



Melanie Turner with the Domino Babies Home's baby safe. This is one of two baby safes

PHOTO: Rianette Cluley/Northglen News



A safe place for unwanted babies

LAUREN ANTHONY

Hundreds of newborn babies are abandoned in ditches, open fields or thrown down toilets throughout the country annually, often by desperate mothers who think they have no alternative.

The Zululand Observer has reported on a number of such abandonments with the latest, a three-day old girl, found dumped in a pit latrine in Nzalabantu Reserve last month.

In an effort to give these babies a chance in life, a number of private individuals have started homes that shelter and care for 'unwanted' babies while searching for adoptive parents.

The Peace Agency, an NGO based in uMhlanga, started the baby house model in 2010, catering for four babies at a time. This model has since been used to assist other crisis care parents in setting up safe care facilities.

Babies are given the best possible care while at the homes, and the best-suited families are found for them.

Ruth Stapleton, Programme Manager for The Peace Agency (www.peaceagency.org.za), said some of the babies are adopted locally, although there is also international interest.

However, the message they are trying to get across is that adoption should not be viewed as a 'Plan B'.

'Adoption is not just for couples suffering from infertility, but should be considered by all families, with or without biological children,' explained Stapleton.

'We advocate strongly for more children to be adopted locally.'

Baby safe device

Stapleton said that, although there are no official statistics, the unofficial guess is that 3 500 babies are abandoned every year in South Africa.

To give desperate mothers an alternative option, The Door of Hope in Johannesburg installed a baby safe drop box which proved successful. Bethany Arndt, director of Cape Town-based NGO, Baby Safe (www.thebabysafe.org), picked up on this and she and another interested friend, got a mechanical engineer to develop the idea, creating the Baby Safe.

'We would offer an anonymous alternative to infanticide. Our idea was to make a device that would be safe, low cost, and easily reproducible,' said Arndt.

The safe has a foam cushion mattress and, once a baby is deposited inside anonymously and the outer door closed, it locks preventing anyone accessing the baby from outside.

An alarm is immediately triggered to three cellphone numbers. The inner door is then opened and the baby retrieved.

There are eight baby safes operating in South Africa, two of which have been installed at homes in North Durban; The Peace Agency's uMhlanga Baby House as well as The Domino Foundation's baby home.

Melanie Turner, project leader of The Domino Foundation, said the safe had not been used to date.

'An awareness campaign in the right areas needs to be implemented.'

Stapleton agreed saying the success of the safe depends on the location, as well as the guarantee of anonymity for the 'abandoning party'.

However, the safes are there only as a last option.

Failure is an option

I know there are many jobs and situations that require precision, and failure is never an option. However, when it comes to children, the reality is that failure is an inevitable – and essential – part of life that offers far more benefits than costs.

When children make mistakes, they are learning how the world works, how to interact with it and connecting with consequences.

This is how they learn to make better choices moving forward and so we must celebrate the learning that comes from their failures and mistakes.

A child will often avoid failure at all costs because of a fear of punishment or emotional rejection. 'If you fail, I won't love you,' is the unspoken threat that can lurk just around the corner from failure. In addition, no-one wants to be seen as incompetent.



21st Century Parenting

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Children who are avoiding failure will do some of the following:

- They will refuse to take part or stop trying at all because if you don't try, you can't fail.
- They may make excuses: 'I would have done better but the teacher was unfair!' If it isn't their fault then they can't fail.
- They find their middle ground, academically or on the sports field, and they tread water, not progressing and pushing beyond their personal best, for fear of failure.

Failure teaches humility

In his book *Your Children are Listening* (The Experiment, 2011), psychologist, Dr Jim Taylor, says that failure can bolster children's motivation in the future to overcome obstacles.

'It teaches important life skills such as responsibility, commitment, patience, determination, decision-making and problem solving.'

It helps children to respond positively to the frustration and disappointment that they will often experience as they pursue their goals.

Failure teaches humility and appreciation for the opportunities that they're given.

Not a loser if you fail

'When you communicate positive messages of failure, your children gain an understanding of failure that liberates them from fear of failure. It also frees them to strive for competence without reservation, to explore, take risks, and vigorously discover their competencies.'

Children will know in their hearts that some failure is okay and is in no way a negative reflection on themselves as people.

This early and frequent messaging will lay the foundation for healthy attitudes toward failure that will serve them well when they get to the age when 'results matter'.

Sage advice!

The fact is that you are not a loser if you fail. You are only a loser if you don't learn from your mistakes and if you fail to get up and try again, in a different way this time.

If Thomas Edison had thought of himself as a failure every time he came up with a new idea for a light bulb, we wouldn't have electricity today.

We need to reframe failure in our own minds and use it as a teachable moment for our children. Failure is an option.

Beautiful nails

DUSCHANKA HITZEROTH

Bitting, cutting too close to the skin, washing with harsh detergents, trying to pry off stubborn lids or peel away dirt from surfaces is all considered to be nail abuse and must stop!

Start taking care of your nails by using an emery board and file along the nail in the same direction.

Moisturise the nails along with the hands by using a good Vitamin E and collagen based lotion. Try not to use nail polish remover very often as the chemicals and alcohol can make the nails brittle.

For attractive nails, dip them in warm olive oil for 20 minutes four times a week, this allows the nails to take on a healthy colour.

For stronger nails, dip them in warm mustard oil for the same amount of time and gently massage the nail area and fingers as this improves blood circulation.

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