

NEWS > PARENTING > ACTING > FILM FESTIVAL > NETWORKING

## How to be best parents to our kids

**Leo Godim**

The parenting workshop Discipline That Doesn't Divide, held in the Wosk Auditorium of the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver on March 24, was an eye-opening experience for many attendees. More than 70 people came to the presentation, organized by the JCC Family Child Development Centre and its new director Susan Hoppenfeld. The majority of the public were women, obviously mothers of young children, with a sprinkling of fathers to even the score.

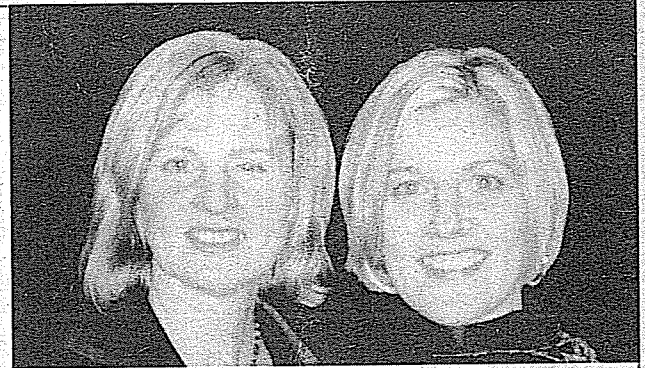
The presenters, Colleen Drobot and Patti Drobot, are both registered family therapists and interns of Dr. Gordon Neufeld, a foremost authority on child developmental psychology in the world. Promoting Neufeld's principles of developmental psychology, Colleen and Patti introduced the workshop's main message: whatever you do, don't break the child's attachment to the parent, because it is the most pow-

erful tool of parenting. Child's love and affection empowers parents as well as allows them to shield their child from danger. "There is no such thing as 'too attached'," Patti Drobot explained. She quoted her mentor Neufeld's paradigm that attachment is "the womb of maturation". Both presenters urged the parents not to employ any disciplinary measures that could damage the connection between children and their parents. "Behavior is not the bottom line. Attachment is," they kept repeating.

The seven strategies of safe discipline discussed during the workshop have been developed by Dr. Neufeld as long-term solutions, designed not to fix the immediate problems of children's behavior but rather to understand and guide the children towards maturity.

"Be creative," Colleen Drobot said. "To deal with children's disciplinary missteps, we have to discipline ourselves first."

Colleen and Patti Drobot are sisters as well as colleagues. They came to their current vocation from



**Colleen Drobot and Patti Drobot**

different backgrounds: Colleen specialized in education, Patti in medical rehabilitation and occupational therapy. Their shared interest in developmental psychology led them both to the Pacific Coast Family Therapy Institute. Afterwards, their mutual friend alerted them to the teaching of Gordon Neufeld. They enrolled in one of his seminars to make sense of their own children's behavior.

That moment was pivotal in their professional evolution. Embracing Neufeld's ability to make children understandable, they became his avid students, attending most of his seminars and workshops. They embraced their mentor's alternative solutions to the current methods of behavioral con-

trol. Both Patti and Colleen are now ardent proponents of Neufeld's methods and licensed presenters of his approach to parenting and teaching.

Their presentation was clear and well prepared, devoid of unnecessary theory but filled with concrete examples, mostly related to their own children. Both sisters practice what they preach, which makes their parenting lessons all the more reliable.

And the public reacted gratefully, soaking in the sisters' child-rearing recommendations and asking multiple questions. In the end of the two-hour presentation, nobody wanted to leave. We all want to understand our children better and be the best parents we can be.