

A New Awareness

As a parent you have your work cut out for you to deal with all what family life can throw at you. And reaching your goals for the New Year can be difficult without the right tools. What if all the answers you were looking for were just a few questions away? umuma attended Anne Maxwell's workshops for parents – "All About Kids" – to find out more about connecting with your kids, playtime activities and Access Consciousness®.

By Christine Grové

Making a list of New Year's resolutions seems almost futile if most of them are forgotten about by mid-January. The great thing about the start of every new year is that it brings with it the sense that one can start fresh – even start over. It is a clean slate for you to reorganise your thoughts and prepare for new goals and challenges.

Abraham Maslow once said, if all you have in your toolbox is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail. The thing about starting fresh is that it needs a specific approach. Baby steps. Reaching your goal is a process. If you are expecting things to change but carry on in the same mind set as before, very little is going to change. So when looking at your plans for 2014, full of hope and positivity, you need to recognise that unexpected difficulties will indeed surface, but you can prepare for dealing with them by equipping yourself with some new "tools".

What if you started with the way you think and see the world? What if you could come up with the answers to all your daily worries almost immediately? What if you could change the things that bother you simply by asking a question?

Anne Maxwell, a leader in the field of child, play and family therapy and a licensed Access Consciousness® facilitator from the United States recently visited Dubai to share her unique set of tools and techniques. Hitting the proverbial nail on the head, Access Consciousness® provides you with a set of techniques to connect with answers you already have inside of you, but you simply didn't think to look there. Accessing this information allows you to become much more aware of yourself and your surroundings. And the best part

about it is that these techniques are extremely easy to use, and you do not have to change anything about yourself. Getting the right answer is as easy as asking the right question.



Anne Maxwell
Family, Child and Play Therapist

"Access Consciousness® shines a light on those areas in life where most people have swept the good, the bad and the ugly under a carpet or shoved it in a corner such that no one sees, including themselves. Access shows you where you've been cutting off your awareness, hiding your capacities and abilities, living in judgment in order to survive, to fit in, to benefit and not to lose," says Anne.

"My sessions provide practical and simple tools to change what hasn't been working, whether it's in the parenting, teaching, diagnoses or treatment realms. My focus is to help people who may be stuck or at a complete loss as to what to say

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or how to be with their kids or their patients, to be able to identify what they really require and know how to provide it," she adds.

During her workshops, Anne provides the space for parents to ask questions about engaging with their families and children, and then facilitates them with a sense of awareness to be able to find answers.

"One of the things that I love about Access is that it is not about analysing and figuring out, and going back to the original source of the trauma so that you can then grow from it. It is about recognising what you are and what you aren't, and what works for you and what doesn't, ending up in destroying what doesn't work for you and choosing something different," says Anne.

In other words, it's about giving yourself choices. That by asking a question, you have an infinite amount of possible answers you can choose from. But by thinking you have the right answer, you only have options that fit with that answer.

To ask or not to ask, that is the question

In terms of your family life and communicating with your children, Anne explains that asking a few questions could open your mind to all sorts of possibilities in dealing with anything from tantrums all the way to children with disabilities.

One of the ways that Anne facilitates this is through play. As a certified play therapist, Anne uses play to help her uncover a child's way of life.

When parents bring their kids in to see me, I say to the kids, 'in here you're the boss.' I immediately try and

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find out from a child's perspective what their life is like. And I leave them in charge. I have no rules. When I erase all those rules, they give me their experience in their play of what it's like to be them," Anne says.

To parents who like to enforce rules and restrictions during playtime, why not ask 'I wonder what I can create with my kids if I left them in charge?' With this, a concern parents might have is the confidence in allowing their kids to take charge – "I don't want to be controlling but I'm worried that she hurts herself."

To which Anne responds: "How many of us were raised thinking that a parent's job is to protect our children? We all were. But, what if the greatest protection you can give your child is awareness?"

We all know that as parents – and as human beings – we cannot be with our children 24/7.

So, how can you protect your child from injury or failure? By giving your child the information they need and having faith that they will make the right choices. Which, more often than not, they do.

"When your daughter is heading towards the stairs, and you don't want her to fall down, what if you could say to her, 'those stairs are really steep – and if you were to fall down, that would really hurt, wouldn't it?' Give her the information that she would require so that she can then choose



for herself. And of course you wouldn't let her throw herself head first down the stairs, but my guess is that if you were to give her that information, she would then have the awareness that she could pay attention, and would actually make the right choice," Anne says.

Choice creates awareness

One of the main principles of Anne's practice is: Choice creates awareness. When you choose something you tap into the energy that's created by the possibilities that choice has.

So as a parent – when you intervene, when your kids are about to choose something, and you shout "No no no, don't do that! Do it like this!" What happens is that they won't get to experience whatever that choice was going to create. What they experience is you. The trick is to try not have a point of view about what your child chooses. Who is responsible for the choices your child makes? You or

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them? If you give them a sense of choice and responsibility, they in turn become aware of themselves and of their surroundings. When you say no, the only choice they have is to push back against you. There is something you create energetically different

when you ask "what would you like to do?" instead of "you must do it like this."

How many times have you taken responsibility for your child's choices? We think that because they are babies, and because they are so little they can't choose for themselves. What if that's actually not true? What if they know so much more than we give them credit for?

Becoming aware

Using questions instead of looking for something to blame your situation on is an eye opening method that begs the question "why did I not think about this before".

It is not a set of rules or longwinded therapy sessions. It is about giving yourself and your family a set of new perspectives and awareness to experience the world around you in an acute state of alertness that will help you understand where you are and how to get to the next step. ■