

**Mary Behrends** is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker offering **parenting education and individual counseling**. She graduated from the University of Illinois with a Bachelors degree in Child Development and Family Relationships and has worked with children and parents for over 20 years. As a mother to 4 and grandmother of 7, Mary believes that raising children is the most important job we will ever do. It is also the skill we get the least preparation for. The Mustard Seed offers **parenting classes** for parents who want to learn new skills to become the best parents they can be.

In 2012, Mary graduated from the University of Georgia with a Masters of Social Work degree. She provides individual counseling for children, adolescents, and adults in all areas including crisis management, anger management, grief, low self esteem, stress, anxiety, depression, ADHD, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Mary recently completed a Post Masters Certificate in Veterinary Social Work through the University of Tennessee. This combines a desire to help people with a lifelong love of animals. Along with her therapy dog, Nick, she specializes in **Animal Assisted Therapy** and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction for children, teens, and adults.





## **What is Animal Assisted Therapy?**

Animal Assisted Therapy is a therapeutic intervention where a carefully trained and tested animal is used by a licensed professional to help an individual achieve their therapeutic goals. The animal provides comfort, helps the client relax, aids in communication, and assists with activities to teach an individual coping skills including anger management, enhanced social skills, assertiveness, and impulse control. Evidence shows that AAT is especially helpful in treating children and adults who are afflicted with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, PTSD, Depression, Anxiety, low self esteem, and Attachment Disorder. Animals naturally provide unconditional love and acceptance. Working with an animal/therapist team is a fun and relaxing form of counseling.

## **Why do I need a Parenting Class? I'm not a "bad parent".**

Parenting classes are not for bad parents. They are for good parents who want to be great parents. A parenting class can help you learn new skills while you share your experiences with others in your group. It is a place to ask questions and learn new skills.

## **Help! I opened my mouth and my mother (or father) came out.**

We learn to parent by being parented. If you grew up with perfect parents you probably have wonderful parenting skills. Please come share them with others. Most of us were raised by parents who were good loving people with strengths and weaknesses. In parenting class we learn how to improve on the skills our parents were weak in.

## **Why do our children do what they do? What were they thinking? How can I get them to listen? How many times do I have to tell them something before they do it? How can I help my children grow up to be responsible adults? Is spanking wrong? Does time out work?**

These are questions every parent asks at least some of the time. In parenting class we use the program Systematic Training for Effective Parenting to answer these and other questions. We share experiences with other parents in a confidential accepting environment. We form support systems to help each other even after class is over. Young parents remind older parents what it is like to be a teen. Experienced parents teach new parents how to care for babies and toddlers. We share our successes and frustrations offering each other empathy and support.

## **What are the topics covered in parenting class?**

Mustard Seed offers a 10 week parenting class titled "Empowering Healthy Families." Topics covered each week are:

- 1 Understanding Yourself and your child
  - Where are my children in the various stages of development?
  - Individual Differences
- 2 Understanding Beliefs and Feelings
  - Family Roles & Dynamics within our family
- 3 Boundaries/Safety
  - Technology in the home
  - What is child abuse and neglect

- Home, car, and playground safety/childproofing
- 4 Encouraging Your Child and Yourself
  - The Importance of Education
  - Self Esteem
- 5 Listening, Talking and Playing with your child
  - Interactive exercises
  - What is quality time
- 6 Budget and Nutrition
  - Making a working budget for your family
  - Eating for good health
- 7 Problem Solving Skills
- 8 Discipline: Video examples
  - Rewards and Consequences that work/setting limits
- 9 Choosing Your approach
  - Reflective Listening
- 10 Family Night – Graduation and receiving of certificate