

## ***THE SOUL OF DISCIPLINE***

Review of the Soul of Discipline discussion - By Shannon Gamble

Shaking the snow from our heads, we entered the Piening Hall great room. Beth, Ellen and I had determinedly driven our way through pelting ice and wind to make it to tonight's presentation. Kim Payne, the guest speaker, is an educational consultant to Hartsbrook specializing in children's social issues.

I was first introduced to Kim Payne last year when I participated in a weekend workshop on social inclusion. I found him not only insightful but down to earth and extremely humorous. His imitations of children in speech and gesture had me rolling on the floor. There aren't many who can decipher the complexities of childhood with such wit and clarity. So I was eager to hear him speak on discipline, tonight's topic.

And I wasn't alone. Despite the blizzard raging outside, the room was filled with parents and teachers. As we settled into our seats, notebooks and pens ready, Kim sauntered up to the front of the room and quickly charmed everyone with his warm, engaging style.

He began the presentation by looking at the history of discipline from the 1950's to present times,

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explaining the theories that drove the changing parenting choices. His humble and accepting attitude helped ease his audience into careful consideration of how these past techniques influence the way we discipline our children today. He also listed the many drawbacks and dangers of these past approaches and how they have resulted in many frustrated parents and unhappy children.

I felt myself cringing at his mention of some of my own tried and true discipline strategies; "natural consequences" and "time outs". But knowing that parents care so deeply and have a tendency to judge themselves harshly, Kim delivered his ideas with compassion and understanding for just how challenging it is to be a parent today. He lightened the mood with endearing vignettes of common struggles we have with our kids. Most importantly, after showing in detail why these other methods may not create the desired result, he laid out his approach to discipline in a clear and cohesive manner.

There is no possible way I can do justice to his ideas here in this small article, they are too rich to be simplified to a few sentences. What I will share is one small way that wintry evening in February influenced how I relate to my children when things are falling apart. There are often moments my days when I am doing too many tasks at once and the girls are, in my eyes, making things harder for me. The bickering turns to crying or yelling, they are ignoring my requests or outright refusing to comply.

Although I've been working on this for ten years (my oldest is ten) one of the most difficult things for me is to stay calm and present enough to not react emotionally when things are going downhill. Kim suggested that we simply pause and say nothing when we feel ourselves about to lose it. I chose this simple task to focus on after the talk, following his advice to start small. This one little shift has helped me listen to my children more effectively and respond to the issue at hand rather than react.

As the snow plinked the windows of Piening Hall, I perched on the edge of my seat to the very end, mesmerized by the wisdom being presented. Kim Payne is an inspiring visionary. I feel incredibly grateful to have him in our midst. Of course, understanding intellectually Kim's advice is only the first step. Making it real in my heart and home will take patience and persistence.