

## News & Announcements

### Summer Programs

This summer, besides on-going academic tutoring, STR will be offering a variety of unique one-on-one tutoring options. Summer tutoring can enhance students' understanding of academics and build interest and experience as well.

Consider how learning chess strategies might help with the logical thinking required for math and calculus, or how calligraphy could improve hand-writing and pattern recognition.

Contact us directly to learn more.

### Go Safely & Confidently into the Wilderness

Pacifica Paddle Sports offers a variety of kayaking courses for individuals and families designed to build confidence and provide stimulating 'soft-challenge'. Courses in Kayaking Basics, and Recovery Essentials as well as Instructional Tours run weekly.

Contact Peter Harris at 361-9365 or [www.pacificapaddle.com](http://www.pacificapaddle.com) to discuss parent-child combined courses or summer programs.

### STR in the Community

In April, STR spoke to the Special Education Local Specialist Association and the peer tutors at St. Margaret's School.

If you are interested in hosting a talk by Smart Tutor Referrals, please contact us. 30 minute - 1 hour talks for peer tutors are offered free of charge as a community service.

## Building a Sense of Self-Sufficiency in Youth

*This month's newsletter is an interview with Peter Harris, owner of Pacifica Paddle Sports in Victoria, BC. Peter has over 20 years' experience mentoring youth in kayak and canoe learning and adventures.*

**STR:** First, thank you for speaking with me, Peter. We've talked before about this concept of building a sense of self-sufficiency in youth. Can you describe for our readers, from your perspective: **what is self-sufficiency?**

**Peter:** It's feeling like you can take care of yourself. Being able to go into a strange place or situation and organize it into the familiar, or figure out how to approach it, so you can deal with it as you've trained yourself to do.

Have you ever heard kids say, "What do I do now?" They're looking for someone to tell them the next step. They're expressing dependency. They're also not engaging with where they are.

Now, think of the word 'engaged'. When you're out there, you want to be there, and you've engaged your senses – sight, touch, listening, smell, taste, thinking, it's all there. When someone is in that state, they won't be bored (in fact 'bored' won't even be in their vocabulary.)

**STR: What does self-sufficiency, or lack of self-sufficiency, look like?**

**Peter:** When you're two years old – you can't reach the doorknob. You have to depend on someone else for everything. This is complete lack of self-sufficiency.

Think of being 12 and going camping with everything you need on your back, putting up a tarp and pulling out some food and making dinner. The difference between doing that and having your mother cook dinner for you is monumental because you're involved with generating your own self-satisfaction. Self-sufficiency isn't just about camping. Learning to cook or getting involved in cooking can also develop that same sense of self-sufficiency.

When you allow kids to learn by doing, this is 'experiential education'. You can see it when a kid has his hands in the flour making a pie as you're making one, by the time he's done it a few times, the motivation to learn and improve is there because he sees the difference between your pie and his, and he has felt the enjoyment of making his own food.

What goes along with self-sufficiency is feeling confident and comfortable.

Think of the difference between being afraid and being curious, being in a state of heightened awareness as opposed to being fearful. The difference is really between risk and perceived risk. There is a difference between what it is like to be with someone who says, "Don't touch that," compared to, "Here's how we do it."

**STR: What are some of the benefits of self-sufficiency?**

**Peter:** Developing a method of dealing with things that can be applied to everything you come across from there on in. Have you ever watched a dog when it's about to lie down? It will circle three times. So do float plane pilots about to land their planes in an unfamiliar place. What they're doing is sizing up the landing place. Someone once said, "Success is 9/10 preparation." When a person is confident in his or her skills, he is comfortable taking the time to prepare rather than just rushing into a new situation or task.

Self-sufficiency means you've started thinking about what you're doing – you're not just floating along – you're *living* your life.

When you think of the issues that face a kid, they are many. To boil it down, self-sufficiency is problem solving. It is that sense that, "I can solve my own problems."

When a young person is out in the woods and he's learned that to make a camp you look for a flat spot and then make shelter or put up a tent – he knows how to deal with

## About Us

### Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents through:

*In-home private tutoring  
matched specifically to  
each student's needs.*

*Stimulating workshops  
building skills in a practical  
and creative way.*

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through one-on-one support that is truly individualized, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

**Our tutors** are certified teachers and professionals. They are carefully screened and chosen specially to match the needs and learning styles of each student.

*We support families in education.*

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

[www.SmartTutorReferrals.com](http://www.SmartTutorReferrals.com)

## Contact Us

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his basic needs for food, shelter and bedding. That same competency can be applied to everything: with a school assignment he knows that there is a process to deal with it and to begin by first covering the basics.

### STR: How can parents help to foster self-sufficiency in their kids?

**Peter:** Model a sense of curiosity and excitement about new experiences. Be genuinely enthusiastic when you suggest, "Let's go try this." Try to get them on board rather than trying to bribe them.

- ▶ Overcome the addiction of staying within the familiar. To move kids from non-engagement to self-sufficiency takes significant planning and guidance. The task is to assist the child in developing their own skill sets so they're more equipped to deal with the broader world.

- ▶ Set a plan to go outdoors – once kids are outdoors, they usually enjoy it.

- ▶ Look at what's dominating the kid's life. Invite the kid to participate in things they haven't done before. It's important that they not see it as a punishment or deprivation. If it took 10 years to create a problem (of not feeling motivated or engaged, for example), it'll take more than a few days to correct the course.

- ▶ If computer games are dominating the child's life, present the child with the point that their time is being stolen. This point is most easily taught in contrast – when they feel the enjoyment of exploration of the real world, computer games tend to pale in comparison. Perhaps a parent has the same issue – look honestly to see how TV or computer time fit into the parents' life-style.

- ▶ Consider applying some game-style problem solving to something outside and active. Most computer games require quick reactions, accuracy and strategy. Advanced forms of hide and seek or capture the flag, for example, can satisfy those same gaming interests using strategy and tactics in the woods or another outdoor environment (woods are ideal because of the natural cover they offer).

- ▶ When you start with a 3 year old, they know how to play. When you start with a 10 year old, they need to learn how. You can put a 3 year old and a 10 year old together so they each have a role model. Get kids out there with other youth so they can learn from their peers. Team-building games and working with a group allow kids to work with each other to accomplish tasks that can only be accomplished as a group. For example, one fun group exercise is to lay a 4x6 piece of carpet on the ground and have as many people as possible standing on it. The task is to turn the carpet over without anyone stepping off it.

- ▶ Allow unstructured play and discovery where the kid is directing it. The difference between playing in a playground and a vacant lot is worth considering. A vacant lot is infinitely diverse compared to a playground. For me, that's what discovery is all about. Take a kid somewhere where there are natural dynamics going on and he'll be engaged (like a stream, a rocky beach, etc.). Let the child explore the natural world.

- ▶ Engagement starts by showing respect for and putting a sense of importance on what his interests are. You could ask questions like, "What would you like to do now?" or "Where would you like to go?" Create situations where the kid is the leader. If you are out together you could point out an attraction and ask, "Do you want to check that out?" When the child says, "Can we stop here?" or "Can we do this?" there needs to be a confidence developed where he can expect a positive answer (at least a good percentage of the time) where he's not completely engaged with someone else's agenda.

- ▶ Enroll in a recreation program – both parent and kid. When you're both in it, each of you is experiencing the other in that situation. It's new, so you're both learning and you're both having a new experience together.

- ▶ The bottom line is investing one's time in developing a broad background of understanding and experiences for your kids. The net effect is making more of the world familiar and building that sense of confidence, capability and self-sufficiency.