

Visit With the Utays

April 2009

School Psychology and Education Specialists



Dr. Joe Utay, Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for Total Learning Centers and former professor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Department of Counseling, is a graduate of University of Pittsburgh, a school psychologist, marriage and family therapist, author, national speaker, and father.

Dr. Carol Utay is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. She is also a graduate of University of Pittsburgh and an expert in learning and special education. "Dr. Carol" has experience as a principal, Orton-Gillingham reading therapist, teacher, consultant, national speaker, professor, author, and mother. She is a national Athena Award winner for community service.

Parent to Parent: Winning the Homework Battle?

Homework brings fear to the hearts of many brave parents and children. Families who have successfully worked together through OTHER challenges have often found homework seemingly insurmountable. This month we asked a mother the secrets to her successful navigation through these emotionally difficult waters.

Dr. Carol Utay (Dr. U): Sara, please share with our readers how you managed to win the often devastating homework battles you had with Don.

Sara: I really see it as a win-win-win situation. Don and I are both winners as well as his teachers who had also been flustered by his homework problems.

Dr. U: So it's more of a team effort than just a set of parenting techniques.

Sara: That's crucial. The first step is to contact the teachers involved. I set up a system where I emailed them as soon as there was an issue. Sometimes it turned out he misunderstood what was due or the deadline. Several times just getting some clearer directions was all it took to calm us both down.

Dr. U: I agree. Communication with the school is vital. What specific problems did you have with Don's homework?

Sara: There were so many times it was more than just not knowing what or when something was due. It took much longer to finish than it should have. Or the opposite- he would rush to finish insisting it was all that was expected. Homework materials were "accidentally" left at school or lost. Especially upsetting were times I knew the homework was done but somehow never got turned in.

Dr. U: Wow, frustrating for everyone I'm sure. What made the biggest difference in turning things around?

Sara: Well, when everything I knew to do from books, articles, other parents, and my own gut didn't have lasting effects, I took him to be evaluated. Looking back, that evaluation was the turning point. It gave me information I was missing about the underlying causes of his – or rather our – homework problems. It also gave us hope that there would be an end to the battles.

Dr. U: So Sara what final advice do you offer parents gearing up for their next homework battle?

Sara: I know a lot of well-meaning parents who waited a year or more after noticing school problems before getting tested to see what exactly the problem was so a plan could finally be put into place to correct it. The sooner problems are well defined, the sooner they can be worked on, improvement seen, and peace restored in your family.

To discuss your child's individual unique needs, please contact Total Learning Centers at (724) 940-1090, email success@totallearningcenters.com, or check the website at www.TotalLearningCenters.com. **Total Learning Centers was voted Best Tutoring and Best College Prep by Nickelodeon's Parent Picks.**

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