

Getting the most from a community Talk

By Thomas Lecoq

To get people to attend a community (or in office) talk, you have to communicate something that touches their hearts. I suggest you focus on the idea of learning related vision problems, and the homework war. In publicity in local papers, emphasize the observable signs and the emotional issues you know go along with that.

Without using names, you can tell a couple of typical stories about how that nightly battle affects the family, not just the child. The new school year is well underway and I would suggest you talk about a child with learning related vision problems facing another year of frustration and failures. Even if such a child can force themselves to do the work, they won't be able to keep up with the class.

Tell a story about that on the radio as well as write a version for the newspapers. I think mainstream Christian stations that are involved in home schooling networks are a good choice and you'd be surprised how easy it is to connect with and be booked on one of their talk shows. Write up a list of questions the host can ask as well as a brief introduction the host can use. Listen to the station and the program you'd like to appear on, then call the programming dept, or call and get the name and address of the talk show's producer. Call and send an email with your story attached.

Emphasize observable signs, not symptoms. Don't focus entirely on the child, include the impact on the parent (mom) and point out the emotional side of dealing with a child who may soon decide they are dumb. That is a sad day for any parent!

Explore all the local cities and the radio station for event listings and post on every one you can find. But even in a short format, you must emphasize the observable signs and the emotional consequences. Otherwise, people won't be motivated to leave the TV and go listen to a talk unless there's a compelling and personal reason to attend.

Personally, I would not want a massive number of people because a really good talk has very little explanation and lots of personal interactions with people who raise their hands when you read a list of observable signs. Read one item then ask them to raise their hand if that rings a bell. Ask them to tell you a little more about that child.

Make up and print a flyer that has a good picture of a child and mom struggling over homework at the kitchen table. Add 6-8 easily observed signs, including "learns spelling words, but fails the spelling test," which is another major indicator that frustrates parents.

Local newspapers these days are struggling and have cut reporter staff. So if you provide a workable 150 - 200 word article and a nice picture (easy with digital cameras), it is pretty hard for an editor not to publish it. Put the date, time and location no further in than the 3rd paragraph on this feature, and include the word free. I spent a decade in the newsroom and a couple of stints in PR so I feel the editors' pain.

Have checklists on hand at the presentation. I've added our Double Vision demonstration, which is the most powerful tool we've found to get an audience to link vision and learning/comprehension problems. Call me at 949-244-3214 if you want more information on its use.

This is a short version of what works well to promote a workshop, but it gives you a place to start. Remember to avoid having it be an *educational* meeting. If you don't interact on the emotional and personal level, no one will sign up for an evaluation (strike the word exam from your vocabulary!). And, whatever you do, do not bring up 20/20 unless someone mentions it. It is easy to spend a long time trying to overcome something people believe, but don't understand. Talk time is precious, spend it where it will be most likely to get help for the children, focus on the emotions.