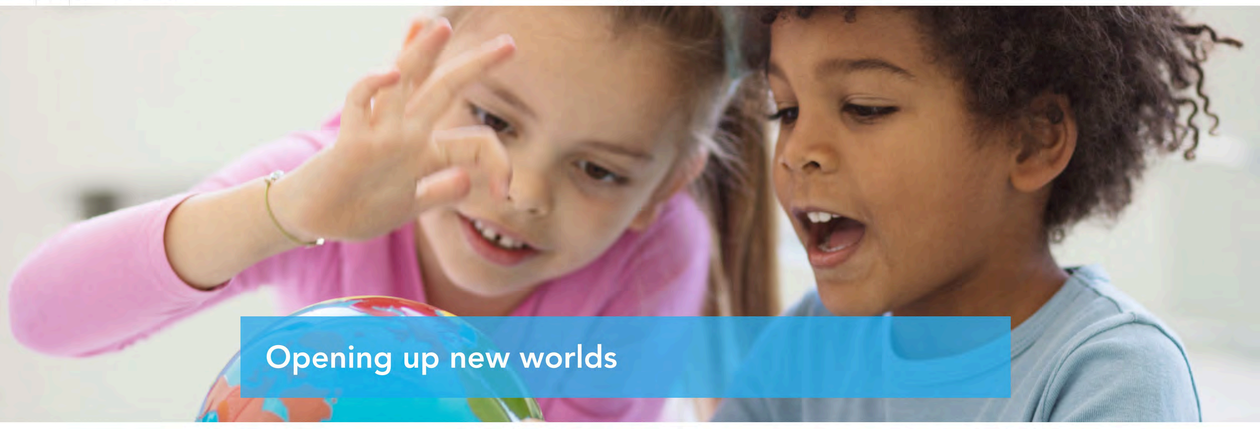
What I love most about Triple P is how it allows parents to determine what works best for them and their family. I also appreciate that Triple P recognizes there's going to be times where children are going to misbehave or have unfavorable behaviors, but wants to provide parents with resources to minimize that.

How do parents react when they realize Triple P is working for them?

I love to hear from parents and see their expressions when they start talking about strategies that they've tried and are working. An example is when I was working with a parent whose child was having really bad tantrums, especially in the grocery store, and she just couldn't understand why. After working with her through the Tantrums tip sheet, she realized her child was acting out because he was completely bored and at times too stimulated, and that having her child engage in the grocery shopping process helped. Mom cried with happiness sharing her success with me and stated that she and her child now look forward to grocery shopping together.

What would you say to someone who thinks they may need some parenting support, but doesn't know where to start?

I tell all of my families I work with that children don't come with instruction books, and even for parents with multiple children, you can't parent all your children the same. As a mom myself of fraternal twins, I have to parent them differently because they definitely are two different personality types. There's no shame and there should be no stigma to a parent wanting to better him or herself. I also remind my parents that "Rome wasn't built in a day," and that time and consistency are key to making positive changes.



Opening up new worlds

No matter what a child wants to become when they grow up, speaking more than one language is certainly an extremely valuable skill to have. Not only is learning another language terrific for brain development, but it also offers a great way to teach children to appreciate the remarkable diversity of the world around them.

It's never too early to start teaching your child a second language, and it's never too late to expose children to new languages and cultures. Research has shown that learning new languages can improve a child's memory, creativity, and ability to focus, listen, and problem-solve. The way children's brains process and remember new sounds and words makes learning a second language one of the earliest skills they can begin to master.

When children learn other languages, they're also learning about other cultures and countries. Language learning gives children a platform to look at our world from different perspectives, nurturing in them a sense of empathy for other people and their customs. Teaching a child to recognize and appreciate our differences helps them become kinder humans who respect and value others.

Lucky for us, North Carolina has plenty of opportunities for families to learn about other languages and cultures. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, this state has been a leader in dual language and immersion programs in area public schools for over 30 years, with more than 225 programs offered in eight different languages. In addition, many cities host family fun events and cultural festivals throughout the year celebrating the diversity within our great state. Here are a few upcoming festivals definitely worth checking out!

African World Peace Festival

September 9-11, 2022

It's back once again in downtown Fayetteville! This 3-day event will feature music and dance performances, cultural exhibitions, storytelling, and more, helping preserve and celebrate the languages, customs and traditions of all indigenous peoples. Presented by the Culture & Heritage Alliance:
https://www.cultureandheritagealliance.org

Asheville Greek Festival –

September 23-24, 2022

Held at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church at 227 Cumberland Avenue, this two-day festival includes authentic Greek food and pastries like lamb shank, spanakopita, souvlaki and baklava, traditional folk dancing, live music, Greek items for sale, and cultural education presentations.
https://www.facebook.com/avlgrkfest/

Hola Charlotte

October 15, 2022

As the largest Hispanic Heritage celebration in Charlotte, the 9th annual Hola Charlotte festival highlights Latin American culture and all its diversity through cultural and artistic dance performances, acclaimed Latin American bands and artists, and family activities to share traditions with new generations.

https://holacharlottefestival.com/

Triangle Oktoberfest

Date to be confirmed

(Your region may also have an Oktoberfest event – search online)

Held in the town of Cary every year, the Triangle Oktoberfest is the largest in Central North Carolina. This authentic German festival focuses on family fun, with traditional Bavarian food, fare, polka music, and hammer striking. There's even an annual wiener dog race and parade for dog lovers!

https://www.facebook.com/triangleoktoberfest

Hosting an Exchange Student

Another way to teach children about other languages and cultures is by hosting a foreign exchange student. Whether you welcome them into your home for a few months or a full year, international students can teach the whole family about cultural diversity and compassion for differences, all without even having to travel. Plus, the lifelong friendships crafted during the hosting experience stretch far into the future, giving families the opportunity to form wonderful connections that span across the globe! Here are a few organizations actively working with host families across North Carolina.

International Student Exchange (ISE)
https://iseusa.org/north-carolina/

Education, Travel & Culture (ETC)
https://edutrav.org

Education First (EF)
https://efexchangeyear.org

Take your parenting to the next level with Triple P

Parenting's a job with lifelong rewards, as you see your child grow and develop, under your positive influence, to become the person you know they can be. It's amazing…and also, a bit scary sometimes! Just like any other job, it's a LOT easier with the right training to teach you skills, tips and new ideas.

Start right now - www.triplep.online/nc

Thanks to the NC Learning Collaborative, FREE access to one of the world's leading parenting programs, online, is available to all parents and carers in North Carolina. Choose the online program to suit you: Triple P Online (for parents with children under 12) or Teen Triple P Online (for parents of tweens and teenagers). Both programs are available in English and Spanish. (Triple P Online is also in other languages including French, Arabic and Japanese).

Each module only takes about an hour, so you can get it done quickly, in your own time. You could say it's free training for the most important job you'll ever have.

Double dose of positive support helps families feel the love

Helping parents create positive, nurturing relationships with their children is a passion shared by Triple P providers Becki Woolf and Emily Vickerman. As part of the family services team at Henderson County's Child and Family Resource Center, the duo work together to support parents in the everyday challenges of raising children.

Between Becki's role as Parent Educator and Emily's role as Community Response Coach, the coworkers have brought the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program to many families in the Hendersonville area, with very positive results. A big part of their work is helping parents understand more about what's realistic and developmentally appropriate for kids. They offer individual sessions with families, and also deliver Triple P Discussion Groups as a team.

"Parents definitely feel alone sometimes, or think their child is doing these things intentionally, so we spend a lot of time working on that and helping them understand what's developmentally normal for a kid," says Emily.

Becki and Emily often hear parents say their biggest struggles are with getting their kids to listen or being disobedient…and so often, they feel like they're the only ones having these challenges.

> "We have to show our little ones that we can be calm so they can learn to borrow our calm and then use those coping mechanisms."

"Sometimes when there's more than one child in the family, parents say their older child did something at this age, 'so how come my younger one isn't?'" says Becki. "I try to help them recognize that all children are different and each child even within the same family can develop at different rates, and it's all within a normal range."

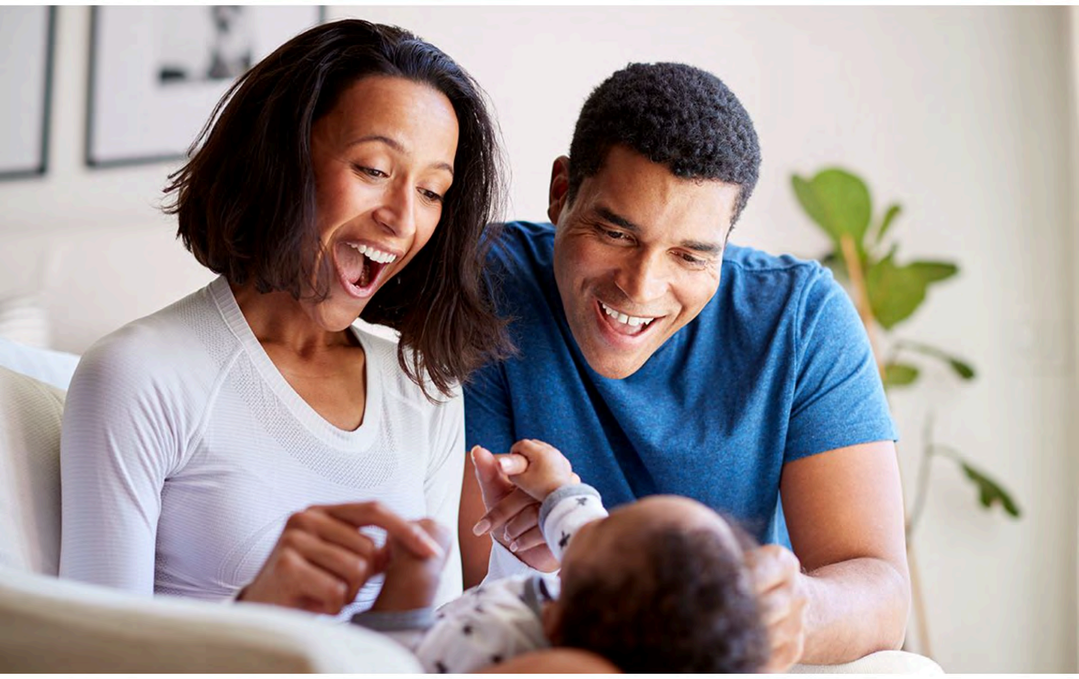
Emily says being able to help parents understand more about their child's development creates realistic expectations, which makes everyone less stressed and happier.

"That way they can see what most 2-year-olds are doing at this stage, and then we discuss the science behind how a little brain is different from a full-sized brain," says Emily. "We have to show our little ones that we can be calm so they can learn to borrow our calm and then use those coping mechanisms when they grow up."

> "Sometimes when there's more than one child in the family, parents say their older child did something at this age, 'so how come my younger one isn't?'"

When parents start helping their children identify their emotions, explains Becki, the child can link up a feeling with a specific word and communicate more about what's going on in their world.

Positive parenting can boost children's emotional wellbeing by making the child feel better about themselves, while also helping parents discover new ways of handling different situations.



> "They feel the hope and the change and know this can really work…it can be pretty emotional."

Emily agrees, adding that helping parents shift perspective adds to their understanding of how and why positive parenting works."One thing I like to do with parents is reflect the situation back on them. If you were having a really tough time because you wanted something, and someone kept telling you 'no,' how would you feel and how would you want somebody to respond to you in that moment?" As Becki explains, it's not about letting kids do whatever they like, though. It's about teaching and guiding rather than using negative strategies.

"Parents learn they should still set limits, but without shame, blame, putting their child down, or comparing them to another sibling, which I think is critically important because those more negative tendencies don't work," says Becki.

Both women say it's wonderful seeing how parents react when they realize Triple P is working.

"They're so excited and relieved to be able to do something that's having an effect, and I think they feel more confident that this can transfer over to other behaviors they're dealing with. It feels really good to them," says Becki.

"When parents come back with feedback after a session, they're almost glowing, because they feel the hope and the change and know this can really work," says Emily. "It can be pretty emotional."

NC kids helping to flush away poverty

Even the youngest among us can become game-changers and world-shakers. It's an important message in more ways than one, because being involved in community projects can have powerful psychological benefits for the volunteers themselves.

When the kids at Cape Fear Center for Inquiry (CFCI) in Wilmington discovered that one in four people around the world don't have somewhere safe to use the bathroom, it made them think about going to the bathroom in a whole new light. Upon learning that one third of the schools across the globe don't have adequate toilets, and hundreds of children die each day from lack of sanitation, this group of motivated middle schoolers knew they wanted to do something about it.

Through the school's Global Studies class, the students discovered the UK-based charity organization Toilet Twinning, which works to fund projects in poor communities so that families can build basic toilets and have access to clean water and hygiene education.

> "I'm just amazed at the fearlessness and compassion of these kids"

> "One thing we learned is that kids can make a change and inspire a movement"

Now, these school kids have helped turn Wilmington into the first official 'toilet twinned city' in America.

The students were shocked to realize that girls are disproportionately affected by this problem and often end up dropping out of school due to both lack of privacy and their responsibilities gathering water. Since 80% of diseases in developing countries are caused by poor sanitation, parents in these countries end up spending what little money they have on expensive medicines, preventing them from escaping the poverty cycle.

Wanting to help make the world a better place, the Global Studies class came together to spearhead a Toilet Twinning project in an effort to raise money and awareness about the issue. A team of middle school students visited elementary classes to share the importance of sanitation and how Toilet Twinning can change lives, while others reached out to local Wilmington businesses to share the Toilet Twinning message and collect donations.

> "When people see a kid, they just think they're a normal middle schooler... but with a big group of kids and an ambitious goal, we actually can do a lot."

"I'm just amazed at the fearlessness and compassion of these kids," says Global Studies teacher Amanda Brust. "They were willing to take an idea that was absolutely foreign to Americans, twinning toilets, and completely run with it. We had a lot of talks about how being a leader and starting a movement could be a lonely or awkward feeling, but they led with their hearts, hearts full of compassion for people they will never meet and a desire to enact real change."

While the older kids liked helping others (and it's good for their self-esteem), the younger kids enjoyed the chance to indulge in toilet humor for a good cause!

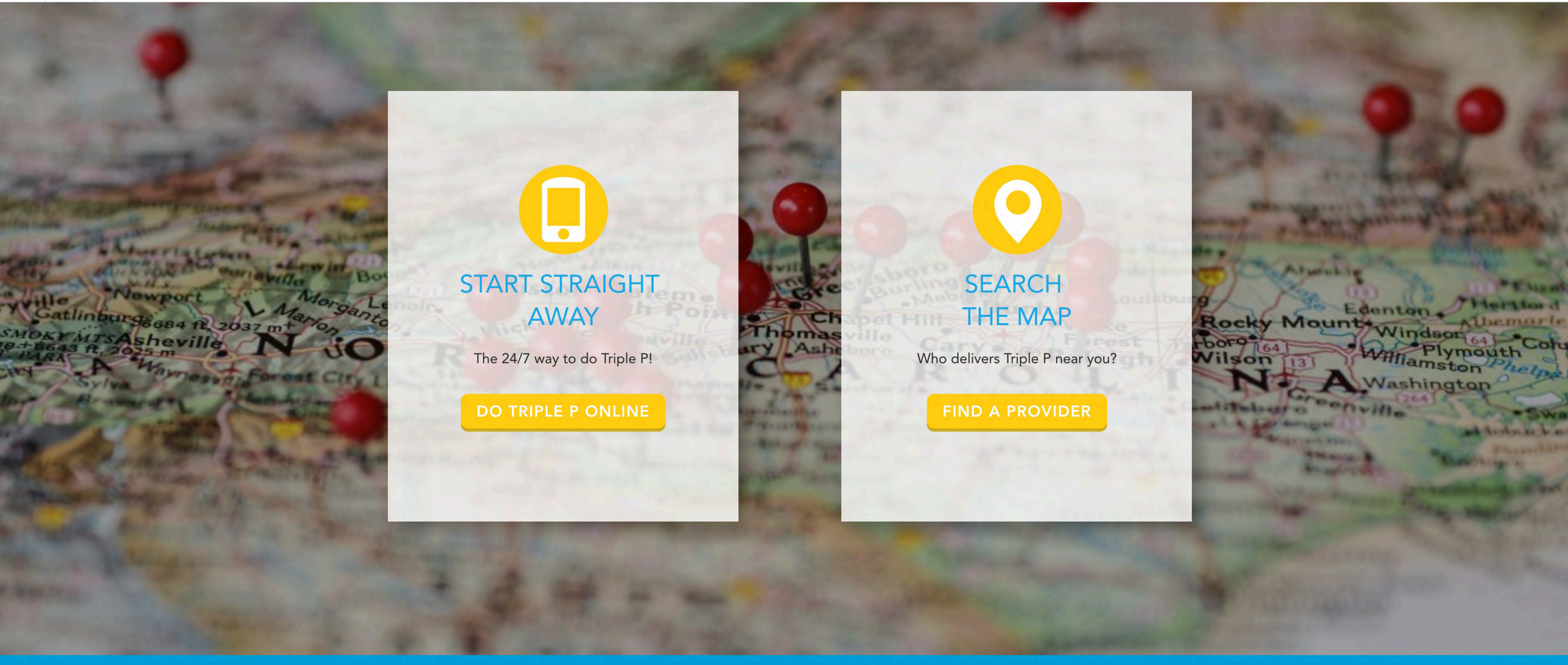
Overall, the school community raised $3,429 from local businesses and student donations, which was enough to twin 45 toilets and help transform lives in some of the poorest places on the planet.

Want to get your school or town involved? Visit www.toilettwinning.org for more information.

785 MILLION PEOPLE (10% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION) STILL LACK ACCESS TO EVEN A BASIC WATER SERVICE.

toilet twinning.org

Triple P



START STRAIGHT AWAY

The 24/7 way to do Triple P!

DO TRIPLE P ONLINE

SEARCH THE MAP

Who delivers Triple P near you?

FIND A PROVIDER