

# Class Can Get Parents Through Early Ages

**By Christine D. Boyd**

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PITTSBURG — The ‘terrible twos.’ It is the age when a cute little baby turns stubborn, determined to do things his own way.

Peter Haiman has spent the last 23 years trying to help parents understand why their children behave the way they do, and how to cope with it. Haiman will spend one night a week, for the next six weeks, teaching a Pittsburg Adult School class designed to help parents understand themselves and their children.

“My focus has always been parents and helping them with what’s the most difficult job there is — rearing children,” he said.

The class, called “Growing up with your Pre-schooler,” is being offered through the adult school in conjunction with the Adolescent Family Life Program, a counseling program for teen mothers and fathers.

Haiman said Tuesday his class will allow parents and future parents to discuss problems they are having with their children, and their fears about the responsibility of raising a child.

The parents will be able to bring their children with them to Delta High School, where the class will be held. The children will be kept in a nursery while their parents attend class next door, he said.

Parents learn from his answers and expertise, and from the suggestions the other parents pass on, Haiman said.

“One of the things that I tell the parents is that childhood behavior is a symptom of underlying problems,” he said. “Unfortunately, 85 to 90 percent of parents just treat the behavior and that’s where they get themselves into a lot of trouble.”

For example, a child who is constantly misbehaving and getting into trouble could be trying to attract his parent’s attention, Haiman said.

Instead of reacting with a backhand, Haiman recommends playing with the child and giving him enough love to persuade him he doesn’t need to be in trouble just to be noticed.



Dr. Peter Haiman will teach a Pittsburg Adult School class designed to help parents understand their kids. Staff photo: Greg Stahler

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Haiman said he has three prime pieces of advice for parents: to give children who are growing from infancy to the preschool age many chances to be their own boss; to find out what is going on in a child's mind behind his behavior, and to understand that the parents' emotions about their children reflect the way they were treated when they were young.

Children growing from infancy to independence go through a period when they are determined to make up their own minds about what they will do. This can create battles over such daily activities as tooth-brushing, going to bed or eating breakfast, Haiman said.

A parent can short-circuit the child's stubbornness by giving him small choices. For instance, the parent can let the child choose between his red toothbrush and his green toothbrush, which will give the child enough sense of independence that he won't fight the idea of brushing, Haiman said.

Often a parent who gets unreasonably upset about his child's search for attention or refusal to cooperate is just remembering his own childhood, when he didn't get enough attention or was forced to do things his parents' way, Haiman said.

Haiman's class will be offered Tuesdays from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Delta High School, beginning Sept. 2. It is open first to parents who are going through counseling from Adolescent Family Life Program and Child Protective Services. But there will

probably also be room for people around the community who want to enroll, he said.

The class will begin a complete cycle every six weeks, so that parents who cannot enroll in the first session can get involved in October, he said.