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**Therapist shares practical tips on parenting with residents**  
**By Sylvie Belmond [belmond@theacorn.com](mailto:belmond@theacorn.com)**

Today's parents must simultaneously juggle numerous responsibilities on several fronts to meet the emotional and physical needs of their families, said Bette Alkazian, a licensed marriage and family therapist and parenting coach who owns a practice in Thousand Oaks.

However, if parents manage to preserve stability most of the time, they'll be able to regain balance when special challenges arise, said Alkazian as she provided a series of helpful tips to a group of about 20 parents at a recent workshop hosted by the Moorpark Council ParentTeacher Association.

Parents often have the unreasonable expectation that they should be perfect all of the time, but that's not feasible, according to Alkazian. "We're all learning, growing and developing, just like our kids, so go easy on yourself and do your best to do your best. Your kids will forgive you along the way if you learn to be forgiving of yourself," she said.

"Be intentional about your parenting; decide who you want your children to be and parent backwards," the therapist said to an attentive audience.

Parents should have a vision of who they hope their kids become and then educate them and model for them those skills and values they want to instill, she said.

It's important to model good problem-solving skills in order to raise well-rounded individuals who are capable of handling the challenges of adult life, she said.

This is also true for other behaviors. "Be who you want them to be. If you want your child to be compassionate, be compassionate yourself," she said.

To instill honesty, parents can't bribe or lie to their children, said Alkazian, encouraging parents to tell the truth despite probable disappointments.

Sometimes parents must learn to tolerate the discomfort of their children to help them grow and mature into balanced adults that can deal with hardship and failure in a healthy way. "You have to be strong to tolerate your child's discomfort," said Alkazian.

This process starts early on. When babies don't want to go to sleep, they may have to be left alone to cry it out

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for a while, and eventually the infant will learn to be selfreliant and go to sleep on his or her own without fuss.

When children are older, parents have to learn to accept opposition as they set appropriate limits. "The wrath of a 16yearold can be brutal, but you still have to say no," she said.

Additionally, teenagers are more likely to accept and follow the rules if families have consistent expectations and guidelines, said Alkazian, who has three daughters between the ages of 7 and 16.

Kids also need unconditional love, attention, purpose and respect. They thrive when parents bring their best selves to their marriage because a good relationship between spouses creates the foundation for a healthy family and a stable environment, she said.

Even as parenting can be difficult, parents should try to infuse laughter and humor into the daily routine to instill optimism.

Alkazian provided good insights about modern parenting, said Michelle Dearman, a PTA Council vice-president and mother of three children ages 11 and under.

"She provided solutions on how to make parenting work in today's society," she said. In previous generations, parents mostly had to just make sure that their children were fed and safe, but now they have to be intentional and think about the impacts that their parenting style has on their kids because there are many things out there to influence children, she said.

As a mother, Alkazian can relate to what parents have to go through because she's experiencing the challenges and rewards of parenting herself, Dearman said.

For more information about Alkazian, visit the website [www.balancedparenting.com](http://www.balancedparenting.com).