



Parenting needs to be simplified: consultant

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
Staff Writer

Consider doing less to be a better parent.

A little simplicity goes a long way for parents and children, according to New York educational and counseling consultant Kim John Payne, who will speak at the Gateways conference in York Region later this month.

"The first question people should be asking is why simplify?" he said. "Well, it has to do with the cumulative stress our children experience."

Stress has become the norm in our fast-paced lives, he added.

Many children may seem jumpy or nervous as a result of trying to over-control their surroundings.

Mr. Payne conducted a research project focusing on troubled youth and was surprised to find these youth had not experienced a traumatic event which caused them to turn to street gangs or drop out of school, but rather a series of small events which accumulated to a lot of stress.

"Many of the youth I studied had elements of posttraumatic stress, but it was a number of small continuous stressors that caused them to become overwhelmed and become unhappy," he said. "I call it the undeclared war on childhood."

After completing the information-gathering from these troubled youth, Mr. Payne began to work to take those small stressors away.

The results were astounding, he admitted.

These youth went from having diagnosable problems such as attention deficit disorder to simply being quirky.

"All kids are quirky," said Mr. Payne. "If you add stress, the slide along the spectrum to disorders like ADHD and, if you add simplicity, their strengths and talents really shine."

Sixty-eight per cent of troubled youth involved in the study began to act "normal" after four months of simplicity.

The bottom line, according to Mr. Payne, is to take some of the stressors out of children's lives to increase their happiness.

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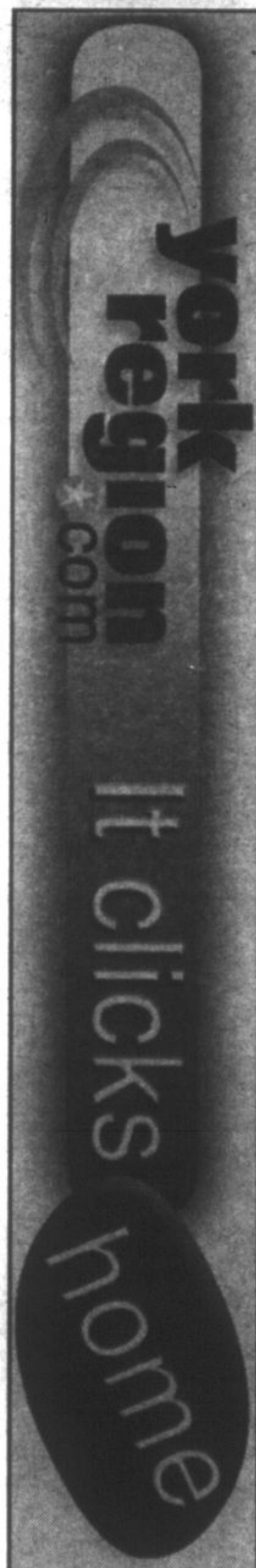
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