Managing your professional and personal life is no easy task, what with the daily duties of work, making time for professional development, and finding time for a social life. Raising a child, as rewarding as it can be, takes that to another level of complexity.

But chances are good that some of your colleagues are going through similar experiences? and they might have some great advice you haven't yet heard.

Parents at Work aims to bring together UA employees who are parents to share experiences in a welcoming environment and get tips from colleagues who know what raising a child is really like. The new program is offered by Life & Work Connections, a unit of the Division of Human Resources.

"It's about the opportunity to share experiences, tips, well-researched information on children and families, and creating the opportunity for networking," said Lourdes Rodríguez, senior coordinator for child care and family resources at Life & Work Connections.

'No silly questions'

Parents at Work began in September and is scheduled to run through April. Each session covers a different topic, suggested by employee parents. Past topics included high-quality child care and coping with parental guilt. Other sessions have simply offered time for participants to network. Parents can attend any or all sessions.

The program is split between two groups: Group A is for parents of children ages 5 and younger; Group B is for those with children ages 6 to 12. Both groups cover the same topics, but have separate monthly meetings, held from noon to 12:45 p.m.

"You wouldn't talk to your child about death, for example, the same way when they're 2 or 3 years old as you would when they are 6, 7 or 12," Rodríguez said. "The topic will be the same, but the way you handle it needs to be developmentally appropriate."

Most sessions begin with a presentation, led by Rodríguez, which often serves as a starting place for the discussion. Participants can attend in person or via Zoom.

Offering the virtual attendance option, makes the program more accessible to those who can't make it to the Life & Work Connections office near Main Gate Square? either from across campus or from UA offices outside Tucson.

To ensure that the virtual participants can be part of the discussion, Josephine Corder, interim director of Life & Work Connections, helps moderate so their questions and thoughts
are shared with the rest of the group.

It's proven to be a valuable option, Rodríguez and Corder said, adding that the majority of participants join via Zoom.

"People are really enjoying that it's still interactive," Corder said. "A lot of times you attend via Zoom and you're just on a lecture and no one's monitoring the chat and you can't have your voice heard."

The level of discussion varies depending on the topic, Rodríguez said, but each session ends with a question-and-answer period. And, as the session wraps up, Rodríguez highlights the child care resources available to employees through Life & Work Connections. She also encourages those interested in discussing a topic further to sign up for free, professional consultations with a counselor.

"This is a safe place," Rodríguez said, referring to the Life & Work Connections office, where consultations are private and confidential. "Once you come through that door, there's no silly questions or forbidden topics."

Learning from other parents

Jaime Valenzuela, a library specialist at the Daniel F. Cracchiolo Law Library, has attended two Parents at Work sessions, both in person. His daughter, Ariel, is 3 years old. He said he jumped at the chance to take advantage of a program that would help him grow as a parent.

"Being a parent for me is the most challenging aspect of my life, so any opportunity I can take to better myself is one I'm willing to at least explore," Valenzuela said. "It's nice to learn about how other parents are dealing with some of the issues I may be dealing with."

After attending the first meeting in September, Valenzuela said he returned in November for the session on dealing with parental guilt ? a feeling some parents have that they are not doing an adequate job because, for example, they aren't around their children enough. He said hearing from other parents in both sessions helped him realize that it's OK for parents to learn from their mistakes.

"It's nice to know that sometimes, although you may not learn the first, second, third, fourth time, you're always going to be given that opportunity to learn from it and maybe do something a little different," Valenzuela said.

Possible changes to come

Rodríguez and Corder said they're looking at ways to improve the program. A change under consideration involves no longer dividing the program into two groups and offering two monthly sessions ? on the same topic ? on different days of the week. This might provide more opportunities for parents to attend, particularly faculty who may have to teaching obligations that preclude their participation.

While the program has an immediate impact on the employees who attend, Rodríguez said it also has clear benefits for the University, as well.
"A relaxed parent will be a better employee," she said. "If you’re wondering, 'How's my kid doing? Is she healthy’ or 'Is she safe?’ that is not a good mindset for work."

The next Parents at Work sessions, which will cover discipline and consequences, are scheduled for Feb. 5 (Group A) and Feb. 12 (Group B). Sessions are held from noon to 12:45 p.m. at the Life & Work Connections office, 715 N. Park Ave., on the second floor. Parents of children between the ages of 0 and 5 can click here [5] to register; parents of children 6-12 can register here [6].

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/got-kids-network-other-ua-parents-monthly-lwc-sessions

Links
[1] https://lifework.arizona.edu/
[2] https://lifework.arizona.edu/cc/parents-work-0-5-years
[3] https://lifework.arizona.edu/cc/parents-work-6-12-years
[5] https://arizona.zoom.us/meeting/register/6fba413085359c7ec5b9141539e44ee6
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