



Issue 80

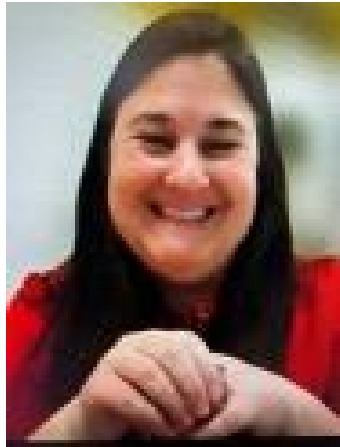
BrainWise Helps Families in Crisis

Kristin Green and her team of child and parent advocates support families in crisis through the Lawrence County Community Action Partnership in New Castle, PA. In 2017, she introduced BrainWise to help parents regain custody of children who have been removed because of abuse and neglect. She says the parents they serve grew up with trauma and repeat these behaviors with their children.

“BrainWise helps us teach them how to change this pattern and create a better outcome for future generations. They have to retrain their brains after being raised in a setting where Lizard Brain use is normal. It takes time to help them change, and BrainWise helps them succeed.”



Lawrence County, PA Community Social Services Team Holding
Their Favorite BrainWise Lessons



Kristin Green, Lawrence County Community Supports Coordinaton

“My staff and the parents love BrainWise,” says Kristin. “We make home visits and teach the 10 Wise Ways from beginning to end. I can’t tell you how many times parents say they ‘love BrainWise!’ “

Kristin says families respond to the lessons, practice the skills, and eliminate abusive situations. “Our parents are very successful and their behaviors show it.” She described how they use BrainWise terms such as, “That was my Lizard Brain, and I should have used my Wizard Brain.” Parents talk about their Red Flag warnings and apply the Wise Ways to everyday skills. The behaviors she and her team describe parallel the observations made by Colorado nurses who taught BrainWise to at-risk families court-ordered to receive parent education. (See the Jefferson County Public Health Nurses’ [poster](#) and [presentation](#).) It is exciting to find BrainWise instructors reporting similar results with high-risk families over the years and across agencies nationwide.

BrainWise Transforms Lives. Kristin says that “BrainWise is designed in a way that helps parents transform their thinking and their lives.” She elaborates, “The Wise Ways help them use their brains to be better parents -- that is why we love it!” She reinforces the findings of other BrainWise instructors who teach challenging populations, including teens with mental health disorders and veterans with serious mental illnesses. (See BW issues on ACHS, Hull Services, VA. [1,2,3](#)) These longtime BrainWise instructors talk about how their clients’ positive behaviors and outcomes are rewarding to them, as well as their clients. They feel good knowing they are making a difference in lives by helping people learn what they can do to change problem behaviors.

BrainWise Reunites Families. Although most of their home visits are with families whose children have been removed, Kristin’s team also sees families whose children have been returned. She described how these situations offer additional opportunities to help families succeed. “The counselors not only teach Mom and Dad BrainWise, but their children also learn along with them.”



Family Discussing Movie Characters using BrainWise Terms

BrainWise is Easy to Adapt. Kristin says, “BrainWise is written so the instructor can use examples to fit individual families. Our parents are very successful, and their behaviors show it. They know the material and use BrainWise terminology in our parent workshops.”

Teaching BrainWise with Fidelity. Kristin acknowledges the social services team. Their fidelity teaching BrainWise underlies the program’s success. “One of the first things we hand a new hire is the BrainWise curriculum and tell them this is our ‘go to’ program,” she says. “We make sure they teach all the Wise Ways and do not move on unless the participant understands the preceding Wise Ways.” She said they are sensitive to families who may take longer to learn the material. We teach a minimum of 13 lessons and keep some cases open for six months.

Expansion to Youth Diversion Program. Kristin emphasizes that BrainWise works well in *all* settings and shares how probation officers started teaching BrainWise. A case manager overheard officers were having problems with juvenile probationers and suggested using BrainWise as an intervention. The probation officers agreed and now teach the 10 Wise Ways to youth in the Diversion Program.

BrainWise instructors frequently mention they feel validated by the positive changes they see in their clients. They work with individuals who grew up in families experiencing generations of trauma and “normalize behaviors that shouldn’t be normalized.” Their clients are grateful to have tools that help break this generational family trauma.

Keep up the good work! Thank you for all that you do.



Take care,

Dr. Pat

On a Lighter Note

Good communicators use all the Wise Ways, which is why Wise Way #10, Communicate Effectively, is the last BrainWise lesson. The following Edutopia video presents a lesson

plan on careful communication that highlights numerous Wise Ways. The content may be dated, but the purpose is timely.

For the video, follow this link:

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/use-humor-teach-your-students-about-careful-communication-maurice-elias>



The 10 Wise Ways