

# CITY Parents & Kids

WEEKEND

城市周报

Oct. 18-Dec. 12



## Trick-or-Treat

Throw a haunted Halloween bash ➔22



**Cooking Together**  
Cinnamon  
Pumpkin  
Soup ➔38



**Family Travel**  
Cycling in  
Germany  
➔21



**School Matters**  
Create your  
own pre-  
school ➔42



# Overcoming Shyness

## How to help your child cultivate social skills



→ We all remember the feeling: walking into a classroom where we didn't know anyone, sitting alone at the lunch table or being the only kid not to have heard of the latest movie or game. No doubt even the "cool" kids have moments where they feel unsure how to be a part of the group or talk to kids they just met. Some kids have fewer of these moments and naturally find ways to get over feelings of shyness. For others, however, it can be difficult to make friends, be active in games or even participate in class.

Fortunately there are a number of ways that parents can help with this. "Don't make it an issue if it isn't one," says Carrie Jones, a counselor at the Community Center. "Some kids are naturally more outgoing and talkative while others are more naturally introverted. It isn't necessarily a problem that needs to be fixed unless it is creating challenges for the child or holding them back from achieving their full potential or happiness."

When preparing to work with your child on overcoming shyness, it is crucial to go slow,

according to Dr. Paul Wang, a clinical psychologist at Shanghai United Family Hospital. "Don't ever try to force a child out of shyness," he says. "It's better to create a comfortable environment to help children progressively engage in more difficult new social situations."

Trying to better understand your child's shyness is a good next step. Dr. Raazhan Rae-Seebach, a clinical psychologist at Olivia's Place, advises, "Determine when and where your child is shy, for example all the time with everyone, at parties, with strangers, new places / events, playing with other children or while giving a presentation at school."

Then give kids a chance to practice these different situations in a low-stress environment. Dr. Wang recommends spending some time every day role playing with your child to simulate situations that children might commonly face. Some examples include making a request at school, introducing oneself to a new person, making a phone call or ordering in a restaurant. Dr. Rae-Seebach agrees, noting, "Puppets can

also be a great tool for introducing and practicing before engaging in real life situations." According to Dr. Rae-Seebach, these can be built step by step into real life situations. Taking the example of ordering in a restaurant, "Start small and build up," she says. "Your child could begin with making eye contact with the server, then the next time smile and greet the server, then finally do the actual ordering."

She also advises that parents try to role model confident behavior by going first in social situations, i.e. approaching and greeting people, smiling and saying hello to people throughout the day. Jones agrees, "It's amazing how much children pick up from their parents."

All three encourage play dates as a way for children to become more comfortable socially. Jones states that you can add to the effectiveness of this by encouraging children to be assertive about who they would like to play with and perhaps making the calls themselves to invite the other kids.

If your child is reluctant to join in group activities, Dr. Rae-Seebach encourages parents to start with solitary activities, such as music lessons, doing arts and crafts projects, shooting hoops, etc. Then as your child gains more confidence, arrange opportunities for other adults to guide your child as he or she engages in preferred solitary activities. Over time, arrange for your child to share his or her interests and expertise with other children. For example, a child learning to play a musical instrument could gradually build up enough confidence to play in the school band.

Most of the time, shy behavior is a result of a child's personality or disposition. However, there can be times when something more is going on. Dr. Rae-Seebach explains, "Some children have difficulty reading social cues, knowing how to enter and exit play activities, or how to talk with others in an age appropriate way. These behaviors can sometimes look like 'shy' behavior. If you think these may be the underlying reason related to your child's shy behavior, seek professional consultation." ●

**Christine Forte**  
is a counselor  
with Balanced  
Heart Counseling

