

Fantastic Fathers



An Experiential, Education and Support Group for Dads

**The Fantastic Fathers Initiative was created by
The Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society
in collaboration with
The Victoria Women's Transition House Society
funded by
The BC Ministry of Community Services**

IMPORTANT:

Only well-trained facilitators should use this resource in working with men who have used abuse in their relationships. Many challenges can arise that require skilful handling, including victim blaming, collusion with the abuser, cultural issues and participant distress. Safety and ethical considerations demand that programs and groups such as Fantastic Fathers operate in close collaboration with tables such as a cross sector community based committees whose mandates include the safety of women and children.

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Group sessions throughout this Guide are noted in Blue.
Positive Parenting Principles throughout this Guide are noted in Red.
Handouts throughout this Guide are noted in Green.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society, also known as The Family Violence Project (FVP), is to stop the abuse of women by their intimate partners, thus breaking the cyclic and often inter-generational pattern of family violence. We provide counselling intervention and prevention services for men who have used violence in their intimate relationships and education and support for their partners and other women who have been abused in their relationships. We also provide counselling for women who have used violence in their intimate relationship. We provide family violence education to schools, colleges and universities, public and private organizations and individual. Additionally we produce public education materials, videos and publications.

The Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society, in partnership with The Victoria Women's Transition House Society, is pleased to offer this valuable community resource to those who are dedicated to seeing fathers transform their relationship with their children. With the help of the ***Fantastic Fathers Facilitator Guide***, service providers can assist men to adjust to a more child-centered approach to fathering and be supportive of their partner's parenting in a respectful and nurturing way.

This resource manual describes the development, implementation and evaluation of the Fantastic Fathers program, a one year pilot project funded through the Ministry of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues via their Partners in Prevention grant initiative.

OUR GOAL

The goal of Fantastic Fathers, simply stated, is to offer dads, who have been abusive to their intimate partners, an educational group experience that would enhance their personal commitment towards a violence free home. However, any man who currently is a father can benefit from the lessons taught throughout the curriculum. The program will help men to transform their parenting approach to one that is more consciously child-centered.

The underlying tenet of a fathering education approach to this significant social problem, is that if a dad loves their child and wishes to support his/her healthy development, he must recognize, value and support the mother's positive parenting. Research into the treatment approaches for men who have used violence in their relationships has indicated that appealing to men's desire to be a good father is an effective intervention into violence against their partners.

OUR RATIONALE

"Many men appear to be more capable of developing empathy, acknowledge damage, and accept responsibility for violence in relation to their children than in relation to their partners."

"Content on parenting may be an effective path towards attitudinal and behavioral change for the men, reducing the chances of their children's continued or subsequent exposure to violence, as well as their partner's experience of violence"

(Breaking the Cycle: Fathering After Violence)

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

An important component of the development of **Fantastic Fathers** was the recognition that it takes an entire community effort to effect change in the field of violence against women in relationships. No single program works by itself, and most importantly, it is unethical for this particular kind of work to take place in the absence of skilled practitioners and appropriate collaboration. To this end a circle of experts came together at the beginning of the initiative to develop a set of guiding principles and standards of accountability for the project.

Members of the project Community Advisory Committee included: Ron Schwartz, Executive Director of the Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society, Carolyn Fast, Executive Director of the Victoria Women's Transition House Society, Marlene Goley, Manager of Women's & Family Services at the Cridge Centre for the Family, Elzbie Jazwinski, Children's and Community Programs Manager at the Victoria Women's Transition House, James Pratt, Project Evaluation Consultant, Richard Routledge, Executive Director of the BC Families in Transition Society, and Michael Timney, Counsellor at the Victoria Family Violence Project.. Other contributors are listed within the Acknowledgement page.

ACCOUNTABILITY GUIDELINES

Accountability to the Safety and Well-being of Children

- Programs targeting fathers who have abused their children or their children's mothers must have firm collaborations with agencies that can identify abusive fathers and can strongly encourage or mandate men into treatment.
- Fathers' participation in intervention must have the potential to benefit children independent of men's progress through intervention.
- Consideration should be given to whether and how children can access clear and developmentally appropriate answers about their fathers' involvement in intervention.

Accountability to the Safety of Children's Mothers

- Abuse of children's mothers compromises children's needs for safety, well-being and stability. As such, men's abuse of children's mothers must be recognized and addressed as part of intervention for fathers.
- Outreach must be offered to partners with information about the program and referrals to appropriate therapeutic or advocacy services.
- Rather than focusing on co-parenting, intervention should emphasize the need for men to be respectful and non-abusive of children's mothers and the mother-child relationship.

Responsibility to Fathers

- Programs for abusive fathers need to maintain respectful and transparent relationships with men.
- Recognizing that any one program is often insufficient to meet all the needs of its clients, program facilitators should be ready to refer men to alternative or additional services.
- Intervention programs for abusive fathers are responsible for being accessible to men of diverse cultures and individual circumstances.
- Programs should allow program participants to add to these guidelines.

Accountability to Communities

- Programs for fathers who abuse their children or their children's mothers need to be offered with the guidance and support of a community advisory committee that includes representatives from agencies that provide services to children, women, and men.
- Programs for abusive fathers should offer training and education to the community as is necessary for service that is accountable.
- Programs for abusive fathers should maintain evaluation cycles.

REPARATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Community Advisory Committee also endorsed a theoretical framework for the project based on the qualitative research conducted through the Fathering After Violence Initiative in Boston (2007). Their model is a work-in-progress based primarily on in-depth interviews with six men who had stopped their violence and had started to heal their relationships with their children. After analyzing the information from the interviews, they discovered a series of similar actions taken by each of the men in question. These findings helped conceptualize the steps needed to be taken in assaultive men's treatment programs to begin supporting the healing process between men and the children in their lives. They named this the "Reparative Framework" and described the following actions in the project's implementation guide:

1. **Changing abusive behaviour.** It is imperative that fathers stop all kinds of abuse immediately. This is one of the fundamental goals of assaultive men's treatment and, of course, a prerequisite to starting any reparation.
2. **Modeling constructive behaviour.** Children learn by example. Fathers need to know that as they stop modeling destructive behaviours, they have to make a concerted effort to model positive ones. A key teaching concept in this project is that a father cannot be a good model for their children if he is abusive, disrespectful or hateful to their mother.
3. **Stopping denial, blaming and justification.** Most assaultive men's treatment works towards having men take full responsibility for their abusive behaviour. In the context of this framework, programs need to teach fathers about the negative effects that denial, blaming and justification can have on children.
4. **Accepting all consequences for one's behaviour.** Fathers involved in a reparation process need to understand that facing the consequences of their behaviour may not only involve the criminal justice system but will also include accepting rejection and the loss of trust, love and even contact with their children.
5. **Acknowledging damage.** It is important that fathers realize the amount of damage they have inflicted and let their children know that they understand specifically how they have hurt them.
6. **Supporting and respecting the mother's parenting.** Men who are abusive often continue to undermine the authority of the other parent. Fathers need to restore the sense of respect for the mother's authority and decision making and fully support her parenting, especially if the father finds himself in a secondary parenting role.
7. **Listening and validating.** Fathers need to prepare and be willing to receive anger, hurt, sadness, fear and rejection from their children. It is essential that they understand that this is part of the healing process and not a way for the children to manipulate the situation.
8. **Not forcing the process nor trying to "turn the page".** Except for the actions that involve personal change work, every action in this framework has to take place on the

children's own terms and timing. Fathers have to learn how to be patient, not try to push healing or contact with their children, and should be open to talking about the past as many times as their children need to do it.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

The Community Advisory Committee also formulated a set of Eligibility Criteria for participation in the group (Appendix B)

PROJECT EVALUATION

During the planning process for the pilot project, James Pratt, was hired to assist in formulating an evaluation plan and summarizing the results. The following plan was implemented in evaluating the project.

Pre-group

Interviewing potential participants

Participant survey questionnaire: Self-rating forms (Appendix E)

Co-parenting partner survey questionnaire: Self-rating forms (Appendix D)

Group

Weekly group feedback rating form

Weekly phone check-ins

Initial phone check-ins with partners

Post-group

Participant survey questionnaire: Self-rating forms (Appendix E)

Co-parenting partner survey questionnaire: Self-rating forms (Appendix D)

Exit interviews with participants and partners

Interview with facilitators: Lessons learned (Appendix G: Preliminary Results)

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Challenges and Decisions

Determining the content and manner of presentation for the FF curriculum presented several challenges. Consideration had to be given to understanding the particular demographic of our potential participants, as well as sensitivity towards enhancing their motivation and commitment towards change. As in other group oriented approaches, facilitators had to be familiar with group process issues and confident in their ability to engage participants in theme-focussed discussions. This would include utilizing skills in monitoring and guiding the content of discussions, maintaining a respectful and supportive environment and encouraging participation of all group members.

Familiarity with evidenced-based group interventions for domestic violence, as well as those designed to enhance parenting practices, was necessary in the development of the curriculum. The

unique approach, piloted in the initial FF group, was in the merging of these two areas of interest and in exploring the interactive relationship that exists between them. The consistent underlying message, that formed the foundation on which the individual group sessions within the curriculum were developed, was the critical importance that positive family experiences have in shaping the wellbeing of children. It was hoped that by emphasizing how important “involved and compassionate fathers” are in the lives of their kids, and that each father has the capacity to improve in that influence, that a deepening commitment towards personal non-violence would be enhanced.

It was the intent of the pilot project team to not only create new and unique materials for the participants, but to bring the best possible resources already available forward to them. In this regard, the initial curriculum relied heavily on several well established and reputable programs, including; The Triple P Positive Parenting Program, The Incredible Years Parenting Program, Relationships without Abuse: Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society, and Breaking the Cycle: Fathering after Abuse. These and other resources, were used not only in the development of the curriculum framework, but also as valuable video examples used within the sessions. A complete description of the references used within the FF Curriculum is listed at the end of this manual (Resource References Guide).

In addition to developing the curriculum and evaluating its use within an initial pilot project, consideration also had to be given to the practicality of delivering the curriculum to other communities in the province. While not all settings will have immediate access to the specific video resources used within the initial pilot sessions, the examples are intended as recommended approaches used to engage the participants in the material. While facilitators of future FF based approaches could access these resources through the reference list, they would also be encouraged to be creative in bringing forward their own personal resources, to augment the themes and discussions in their groups.

General Group Format

A Fantastic Fathers group format does not differ widely from most parenting groups formats. There is time allotted for educational components such as lecture, experiential exercises, videos, DVD clips, printed materials, handouts and some homework (though written homework is limited). We recommend that binders and a pens be provided to the men on the first day and handouts are given out in their natural order, as themes dictate and that the evening's agenda be flip-charted and posted up on the wall for the group to follow each session.

- Weekly, two hours, with 10 minute mid-point break
- Agenda for each group written on flip chart as a reference
- Erasable white board for highlighting questions and key points
- Presentation on Weekly Themes (14 weeks)
 - The impact of family experience on child development
 - Positive Parenting Principles
 - “Becoming the Best Dads We Can Be”
- Video Clips
- Written Handouts and Participant Binders
- Discussions and Exercise Activities
- Home Assignments
- Mid-week phone check-in

Though there are recommended themes and educational content to cover, it is of the utmost importance to allow men the time to tell their stories, to feel heard and to change.

CURRICULUM SYNOPSIS; SESSION THEMES AND PRINCIPLES

Group #1

Introductions and Establishing Our Goals:

Why are fathers important in the lives of their kids? Positive, involved and balanced parenting: The forces that pull us along the parenting styles continuum between Nurturing and Guidance.

"Investing in positive relationships with our kids is the foundation of successful parenting"

Group #2

Family of Origin:

Does the apple fall close to the family tree? Early life experiences as influences on personality development. What we learned from our parents and hope to develop for ourselves. The life transforming benefits of being an involved dad. Setting an example: "kids will do what we do, not what we say"

"Our own example is the most powerful parenting influence that our children experience"

Group #3

Becoming Our Own Positive Parent:

Overcoming the negative parenting we received through constructive self-dialogue. Understanding the interaction of our thoughts, feelings and actions.

"Reframing our own self-messages into positive expectations models for our kids how to manage emotional experiences & prepares us to provide for their needs"

Group #4

Staying Cool When Things Heat up:

Controlling ourselves, not others. Modeling for our kids how to cope with frustration by being assertive.

"We are responsible for our own actions and can stand up for ourselves without using our anger to control others"

Group #5

Addressing Our Personal Issues in Order to be Able to Provide What Our Kids Need:

Accessing support for our emotional health while committing to a non-violent home.

"Giving is a selfish act: We gain more for ourselves by giving to others"

Group #6

**Understanding the Impact on Children Who Have Witnessed Violence in Their Families:
Developing individual commitment and group support for non-violence. The best revenge is a life well lived.**

"It is our responsibility to protect our children from the trauma of violence"

Group #7

**Developing Skills and Strategies for Positive and Balanced Parenting:
Building our parenting relationship on a solid foundation: through play, praise, encouragement & appreciation.**

"Attention is reinforcing: so catch them being good! If you want to see more of certain behaviour ... pay attention to it"

Group #8

**Communication Skills:
Active Listening & Empathy.**

"The 2 biggest mistakes parents make when they deal with their kids misbehaviour are: too much emotion and too much talking"

Group #9

**Empathy, Problem Solving & Non-Violent Communication:
Responding supportively to emotional behaviours... encouraging our kids to learn how to resolve their own problems.**

"Kids need our support to learn How to Think... not ... What to Think"

Group #10

**Family Structure - Clear, Specific and Simple:
Developing consistent household rules, expectations and agreements.**

"It is not the severity but the certainty of a consequence that makes a difference"

Group #11

**Avoiding Parent Traps and Escalating Conflicts:
Providing clear expectations and warnings, while avoiding the escalation trap through preventative interventions for misbehaviour.**

"Kids respond best to clear reminders that offer them positive reasons to cooperate"

Group #12

Letting the Consequences do the Teaching:

Natural and logical consequences, time-out and removal of privileges.

"When we become emotionally reactive, the issue will become our reaction, not their behaviour... Stay calm and let the consequences do the teaching"

Group #13

Supporting our Parenting Partners:

Respecting and supporting the mothers of our children. Taking responsibility for the influence we have in guiding our kids.

"Our ability to work supportively with the mother or our kids is critical to their sense of wellbeing and healthy development"

Group #14

Taking Care of Ourselves:

Putting it all together - positive but realistic expectations of our kids and ourselves, personal support and action plans for personal goals. Program evaluation and celebration.

"We need to develop and maintain a personal support network in order to take care of ourselves and Be The Best Dads That We Can For Our Kids"

FANTASTIC FATHERS: FACILITATOR CURRICULUM GUIDE

Group #1:

Introductions and Establishing Our Goals:

Becoming the best dad's that we can be

Handout

Positive Parenting Principle #1



“Investing in positive relationships with our kids is the foundation of successful parenting”

Parenting Group Facilitator Comment:

“It made me aware of the positive effects it would have on our community and some of the challenges we may face trying to start this kind of program.”

Agenda Group 1:

Complete participant's questionnaire and sign-in form

Who's facilitating this group?

What is this group all about and why are we here? (group goals and individual goals)

What will each group look like?

How can we feel more comfortable and safe here?

- Developing our group participation guidelines

Theme: Why are dads important in the lives of their kids?

Discussion: What is positive, balanced and involved parenting?

Home Assignments: Forces affecting parenting, Child Centered Activities

Group Evaluation Form

Introduce Facilitators (brief) – names, background

Discussion: Why are we here?

Facilitator uses a flip chart to record the responses of the participants to this question and prompts or contributes some of the following objectives:

1) "to become the most positive influence that we can be in the lives of our kids" ... we will be looking at and rehearsing effective parenting skills and strategies, as well as the impact that life experiences have on child development

2) to explore how to do that and support each other through whatever personal challenges get in the way

- acknowledge our common goal of creating a safe and non-violent home! (Invite responses to that goal)

What will this group be like?

- Theme Presentations, Group Discussions, Parenting Skill Development and Practices

- Video examples

- Home Assignments

- Weekly phone calls, contact with moms

- Handouts and Binders

Developing Group Participation Guidelines

Discussion: Facilitator records suggestions for the development of a Group Participation Guidelines

What is our expectation of each other here?

How do we ensure that everyone feels safe and supported?

(Attendance, respectful interactions, start and end on time, group support and education vs. individual therapy, group safety, confidentiality, alcohol and drug free sessions...)

Exercise #1 Introducing each other:

In pairs: act as an interviewer and collect the following information (should take about 5 to 10 min. than switch places)

Handout #1:

Initial group interviews

Name
What are the name(s) and age(s) of your kid(s)?
Who do you presently live with?
What is your area of employment interest?
What are your hobbies and interests?
What is your favourite TV show?
Who do you identify as a personal hero or as someone you hold a lot of respect for and why?

After about 20 minutes, pairs are called back to the group and, going around the circle, introduce each other (facilitators use the forms to introduce each other first to set the tone and encourage participation)

Theme #1: Why are Dads Important in the Lives of Their Children?

[Facilitators Note: The study of "Appreciative Inquiry" suggests that the way we offer our questions will determine the responses that we receive. By framing the positive assumption embedded in this question, that Dads are important, participants will be encouraged to begin to explore their own role in the lives of their kids.]

Discussion

- main points contributed by participants written on flip chart or on the white board
- all contributions are acknowledged and included

[Facilitators Note: The following information is available for facilitators. A summary of the importance of fathers in the lives of their kids is provided to the participants at this point in a handout. Decision was made to be more general and less specific in the handout to avoid the potential negative use of powerful statistics, by the participants against their partners, particularly sensitive to those who may be presently engaged in custody disputes]

Why are fathers important in the lives of their kids?

Research on Father Absence:

Adolescence more likely to engage in tobacco, alcohol and drug use
Higher rate of suicide intention and attempts
More likely to engage in delinquent behaviour and to be incarcerated
More likely to drop-out of school and become involved in socially alienated peer group
More likely to demonstrate hyperactivity, social withdrawal, lack of attentiveness, difficulty with deferred gratification (Broffebrenner)
Daughters 3 times more likely to become sexually active by the time they turn 15, and 5 times more likely to become teen mothers
Children have a higher rate of asthma, headaches, anxiety, depression and behaviour problems
65% of never married mothers live below the poverty line, compared to 10% of children living in two-parent homes
Child abuse more likely to occur in father absent homes (33% more likely to be abused when a live-in boyfriend or stepfather is present than in an intact family)

(London Family Education Trust, 1993)

“Father-deprivation is a more reliable predictor of criminal activity than race, environment or poverty”

Father-deprived children are:

72% of all teenage murderers

60% of rapists

70% of kids incarcerated

Twice as likely to quit school

11 times more likely to be violent

3 of 4 teen suicides

80% of the adolescents in psychiatric hospitals

90% of runaways

(National Fatherhood Initiative (USA), US Bureau of Census, FBI)

Children who grew up fatherless are:

8 times more likely to go to prison

5 times more likely to commit suicide

20 times more likely to have behavioural problems

20 times more likely to become rapists

32 times more likely to become runaways

10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances

9 times more likely to drop out of high school

1/10 as likely to get A's in school

(Institute for the Study of Civil Society, UK)

Facilitators distribute the group binders with session handouts inside

Handout #2:

Summary of research findings on importance of fathers who are “involved” in the life of their kids

- Participants take turns reading the summary of stats

[Facilitators Note: While participation in all group discussions and exercises are encouraged, participants are only offered opportunities to speak-out, read or practice techniques if they want to. Sensitivity has to be extended towards those individuals who may have personal issues related to literacy or anxiety. It is hoped that a climate of safety and support will be developed that promotes risk taking and offers opportunities for all participants to gain the most that they can from the group experience.]

Discussion: Research has indicated that it is not the frequency of contact but the quality of the relationship of involved fathers with their kids that supports their healthy development. While father involvement is identified as a protective factor in the lives of kids, the quality of that involvement is the crucial characteristic. Many fathers while physically present in the family home are emotionally absent or have a negative involvement in the lives of their kids. Our group will focus on developing the qualities of fathers who are positively involved in the lives of their kids and on our ability to improve our skills in this area.

- Confirm our individual commitment to our group goal: “becoming the best fathers we can

be in the lives of our kids” exploring and practicing how to have a positive and involved relationship with our kids. This group will stress the importance of providing a violence free home and will offer strategies for effective parenting and personal coping options to avoid violence.

- Becoming part of the solution and not part of the problem
- This group is committed to providing an opportunity to become more involved in and promoting the solutions to domestic violence.

Break

Discussion: “Achieving our group goal”

Facilitator leads a discussion to “explore our own behaviours and develop effective parenting practices that help us to be the best dads that we can be”

What is our job as a dad? = nurturing, guiding and modeling

Handout #3: (Refer to Binders)

Traditional Parenting Styles Model (The two ends of the Parenting Continuum)

- Guidance and Nurturing
- Expectations and Caring
- Teaching (socialization) and Attachment
- Brick Walls and Jellyfish (aggressive and passive)
- Supporting our kids self-esteem (acceptance and competence)

Handout #4: The 4 Quadrant Model of Responsiveness and Demanding-ness

What is Balanced, Positive, Active and Authoritative Parenting?

Backbone = structural strength with flexibility

Involved, Assertive, Democratic, Authoritative, Positive

Handout #5:

Encouraging self-esteem

Handout #6:

Positive and Balanced Parenting

Webster Stratten Parenting Pyramid

Relationships = the foundation we build on

Child-centered vs. Adult-centered homes

Personal Involvement = positive time together (play)

Handout #7:

Homework assignment: Child-centered Activities

Present a brief overview of the group curriculum - stressing the ability to learn how to become parenting experts (Fantastic Fathers) and “the best dads that we can be” by developing personal skills in investing in our own relationships and developing our positive parenting strategies. Before going on to specific parenting skills and strategies, we have to take the time to understand ourselves, and the parenting style that we have developed. We will want to explore our own history to reflect on who we are and who do we want to become.

Handout #8: Ideas for activities for single dads

Home Assignments:

Setting Personal Goals: we will get out what we invest in (into the group and into our kids)... encourage participants to complete the weekly assignments in order to get the most that they can out of the group.

Demonstrate how to fill-out the "Forces Influencing Parenting" form (**Handout #6**)... to be completed and handed-in next week.

Ask the participants to think about the parenting that they received as a child and place the name of their parents on the parenting continuum at the point that best describes the parenting style that each parent typically displayed.

Invest time with your kids (if you have access) complete a weekly self-monitoring "Activities with Kids" form (**Handout #7**) keeping track of time spent with our kids in child-centered activities.

Participants may choose to hand-in their home assignments for feedback and may use it as a reference for discussion during a mid-week phone check-in with the facilitators.

Session #1 Feedback Form

Handout #1

Introducing Each Other:

In pairs: act as an interviewer and collect the following information (should take about 5 to 10 min. then switch places)

Name _____

What are the name(s) and age(s) of your kid(s)?

Who do you presently live with? _____

What is your area of employment/interest?

What are your hobbies and interests?

What is your favourite TV show? _____

Who do you identify as a personal hero or as someone you hold a lot of respect for and why?

Handout #2

Research Findings of Children Who Have Involved Fathers

More likely to graduate from high school

More likely to stay out of jail

More likely to avoid drug and alcohol abuse

Less likely to threaten or attempt suicide

Less likely to become socially isolated and alienated

Less likely to develop asthma, headaches, anxiety, depression and behaviour problems

Less likely to commit murder

Less likely to commit rape

Less likely to be involved in violent crime

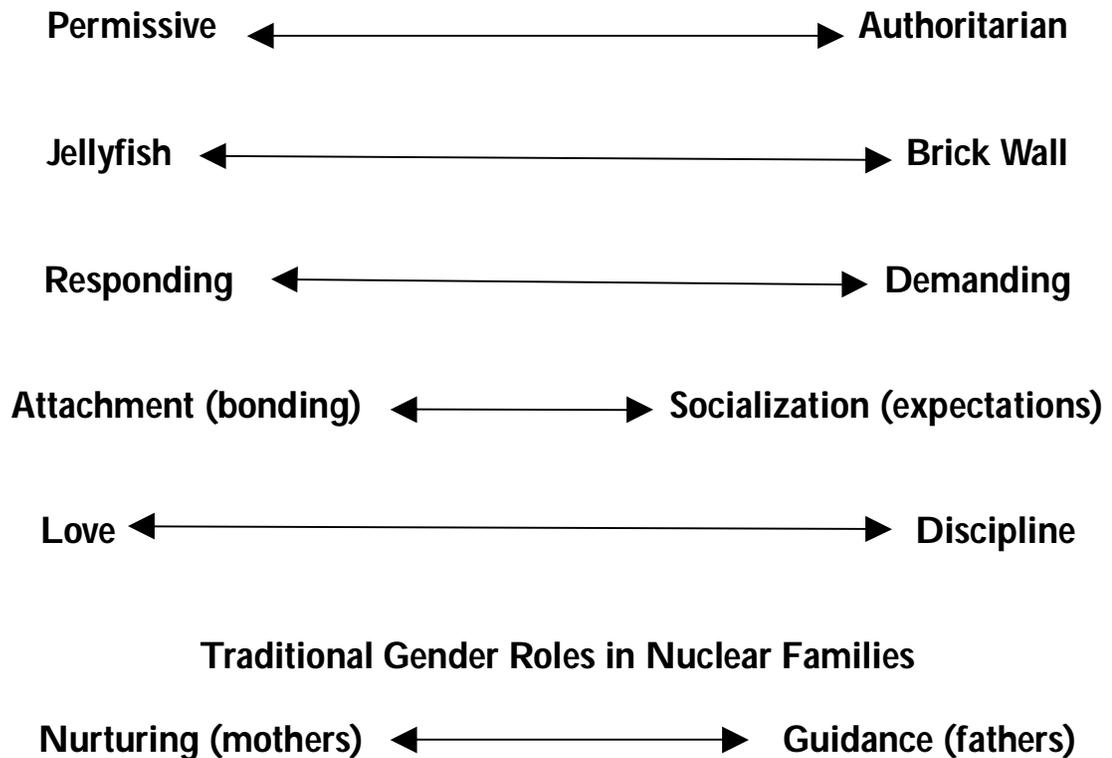
Less likely to run away from home

Less likely to be admitted into a psychiatric hospital

Research has indicated that it is not the frequency of contact but the quality of the relationship of involved fathers with their kids that supports their healthy development. While father involvement is identified as a protective factor in the lives of kids, the quality of that involvement is the crucial characteristic. Many fathers while physically present in the family home are emotionally absent or have a negative involvement in the lives of their kids. Our group will focus on developing the qualities of fathers who are positively involved in the lives of their kids and on our ability to improve our skills in this area.

Handout #3

The Parenting Styles Continuum: Describing the manner in which parents meet the needs of their children for care and guidance

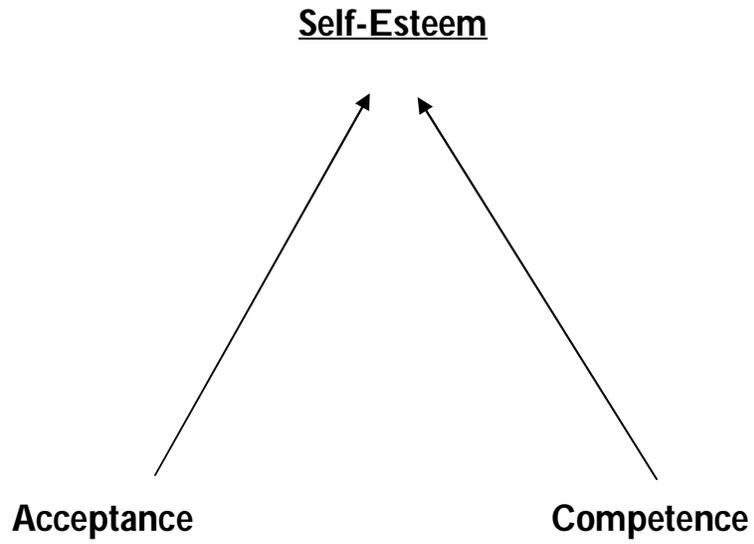


Handout #4

Parenting Styles Quadrant

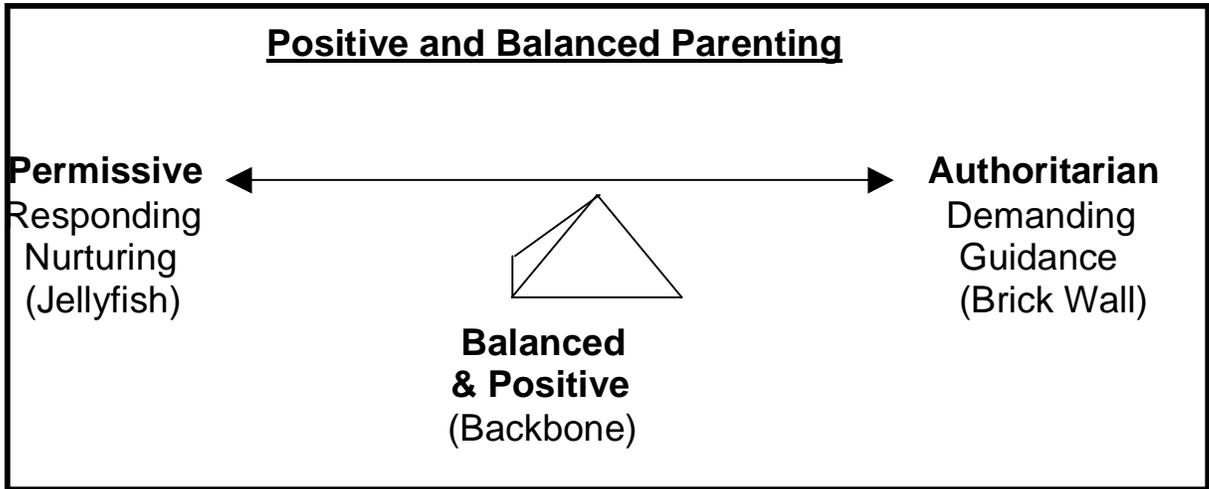
- Responsiveness +	Permissive (Jellyfish)	Balanced & Positive (Backbone)
	Neglect	Authoritarian (Brickwall)
	- Demandingness +	

Handout #5
Encouraging Positive Self-Esteem



Handout #6

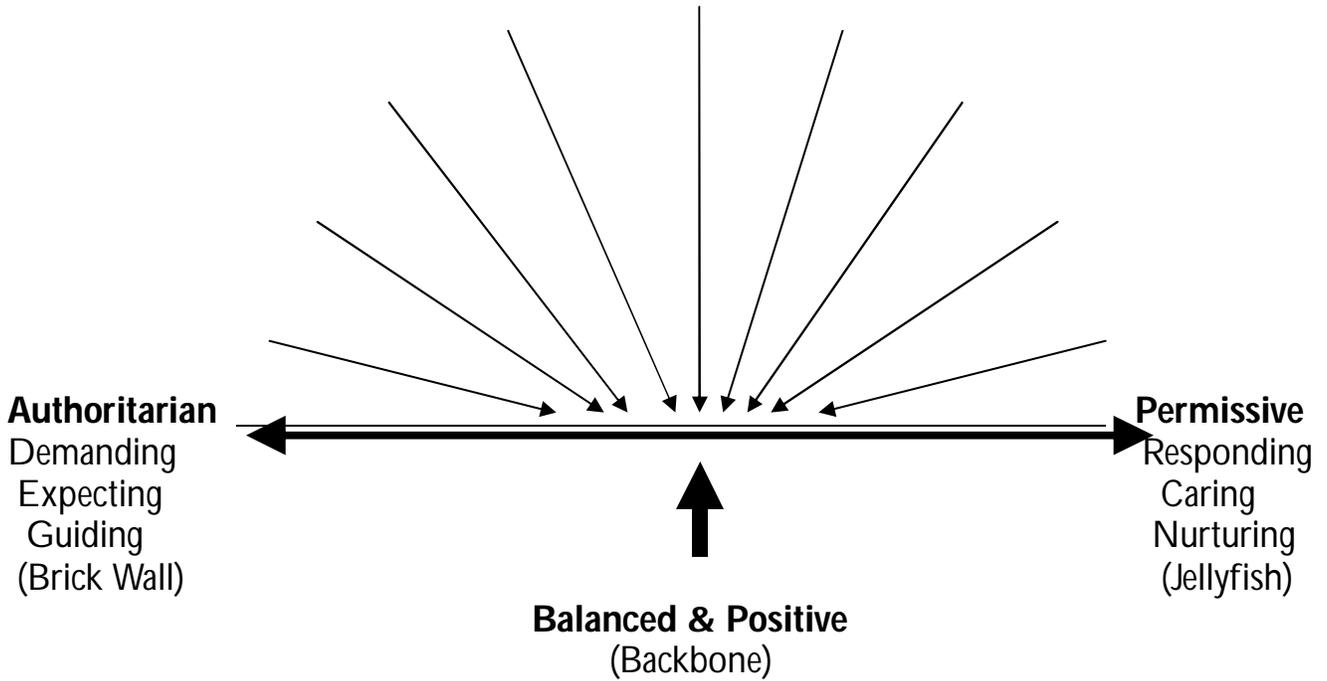
Positive and Balance Parenting



Incredible Years Parenting Pyramid 1



Handout #6
Forces Influencing Parenting



Home Assignment

In the spaces below, describe the life forces that are currently effecting your ability to stay Positive and Balanced in your relationship with your child(ren)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Handout #7

Home Assignment #2

Child-Centered Activities: In the spaces provided, describe the date, amount of time spent, child centered activity and observations you made during your time together with your child.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time spent</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Observations</u>

Handout #8

Ideas for Single Fathers to Connect with their Children

1. Create a space for your child somewhere in your home. Even if it is just a corner or basket with all his or her stuff. It will help the child to feel like they have a piece of your home.
2. Make and enjoy meals together. A simple sandwich for lunch or dinner or bagels and juice for breakfast. It gives an opportunity for conversation. You don't have to be a gourmet cook. Making pasta, meatballs and sauce are not that difficult with a recipe.
3. Have down time for you and your child. You don't have to plan every moment that you are together. Sometimes just being in the same room together is comforting.
4. Don't force things to happen allow them to just be. Be patient, consistent and give the relationship time to grow.
5. Talk to your kids not at them, while looking them in the eye without distractions from TV or the computer. Ask simple starter questions like; How was your week? Did you meet any new friends this week? What subject is giving you trouble? Try to relate something in your life to what they might be struggling with.
6. Laughter. Lots of Laughter. (Put on some music and dance, that always makes my kids laugh)
7. Let them know that you are a person too. Share something with them that might be bothering you (age appropriate). Maybe someone got you upset at your job and share how you handled it in a kind and compassionate way. Be honest and real but on their level. Let them know you have feelings too without giving them your burdens.
8. Plan a vacation with them. Involve them in researching where they want to go together.
9. Hugs. Lots of Hugs.
10. Kind positive words. Boundaries; don't allow them to run your home just because they are only there for a short time.
11. During time when you are not with your child keep a journal of each day and tell them how you miss them. Talk about something that made your day. Use this tool to talk to your child. Hand the journal to your child and ask them to write in it especially when they are missing you the most and can't get to talk to you. Alternate weeks or days of having the journal so you can write to each other. Don't force them to write at first it will just come naturally.

Group #2:

Family of Origin:

Does the apple fall close to the family tree?

Handout

Positive Parenting Principle #2



“The example we set is the most powerful parenting influence that our children experience”

Agenda Group 2:

Housekeeping (forms, phone calls, comfort, missed handouts...)

Review of Group 1

Feedback on Assignments

Themes: The impact of parenting on personality development

- The potential life transforming experience of parenting
- Erik Erikson's critical stages of child development
- Brain development: Making sense of early life experiences
- Setting an example: The most powerful influence parents have

Exercises: Understanding the forces that affect our parenting

Creating our family of origin tree

Home Assignments: Affirming messages, Family tree

Session #2 Feedback Form

Review main points from last week:

Group guidelines and confidentiality (handout)

Importance of fathers in the lives of kids

Parenting Styles, Positive and Balanced Parenting, Child-centered Families (review hand-out of parenting pyramid)

Creating and supporting a "child-centered home" as Involved Dads

Home assignments: Group Discussion

Child-centered activity form: Comments/Questions

Forces influencing parenting form: Comments/Questions

Discussion: Last week we started by asking the question; Why are dads important in the lives of their kids? And we looked at the research evidence that described the benefits for those kids who have "Positively Involved Fathers" compared to those that do not. The differences are striking...

We want to continue to explore and develop our skills to become more positive and involved in the lives of our kids... but let's start today with another question to consider...

What are the benefits for us in being Involved and Positive Dads?

Before we go around the group for our ideas on this, lets watch a clip that came across U-tube and think about what we get from the time we invest with our kids.

Show DVD: Infant laughing and quadruplets laughing

What do we get out of being dads?

Write responses on flip-chart or white-out board... generate discussion.

Present the summary of research evidence in **Handout #8:**

Life Transforming Benefits of Involved Fatherhood

So our investment in providing a balance of Nurturing (Care) and Guidance (Socialization) has a huge impact on forming a foundation on which our kids can develop the person that they will become... and provides us with potential life transforming meaning in our own lives. The most influential thinkers, philosophers and spiritual leaders in human history have agreed that our fulfillment as individuals, our sense of purpose in living, is captured within our ability to care for others and feel cared for "to love one another". As dads we are offered an opportunity to hold

another being close to us, to help meet their needs and in doing so become fulfilled in our own needs.

Show DVD clip from Aboriginal Fathers: "Becoming a dad has changed my life"

Why is early life experience so important in shaping personality?

Handout # 9:

Stages of Development According to Erik Erikson

[The following information includes handout #9 with additional notes for the facilitators to consider including in the group discussion]

Approximate Age Developmental Task or Conflict to Be Resolved:

Birth to 1 year Trust vs. mistrust: Babies learn either to trust or to mistrust that others will care for their basic needs, including nourishment, sucking, warmth, cleanliness and physical contact.

If we pass successfully through this period of life, we will learn to trust that life is basically okay and have basic confidence in the future. If we fail to experience trust and are constantly frustrated because our needs are not met, we may end up with a deep-seated feeling of worthlessness and a mistrust of the world in general.

1 to 3 years Autonomy vs. shame and doubt: Children learn either to be self-sufficient in many activities, including toileting, feeding, walking and talking, or to doubt their own abilities.

Here we have the opportunity to build self-esteem and **autonomy** as we gain more control over our bodies and acquire new skills, learning right from wrong. And one of our skills during the "Terrible Two's" is our ability to use the powerful word "NO!" It may be pain for parents, but it develops important skills of the will. It is also during this stage, however, that we can be very vulnerable. If we're shamed in the process of toilet training or in learning other important skills, we may feel great **shame and doubt** of our capabilities and suffer low self-esteem as a result. The most significant relationships are with parents.

3 to 6 years Initiative vs. guilt: Children want to undertake many adult like activities... Sometimes overstepping the limits set by parents and feeling guilty.

During this period we experience a desire to copy the adults around us and take **initiative** in creating play situations. If we're frustrated over natural desires and goals, we may easily experience **guilt**.

7 to 11 years Industry vs. inferiority: Children busily learn to be competent and productive or feel inferior and unable to do anything well.

During this stage, often called the Latency, we are capable of learning, creating and accomplishing numerous new skills and knowledge, thus developing a sense of **industry**. This is also a very social stage of development and if we experience unresolved feelings of inadequacy and **inferiority** among our peers, we can have serious problems in terms of competence and self-esteem. As the world expands a bit, our most significant relationship is with the school and neighbourhood. Parents are no longer the complete authorities they once were, although they are still important.

Adolescence Identity vs. role confusion: Adolescents try to figure out, "Who am I?" They establish sexual, ethnic, and career identities, or are confused about what future roles to play.

Up to this stage, according to Erikson, development mostly depends upon **what is done to us**. From here on out, development depends primarily upon **what we do**. And while adolescence is a stage at which we are neither a child nor an adult, life is definitely getting more complex as we attempt to find our own **identity**, struggle with social interactions, and grapple with moral issues. Our task is to discover who we are as individuals separate from our family of origin and as members of a wider society. And if we are unsuccessful in navigating this stage, we will experience **role confusion** and upheaval. It is no surprise that our most significant relationships are with peer groups.

Young adulthood Intimacy vs. isolation: Young adults seek companionship and love with another person or become isolated from others.

Adulthood Generativity vs. stagnation: Middle-age adults are productive, performing meaningful work and raising a family, or become stagnant and inactive.

Maturity Integrity vs. despair: Older adults try to make sense out of their lives, either seeing life as a meaningful whole or despairing at goals never reached and questions never answered.

Source: Berger, K.S. The developing person through the life span. New York: Worth Publishers, 1988.]

Handout #10:

Erikson's critical stages as building blocks for development

The main point from Erikson's formulation of personality development is that there are critical stages or times in our lives when we face specific developmental tasks. If as children, we experience the support and care we need, then we will move through each task and on to the next developmental challenge. The successful completion of each developmental task is the building block to move on to the next stage of development. If we do not have the right kind of supportive environment, then we could become stuck at that particular level or stage, with unresolved developmental needs.

Discussion: This conception of healthy development places a real sense of responsibility on parents to meet the needs of their kids, with the right amount of support and encouragement. It also offers us a way of understanding our own lives and whether or not our own parents offered us the environments we needed to grow and to develop in a healthy manner.

Thoughts or Questions?

Another consideration in understanding the impact of early life experiences on the development of who we have become, and who our kids will be, is through our understanding of neurobiology (how our brains develop and function).

Basically children are born with a tremendous capacity to learn. Their brains have a plasticity to develop, be altered, change and grow. Their brains are ripe with neurons and cells that begin to join together as they experience the world and are driven by natural instinct to work towards making sense of their experiences. Neurons in the brain that are stimulated fire off electro-biological signals or impulses that pass on the signal by stimulating other neurons. Developmentally neurons that fire together start to wire together. Pathways of neurons connect and become more established each time they connect as they run to specific areas of the brain where information is stored. The familiarity of stimulus forms concepts or ideas of the world, which are retrievable from the brain and eventually easily recognized when called on to make sense of what is going on and how to respond.

Kids will go through a tremendous period of rapid and complex change, learning how to move their bodies, form language for communication and make sense of the world that they live in. Many developmental scientists describe the earliest years as the "critical time period" in the formulation of personality or who we will become... because our brains are getting hard wired to view the world through our own experience or lens. Everything that happens becomes filtered through that experience and our understanding of ourselves and others.

In many ways this discussion on our brain anatomy relates to Erikson's description of personality development. We may have some genetic predispositions that we have inherited from our biological parents... but our life experiences will greatly shape the person we become. Our kids will be shaped by their experience of us and the environment that we provide for them.

We will take a break in a second but one last thing to consider about how our brains work to formulate our sense of the world and who we are...

When humans are subjected to stress, such as conflict and perceived threats to physical safety, they

secrete hormones or bio-chemical reactions (such as adrenaline) that are transmitted throughout their bodies and travel through the pathways to the brain. The natural instinct of our bodies when triggered by stressful experiences is to react physically with a “fight or flight” response. When kids are powerless to have physical control over what is happening to them, their bodies can’t respond naturally and they are affected in profoundly detrimental ways. Kids are vulnerable to the emotional strain and we can see how they will develop a sense of insecurity and mistrust in the world around them and have difficulty moving on in their development. What is particularly interesting is that the hormones that produce fight or flight responses, due to perceived threats and stress, will become triggered off when kids face similar experiences again. Loud noises, arguments, even facial expressions or certain words will trigger off physiological and emotional reactions in kids... and maybe even in ourselves as adults. Prolonged experiences of distress will cause individuals to withdraw, react in self defence with hostility and aggression... and can have a lasting impact on the development of personality.

It is interesting that many children who have been diagnosed with some of the most common childhood psychiatric conditions, such as ADHD, Conduct Disorder or Oppositional Defiant Disorder, have many of the same behavioural symptoms as children who have experienced prolonged or acute trauma. They are often insecure, anxious, disorganized, and have great difficulty with emotional self regulation.

Questions, comments?

Break

Discussion: Our parents have modeled for us how to behave and helped shape our sense of who we are. While many people will develop the same manner of parenting their own kids that they themselves received, others make a conscious choice to do the opposite.

What has the impact on our own lives been from our own parent's style of parenting us?
Do you consider yourself to have followed your parents' example? Do you think you are more like your fathers or your mothers?

Exercise: In pairs, have a discussion describing the type of parents that you had, take turns describing and then listening.

- Use the parenting styles form from group 1 to rate where on the continuum your parents were (do dad and mom separately) and as a reference for describing them.
- Describe something positive that you inherited from your parent's personality... a positive quality that you saw in him that you also see in yourself
- Describe a quality of your father that you wish you did not have

Group Discussion: After approximately 10 minutes, participants return to larger group

Anyone wanting to share their thoughts about their own parents' style?

- For many of us we will have to acknowledge that we did not have the healthiest experiences of being parented in our own families of origin. The messages that we received from our parents about ourselves may not have been affirming or presented from a positive, balanced, active, nurturing and involved parenting style. Children often internalize the messages that parents have stated to them and this can affect how they feel about themselves and the person that they become.

- We are not sentenced to become our fathers, or behave the way they did. We have the freedom to choose to change and we will explore how to do this in our next group.

Discussion: Shaping Self-Concept (The way we see ourselves)

If we were repeatedly given negative messages or told that we are "too noisy", "stupid", "in the way", "annoying", "frustrating", "idiots" ... we internalize these messages and hear them in our own self dialogue (the way we think to ourselves)

Developmentally, children move from dependence (parental dictatorship) to autonomy (parental democracy) and therefore the parental impact on self-esteem and identity diminishes over time (developmentally)... however, there is a critical age span when kids are younger that has a profound influence over our personal sense of who we are. This explains how our own sense of self develops over time, but also places a burden of responsibility on parents in shaping the identities of our children.

Developmental consideration: When children are younger, their sense of personal identity is largely defined by their attachment figures; there is no sense of personal separation as unique individuals (autonomy develops through adolescence). When the primary caregiver is attacked

(verbally or physically) the child is attacked. As fathers, we cannot put down the child's mother without putting down our own kids! It undermines their sense of security in the world.

Discussion:

What would we describe as the qualities of a great dad or "Fantastic Father"? How would the best dad act towards his son or daughter?

(List on flip chart and build on responses of participants)

Facilitator looks for opportunities to insert or emphasize positive parenting qualities such as: caring, nurturing, "biggest fan", encouraging, guiding, modeling, socializing, praising etc.

Discussion: The way in which parents behave is a powerful model for their children and provides them with permission to behave the same way. The way we say and do things will matter far more than what we say.

Video: Show video clip from Australia "Setting an Example" (approx. 8 min.)

Are we aware enough and to the power of our example in shaping the lives of our kids?
- Comments and Questions

The example that parents provide will shape the person that our kids will become. The most powerful influences that parents provide is through the comments they direct to their children. Review the handout from group one, on shaping self-esteem through encouraging a sense of competence and acceptance. Who we are, our self-esteem, has been shaped by the messages that we internalized about ourselves at our most vulnerable ages. The way in which our parents spoke to us about who we are and the way that they treated us influenced the person that we have become.

Exercise: Drawing a family tree

Facilitator draws a basic example of a three-generation family tree (genogram) and explains that participants will be asked to draw their own family tree (provide handout)

Home Assignments

Continue to offer positive child-centered attention and activities... complete another Child-centered activity form (Handout #11)

Focus on Positive and Affirming Messages Form (Handout #12)

- Write 3 examples of parenting behaviours that you provided this week that reassured your child (children) of your love (acceptance) and 3 examples of parenting behaviours that boosted their sense of competence.

Create a family tree (**Handout #13**) (genogram) using the example provided by the facilitator

- Filling-in a family tree drawing with your parents, yourself and your partners, as well as your children (3 generations)

- Beside each person's name, write 2 or 3 adjectives or descriptive words that describe their personality

Session #2: Feedback Form

Handout # 8:

Research on the Life Transforming Benefits of Involved Fatherhood

Men who are involved fathers:

Feel more self confident and effective as parents
Find parenthood more satisfying
Feel more intrinsically important to their child
Feel encouraged to be even more involved
Are more likely to see their interactions with their children positively
Are more attentive to their children's development
Better understand and are accepting of their children
Enjoy closer, richer father-child relationships
Exhibit greater psychosocial maturity
Are more satisfied with their lives
Feel less psychological distress
Are more able to understand themselves, empathically understand others, and integrate their feelings in an ongoing way
Have fewer accidental and premature deaths
Have less than average contact with the law
Have less substance abuse
Have fewer hospital admissions
Report a greater sense of well being overall
Are more likely to participate in the community and do more socializing
Are more likely to serve in community leadership positions
Are more likely to attend church more often
Are more likely to have marital stability
Are more likely to report marital satisfaction in midlife
Are more likely to feel happily married ten or twenty years after the birth of their first child
Report being more connected to their family

“Involved fathers during early adulthood usually turn out to be good spouses, workers and citizens at midlife. Despite some of the documented short term costs of father involvement for men such as stress, increased work-family conflict, decreased self esteem: long term, high involvement has a modest, positive impact on occupational mobility, work success, and social generativity. In fact, men's emotional involvement with their children has been found to act as a buffer against work related stresses.”

The Effects of Father Involvement: A Summary of the Research Evidence, Father Involvement Initiative Ontario

Handout #9:

Stages of Development According to Erik Erikson

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3 to 6 years Initiative vs. guilt: Children want to undertake many adult like activities, sometimes by overstepping the limits set by parents and then feeling guilty.

7 to 11 years Industry vs. inferiority: Children busily learn to be competent and productive or feel inferior and unable to do anything well.

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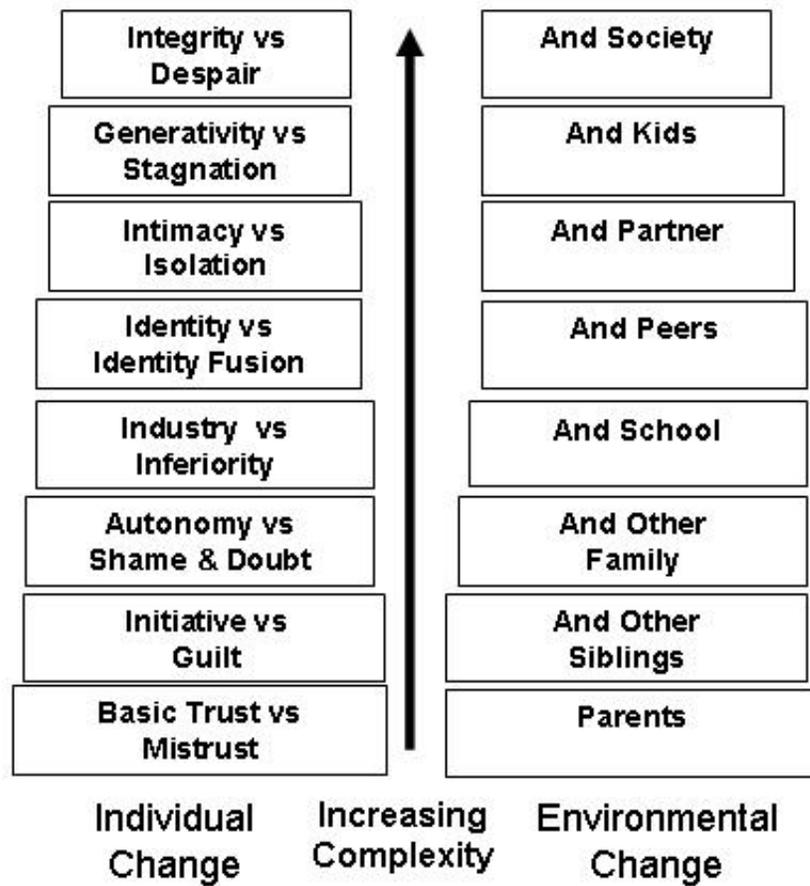
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Source: Berger, K.S. The developing person through the life span. New York: Worth Publishers, 1988.

Handout #10

Erikson's Critical Stages as Building Blocks for Development



Handout #11:

The main point from Erikson's formulation of personality development is that there are critical stages or times in our lives when we face specific developmental tasks. If as children, we experience the support and care we need, then we will move through each task and on to the next developmental challenge. The successful completion of each developmental task is the building block to move on to the next stage of development. If we do not have the right kind of supportive environment, then we could become stuck at that particular level or stage, with unresolved developmental needs. This conception of healthy development places a real sense of responsibility on parents to meet the needs of their kids, with the right amount of support and encouragement. It offers us a way of understanding our own lives and whether or not our own parents offered us the environments we needed to grow and to develop in a healthy manner.

The critical nature of early life experiences on shaping personality development may be more understood through specific scientific studies, such as brain anatomy and neural development. Basically children are born with a tremendous capacity to learn. Their brains have a plasticity to develop, be altered, change and grow. Their brains are ripe with neurons and cells that begin to join together as they experience the world and are driven by natural instinct to work towards making sense of their experiences. Neurons in the brain that are stimulated fire off electro-biological signals or impulses that pass on the signal by stimulating other neurons. Developmentally neurons that fire together start to wire together. Pathways of neurons connect and become more established each time they connect, as they run to specific areas of the brain where information is stored. The familiarity of stimulus forms concepts or ideas of the world, which are retrievable from the brain and eventually easily recognized when called on to make sense of what is going on and how to respond.

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Home Assignment

Child-Centered Activities: In the spaces provided, describe the date, amount of time spent, child centered activity and observations you made during your time together with your child.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time spent</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Observations</u>

Handout #12

Home Assignment

Encouraging Our Kids Positive Self-esteem

Provide 3 examples of behaviours that you offered to your child(ren) that displayed your acceptance (care) for them and 3 examples of behaviours that empowered their sense of competence (skills, talents, abilities).

Behaviours that encourage a sense of acceptance

Behaviours that encourage a sense of competence

Handout #13:

Group 2: Home Assignment

Drawing a Genogram (Family Tree)

Symbols and Relationships

O = Living female family member

LI = Living male family member

O LI = Deceased family member

LI O
|_____ | = Marriage

LI O = Non-married relationship, common law, affairs
:.....:

LI O LI = Relationship 1: divorced or separated
|_d_/_/_s_|_____ | Relationship 2: remarriage

LI O
|_____ | = Blood relationship between father mother son daughter
 | |
 LI O

LI O
|_____ | = Non-blood relationship between parents and child
 :
 LI e. g. fostering/adoption

Assignment: Create your three generation family genogram that represents your parents, yourself and your children. Beside each family member offer 2 or 3 words that describe the most prominent features of that persons character.

Example = Biological parents divorced with 2 children, mother had second non-married relationship (deceased partner) with another child and is in another relationship. Second generation self with non-married partner and child, and married partner and 2 children.

Group #3:
Becoming Our Own Positive Parent:
A Kind and Compassionate Father

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #3



“Reframing our own self-messages into positive expectations, models for our kids how to manage emotional experiences and prepares us to provide for their needs”

Parenting Group Facilitator Comment:

“I found that the information was well put together. The information will eventually make a strong impact on fathers who are willing to change for the future.”

Agenda Group 3:

Housekeeping - Forms, phone calls

Review- Group 2

Discussion about assignments

Theme: Overcoming the possible negative impact our own parents had on us, so that we can offer a more positive example and influence on our children

Discussion: Developing our skills in remaining calm and reframing negative attributions into positive expectations

Break

Exercise: Relaxation breathing, muscle relaxation

Assignments: Changing your tune diary

Session #3 Feedback

Review main points from last week

- The way we were parented will affect the way we parent (we either follow the example or reject it)
- Our self-concept is largely shaped by the messages we received from our parents about ourselves
- There are critical ages and stages in childhood development and our experience of the world around us will shape our personality (Erikson's critical stages of development)
- Our sense of who we are and how to interact with our world (including coping with frustration) has been moulded by our own parents, the way they modeled behaviour for us and what they told us about ourselves
- As caring and compassionate fathers we have to take responsibility for how our behaviours are effecting our children's sense of trust and safety, we need to offer them a sound foundation in order to develop to their healthiest potential

Feedback on Assignments

How did we do with our goal of child-centered play and positive attention for our kids?

Who wants to share examples of behaviours that reassured their child (children) that they are accepted/loved... or are competent?

Does anyone have anything they want to share about their family tree and insights into the parenting style that they received from their parents and may have inherited (or rejected)?

Theme: We can not offer our kids the positive and balanced parenting that they need, if we have a negative self-concept that developed from our own childhood experiences: "Overcoming the impact of negative parenting (breaking the generational cycle) by becoming our own caring and compassionate father"

Discussion: What were we told about ourselves as boys?

- The cost of the traditional masculine roles
- Suppression of feelings - the challenge for men to accept and express their feelings, contrary to our conditioning
- Integrating feminine roles of Nurturing into our Balanced Parenting Approach (Refer back to the Webster-Stratten model of positive parenting)

What do we believe about ourselves? Are we conditioned to fall back into unresolved issues of mistrust, dependence, insecurity...?

We are not sentenced to continue being stuck at lower levels of personal development just because our needs were not met at that time. We have the ability to change and develop our sense of security in the world. We have to provide our own positive self messages – become our own kind father... provide positive messages of reassurance, encouragement, and affirmations.

We know that altering our negative thinking styles and reframing our experiences into positive expectations works! This is the basis of current counselling psychology trends and interventions that research evidence supports as effective in helping individuals change.

Hand-out #14:

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy – the relationship of thoughts, feelings and behaviours

Critical consideration – What happens when our thoughts and attributions set-up negative expectations or arouse our feelings of frustration and anger

- The snow-ball effect - As emotions become intense - the ability to think clearly becomes impaired... as our ability to think clearly is impaired, more negative thinking seeps-in (blaming, judging, plotting revenge) and the more we become upset “the negative tape in our minds is playing over and over again” we are continually winding up the coil of tension

- We have the ability to gain control over our feelings and can use our own thoughts and self reminders as well as specific relaxation techniques to calm down

Quick relaxation exercises:

- Facilitator describes, demonstrates and leads group in the use of ...

1. Deep abdominal breathing, placing hand on stomach
2. Muscle tension/relaxation

Group Exercise: Understanding the power of self-dialogue

- Facilitator draws a 10 point thermometer scale on the board

Handout #15: **Personal thermometer**

Use the self-rating scale of anger (1 to 10) to describe your feeling levels in the following situations:

“Your partner has left the house in a mess and taken off with the kids while you were out working all day... there is no note or message anywhere, no dinner plans that you can see and they knew you had plans to take the kids out to visit their grandparents for a family get together tonight.”

How angry are you? (Self-rating level of anger)... ask for volunteer ratings.

Now close your eyes and think to yourself... you had an argument this morning with your partner before you went to work because they wanted to use the car but you needed it for work. She expected you to take the bus so that she could go to a friend's place... you said no you needed the car and reminded her of the visit with your folks tonight... now you realize that she has taken the kids even though she knew your plans tonight and she has done this just to get you back. You know she always does these things to get you...

How angry are you? (Self-rating level of anger) ask for volunteer ratings.

Place your hand on your stomach and feel it go slowly in and out as you take slow deep breathes in your diaphragm... now think to yourself... I wish we hadn't had a tough time this morning, (Breath) I could have easily taken the bus but I was being too controlling, my folks won't mind if we have to come by another day... she had been asking to use the car to do the shopping for a few days now and I kept saying no... she has been trying to get some winter clothes for the kids, they really need them and have been asking to go with their mom. She has also been working hard around here keeping the house clean, doing the laundry, getting stuff ready for Christmas... I am not going to let this problem upset me and wreck our night and my chance to have some positive time with the kids when they get home

How angry are you? (Self-rating)

Discussion: How do the way we think and self-messages that we produce, affect the way we feel?

- If our thoughts and feelings are so intertwined and we want to have greater control over our angry behaviour... what can we do to reduce and manage our angry feelings?

- Positive reframing in self-messages
- Importance of reminding ourselves to calm down before reacting
- Using quick relaxation techniques

Break

Discussion: Becoming our own positive parent - listening to the conversation with our own kind father (internal dialogue)

Read selections from “How to be Your Own Best Friend”, reassuring our own worthiness and our sense of acceptance and competence through affirming self-dialogue

- Awareness of our situation (What is going on? Am I getting triggered?)
- Accepting our feelings (How do I feel? Taking our temperature)
- Providing reassuring self-messages (empathy and avoiding blame)
- Developing a positive expectation ("you can do it", "this is an opportunity to show what you can do" "I am not going to let this upset me")

Discussion: We can model positive coping for our kids by putting positive self-reassurance into an action plan. By expressing our positive thoughts out loud, we provide our kids with a demonstration of self-confidence and skills in managing their emotional experiences.

Developing our skills in reframing potentially upsetting situations, is good for our kids, our relationships and our own health... as it reduces stress.

Handout # 16:

Changing Your Tune Diary Form

Ask participants to look at the form and offer examples of events or situations that have happened recently in their own life. Encourage them to fill-in a couple of examples.

Event – Thought – Feeling, Self-rating out of 10 – Positive Thought

Anyone interested in sharing one of their examples?

Exercise:

Facilitator demonstrates pulling-out a scenario and reading it to the other facilitator (i.e.: your boss has written a public email criticizing your work). The other facilitator “thinks out loud” demonstrating how his/her thinking is reframing this experience into a positive expectation.

i.e.: “This is a real challenge for me to demonstrate to my peers that I can take this feedback and handle it well” “I am not going to let this ruin my day or my relationships here at work” “I’ll put some time into reworking that task and ask for feedback from some of the guys I work with” “It’s OK! This is a chance to show what I can do”

Break into pairs and take turns reading out a frustrating situation that the other person is in. That person then “thinks out loud” the positive interpretation of the event, reframing the negative into a positive expectation

- take turns with each partner participating in three scenarios
- Facilitators mingle around in the pairs to offer support

Discussion: - After 20 minutes - return for large group discussion

Any thoughts, feelings or observations?

Monitoring our own reaction to frustration will help our development of more positive coping skills, and set an example for our kids...

Video: Triple P Parenting - Coping With Stress

Discussion: Thoughts or questions about the video

Home assignments

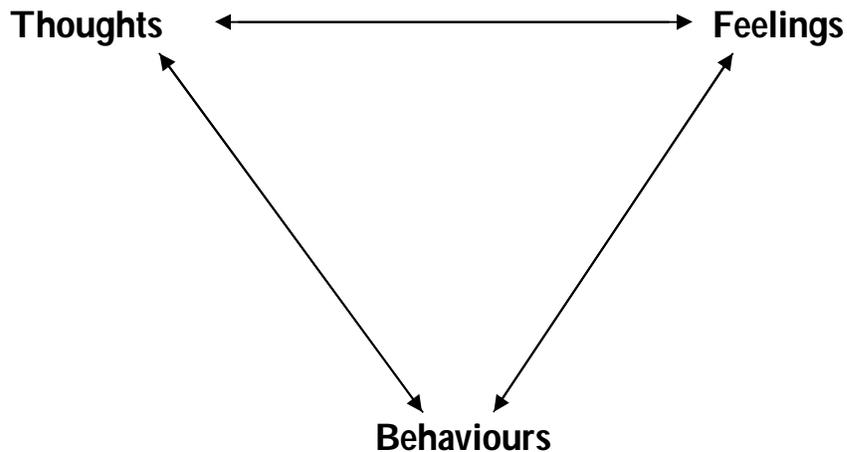
Continue to offer positive child-centered attention, praise, and activities

Use the “Changing your tune diary” to describe 2 frustrating situations that occurred and your process of formulating a positive interpretation and expectation

Session #3: Feedback Form

Handout #14

Cognitive Behavioural Theory



Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours all influence each other

The way we think about a situation will affect our feelings towards it and therefore how we respond to it

We can change our thoughts towards a situation by reframing negative attributions into positive expectations and this will enable us to act in a more desirable manner

Handout # 15:

Paying attention to our own positive self-affirming messages

The way we interpret or think about the situations that we are in, will affect the way we feel and this will determine the way we act. We have to be conscious of our own thoughts and catch negative messages before we react to them.

When we allow our negative thinking to spiral towards frustration and anger, our children are often frightened, we model using anger as a way to control others, solve problems and often react in ways we later regret.

Reframing negative messages into positive expectations or positive self-affirming thoughts will reduce our anger, model for our kids how to manage their emotions and attract positive reactions from others back towards us.

Examples: Thought Switching or Reframing Negatives into Positives

<u>Negative Thoughts</u>	<u>Positive Reframing</u>
" That jerk is cutting me off with his car... he is a terrible driver... I am going to show him he can't get away with that"	" Boy that is dangerous ... people should be more careful when they are driving ... I'm going to take it easy and slow down"
" She is always on my back ... she cuts me down for every little thing I do ... I don't have to take that crap from her anymore"	" Sounds like there is something really bothering her ... she has probably had a tough day ... I should give her some support so that she feels better"
" The kids are wrecking this place... they have no respect for anything here and get away with way too much... they know I am tired and are just trying to piss me off"	" The kids are all wound up again and probably need some attention ... I need to help them learn how to take care of our things ... they will probably listen better after I give them some of my time"
" Where has she been ... she said she would be home an hour and a half ago... she is out doing whatever she wants and leaves me with the kids as if I have nothing else to do... she knows this really pisses me off"	" I am starting to get tired and frustrated... I know when that happens I often get angry so I think I should take a few breaths and relax... everything is going to be OK, she will be home soon"

Handout #16:

Quick Relaxation and Calming Exercises

Our kids will benefit from seeing us manage our frustration and are often frightened by anger and fighting. When we notice the signs of feeling upset (such as arguing, heart pounding or clenching our fists or teeth) we can use some or all of the following techniques to calm ourselves down.

Deep Breathing (Square Breathing)

- Breathe in a full, slow and deep breath... to the count of 5 (or 7)
 Make sure your breaths are from your lower diaphragm which should cause your stomach to extend out
- Hold for the count of 5 (or 7)
- Exhale slowly to the count of 5 (or 7)
- Hold to the count of 5 (or 7)
 Repeat the cycle 4 or 5 times

Muscle Tension/Relaxation

- Find a comfortable sitting position, feet on the floor and hands on your lap
- Start at the top of your head by taking a deep breath... hold your breath while shutting your eyes tightly ... hold to the count of 7
 - Slowly release the tension of your eye lids... breathing out slowly
- Breath-in and hold ... clenching your teeth and jaw ... hold to the count of 7... slowly release and breath out
 - Breath-in and hold ... lifting you shoulders and hold them tight to your neck ... hold to the count of 7... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly
- Breath-in and hold ... pushing your arms in tight to the sides of your chest ... hold to the count of 7... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly
 - Breath-in and hold ... clenching your fists tight on your lap ... hold to the count of 7... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly
- Breath-in and hold ... pull in your stomach tight to your spine ... hold to the count of 7... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly
 - Breath-in and hold ... tighten your backside ... hold to the count of 7... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly
- Breath-in and hold ... force your knees tight together ... hold to the count of 7 ... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly
 - Breath-in and hold ... force the sides of your feet together ... hold to the count of 7 ... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly
- Breath-in and hold ... tense up your hold body from head to toe ... hold to the count of 7 ... slowly release the tension... breathing out slowly

Handout # 17:
Feeling Thermometer

Think of the situation that you are in and rate your feelings at the time on the following scale:



Handout #18:
Changing Your Tune (Practice diary)

Goal

1. Change the things I am saying to myself so that my feelings will change
2. Use positive expectations to change my emotions and behaviours

In the spaces below, describe a potentially upsetting event, rate the intensity of your emotions out of 10 (feeling thermometer), describe your initial negative self-message and then counter this with a new positive self-message or expectation.

Event	Rate intensity of Feeling	Old Negative thought	New positive thought

Group #4:

Staying Cool When Things Heat-up:

Developing assertiveness skills and setting an example for our kids on coping with frustration

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #4



“We are responsible for our own actions and can stand up for ourselves without using our anger to control others”

Agenda Group 4:

Housekeeping: Pictures with our kids?

Review: Main points from last week and home assignments

Theme: Coping With Frustration in an Assertive Manner

Discussion: Demonstrating assertive behaviour and the Non-violent communication script

Break

Exercise: Drawing anger, practicing Non-violence communication script

Assignments: Personal anger management plan

Session #4 Feedback

Review main points from last week

The importance of positive self-dialogue in supporting positive expectations, feelings and behaviours

We can not offer our kids positive parenting if our own self-concept and manner of interacting is stuck in the negative

We can develop habits of self-reassurance (becoming our own positive parent) through self-dialogue and relaxation

Review Home Assignments

Does anyone want to share their use of the "Changing Your Tune Diary"

If no one offers to describe their use of the form, generate a discussion on using the form for frustrating situations that participants faced over the past week.

"Does anyone have an example of a stressful event that occurred to them this week that we can use for this exercise"

- Reframe negative messages into positive expectations

Discussion: Positive self-dialogue is a challenge - Why is it worth the effort?

Review why we are here... "To provide our kids with the best dad that we can be"... we can not provide our children with a relationship with a kind, compassionate, positive and balanced father if we are not in that kind of a relationship with ourselves

If we were not nurtured to have that positive core concept of ourselves, than we have to develop it now... be our own caring, compassionate and positive father and offer those reassuring and supportive messages to ourselves.

Discussion: Tonight we are going to explore our ability to manage our own anger and avoid the use of intimidation as a way to get what we want from others.

Everyone gets mad; anger can have a positive function (letting us know when something is wrong, motivating us to do something about it). We can use our energy towards making changes in our lives ... but as dad's we have to always consider the impact that our behaviours are having on our kids...

Last week we took a look at ways to keep ourselves calm when we are becoming upset, including; relaxation exercises and using positive self messages. Tonight we will continue to focus on ways to manage our emotions and set an example for our kids on how to treat others with respect.

Group Discussion

Why does the use of anger, and for some violence, become such a habitual part of some of

our personalities?

- family example – it is what is familiar to us
- it works to influence others & get our way
- it is accepted and encouraged in the culture of male aggression
- as young men, physical strength is status... being a wimp is not just weak but pathetic
- our cultural masculine social models that we uphold ... rappers, athletes, extreme fighting!!!
- dominance is socially advantageous
- natural human instinct, to prefer power and control.
- some folks life experience has taught them that the only way to feel good about themselves, is to have a sense of power and control over others and that often involves the use of intimidation through the threat of and use of aggression ... Self-esteem, however, is not gained by dominance over others but through acceptance and caring from others and a sense of personal competence, including social competence in developing and maintaining relationships.

Facilitator uses the white board to explore the group responses to the question...

Why is it important to manage our emotional reactions in front of our kids and avoid the use of anger to control others?

- Look for opportunities to include

... kids will learn from us how to behave and will have emotional reactions themselves to what they experience... when young children live in an environment of tension, conflict, aggression and the threat of violence (not just violence but the threat of it) their sense of security is undermined, they can live in a sensory arousal of fear (which has damaging impact on their physiological development), and potential personal experience of trauma (which we know in the mental health field can be extremely damaging to their well being)... many kids who display emotional manifestations of trauma can be highly anxious or act out in extremely disturbing ways

The important consideration is not what we think of their experience but what their perception of their experience is.

What are they experiencing as they watch us deal with our frustration?

Are we modeling for them how to handle things?

Are we supporting them to feel safe, secure, confident and competent?

Exercise: Drawing Anger

Facilitator provides materials (paper and crayons) and asks participants to remember a recent time when they felt very upset and angry... They choose your own colours and draw their anger.

After the first drawing, ask participants to turn over the paper and this time draw their anger with their other, non-dominant, hand.

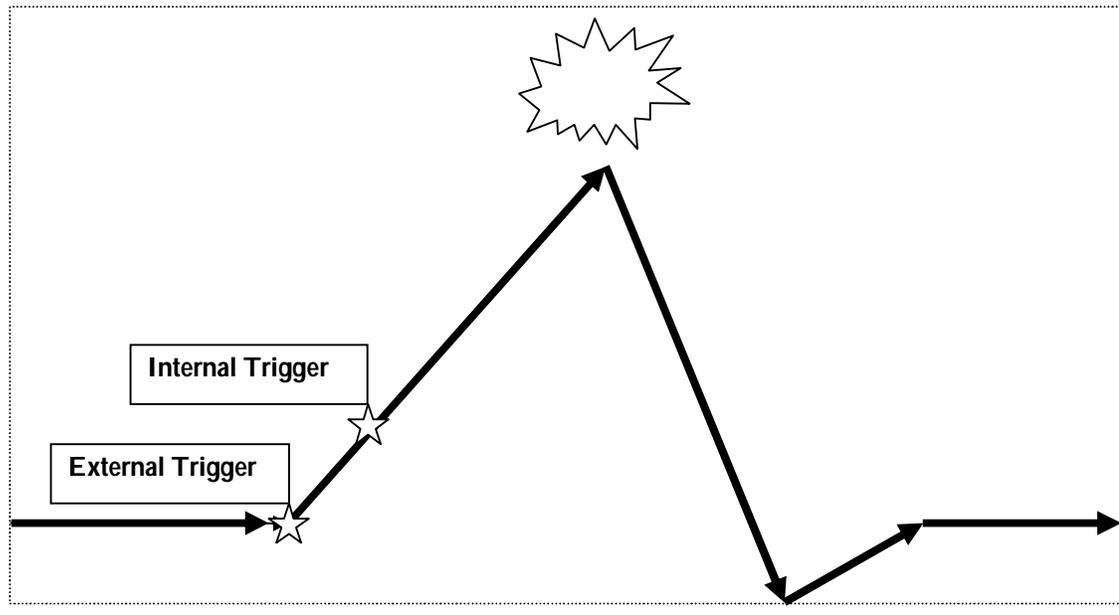
When drawing is finished, each man speaks to their drawings. What are the differences in the two pictures? Why did they choose their colours? What emotions have been aroused?

Discussion: Anger management approaches taught to youth

Handout # 19:
Anger Mountain
Coping with Frustration

- Be aware of cues and triggers
- The difference between external and internal triggers
- The cumulative effects of anger peaks = burnout

Anger Mountain



Use your WITS

W = **Walk away** - When you feel yourself getting upset – take a break!

I = **Ignore** - Use self-reminders to distract yourself and move on

T = **Talk it out** - Use non-violent communication and active listening to address the problem with the person [*Caution! Have to be calm enough not to escalate into a conflict]

S = **Seek some help** (Contact someone who is a personal support)

Handout # 20: Use your WITS

Discussion: Before we move-on to explore the skills and strategies we need to develop to be the best dad's we can be in managing our anger... There is a critical difference between those individuals who loose control of their emotions when upset and frustrated ...and those of us who may be using anger as a weapon to control others. (**Loosing Control of Our Anger is not the same as Using Our Anger to Control Others**) and we often hear people use the excuse "I lost control of my anger... I have a short fuse... you better not get me upset or look out". Many of us have learned that by becoming emotionally upset and expressing our anger towards someone, we can influence and control their behaviours and quite effectively get them to cooperate through intimidation and fear. For many of us the expression of anger has been a very successful way to get what we want off of others.

But what is the cost of using anger as a weapon of control within our relationships?

What happens to the quality of our relationships?

What do our children learn to do from our example, when others are upsetting them or not cooperating with them?

Even if we have been conditioned to use anger as a tool to control others, we can develop another way of interacting ...

Discussion:

We are being encouraged not to be explosive and yet we can't let others bully us and become victims ourselves. We are also being asked not to use our anger as a tool to control others and get what we want...

How are we suppose to act when we are feeling upset?

When we first started talking about the ideal style of parenting we should work towards, we used the model of The Parenting Styles Continuum and looked at the extremes of being too harsh or Authoritarian at one end ... and to lax or Permissive at the other. Either end of the parenting styles continuum are not healthy for our kids, but a balanced and involved parenting style between the two that sets expectations and provides guidance... but at the same time provides affection, acceptance and encouragement is seen as the most positive parenting that our kids could get.

If we are to apply this same model to how we should deal with our own frustration we could say that either end of the extremes would again not be healthy.

Aggressive (Bully) _____ Passive (Victim)

Handout # 20: **Assertive Behaviour**

(Describe the difference of using a passive approach as a way to get someone else as another form of aggression (i.e. the silent treatment, resistant behaviour, refusing to cooperate) = passive-aggressive)

The balance point between the two ends is to be Assertive. We describe this manner of dealing with others, when we work with kids, as "Standing Up For Yourself". The trick is to be able to communicate the way we feel, in order to deal with the things that are bothering us, without losing our temper or being a door mat. It involves letting others know how we feel, why we feel that way, and offering a suggestion of what we would like to see happen.

Discussion: Keeping our emotions in-check is critical but is more difficult as we become more upset during interactions with others. There are some things that particular people can do that just trigger us off, and there are ways that we act that may be strong triggers for others. We have to polish our skills in interacting with others so as to decrease tension, conflict and the use of anger.

The way we engage in conversations, particularly at times of increased tension, will have a profound impact on the reactions of others and the potential escalation of conflict. Non-Violent Communication is a term used to describe the most effective strategies that we can use within interactions that will decrease the potential for escalating conflicts and which can lead to the most beneficial potential for solving problems together.

- Avoid using blame... use "I messages" (point to yourself) to describe what you are going through, rather than "you messages" that put the fault on the other person and point to them! Take ownership over your own feelings and offer a chance for the other person to help figure out what to do.

Handout #21:

Using the non-violent communication script

“When _____ happens,
I feel _____,
I need _____,
What I would really like to see happen is _____.”

Active Listening

Video: Facilitator shows a clip from “The Basics of Non-violent Communication”

Discussion: May sound easy for some to just say how they felt... but for many of us... and in particular for many men... identifying and expressing our feelings are very uncomfortable and for some a difficult, task

- Gender differences in expressing emotions (men are conditioned to keep our emotions to ourselves and that expressing emotional feelings such as feeling hurt, embarrassed, afraid That this is a sign of weakness

- Assisting youth with limited feeling vocabulary (emotions reduced to either mad, sad or glad (happy))

Here is a **Hand-out #20** of feeling words that may help to expand our own expression so that others can understand and support us... but also so that we can support our kids and offer the empathy that will help them resolve their conflicts and problems.(Hand out Naming Feeling Words (from Becoming the Kind Father p.56)

Exercise: We are going to do some practicing of the non-violent communication script (refer to **Hand-out** of script)

Break into triads (parent, child, and observer)

Facilitator describes the roles of each

- Observer reads out a scenario, parent responds to child by following the Non-violent Communication Script, child can respond back (not overly negative), after each scenario observer asks parent how they thought that it went

- After each review, switch roles until everyone has had a chance to try each role twice

Facilitators model how to do exercise

Discussion:

In large group: ask participants if anyone has observations or questions

Handout #22:

Personal Anger Management Plan

- What positive self-messages will I focus on to reduce my anger arousal?
- Who do I have in my life that I can call at the time of need for support?
- How do I feel I am progressing in changing the way that I manage my anger?

Home Assignment

Continue to provide positive child-centered attention, praise, appreciation and activity time
Use the Personal Anger Management Plan form to describe the steps that you will take in times of emotional reactions to conflicts

Session #4: Feedback Form

Handout # 20:

Assertiveness:

Standing-up for ourselves while respecting the thoughts and feelings of others



Aggressive = Bullying, harsh, demanding, confrontational, abusing, controlling, blaming, violent, using "you statements"

Passive = Victim, being controlled, Martyr, giving in, being abused

* Passive/Aggressive = Using resistance or non-compliance to control or punish others

Being Assertive =

Standing up for yourself

Being open and honest

Communicating how what has happened makes you feel and what you would like to see happen

Communicating with respect, non-violently and receptively

Using "I statements"

Handout # 21:
Non-Violent Communication Script

**“When _____ happens (happened),
I feel (felt) _____,
I need _____,
and I would like _____ to happen.”**

Be receptive to and welcome feedback

“What do you think” or “How do you feel about it”

Active Listening

After the other person expresses their thoughts and feelings

Clarify their message (what do we think they thought and felt?)

**“So you were saying _____ happened and you felt _____ about
it” ... “is that right?”**

Check it out (in your own words) and make sure they know you understand - empathy is not the same as agreement!

Once you have confirmed their message then you can explain your own thoughts and feelings about the situation... making sure you talk about yourself (I messages) and not about them (you messages)

Handout #22

Personal Coping Plan

Know your triggers (what upsets you)

Watch for cues (tight muscles, clenched fists, fast breathing, heart pounding, voice raised...)

Use self-relaxation routines

- **Slow deep abdominal breathes** (square breathing)
- **Exercise** (walking, running, yoga ...)
- **Muscle tension/relaxation**
- **Positive imagery** (peaceful place or memory)
- **Contact with support person**
- **Use positive self-messages** (self talk to reassure and reframe negative thinking into positive expectations)

List the personal strategies you will use when emotionally triggered

Reassuring positive self-messages " _____ "

" _____ "

" _____ "

Relaxation routines

Support contacts _____

Practicing Assertive, Non-violent Communication

In triads (father, child and observer)

- Observer chooses a scenario and reads it out
- Parent uses the "Non-violent communication script" to address their child about the described problem
- Child can respond back in a disappointed or mildly frustrated way
- Parent uses active listening to demonstrate that they understand but restates

what they would like the child to do

Observer offers feedback on the use of the script and active listening

Scenario #1

Dad has just walked in the door after a hard day at work. His 10 year old is lying on the couch with potato chip crumbs on his face, packages of junk food all over the place... TV is on loud... jacket and shoes in the middle of the room... dirty dishes on the coffee table ... child has been asked not to eat junk food before dinner and to keep the home tidy

Scenario #2

Dad has asked his 12 year old son to get off the computer and get to bed... son has said "yea" but 15 minutes later finds his son still on the computer

Scenario #3

Dad gets a phone call from the school saying that his 14 year old daughter was not there in the afternoon. There have been other days that she has skipped classes but she had promised not to skip again.

Scenario #4

Dad finds 7 year old watching TV and not ready to leave for school, he is often disorganized and not cooperative in the morning and both he and dad have ended up often being late for school and work

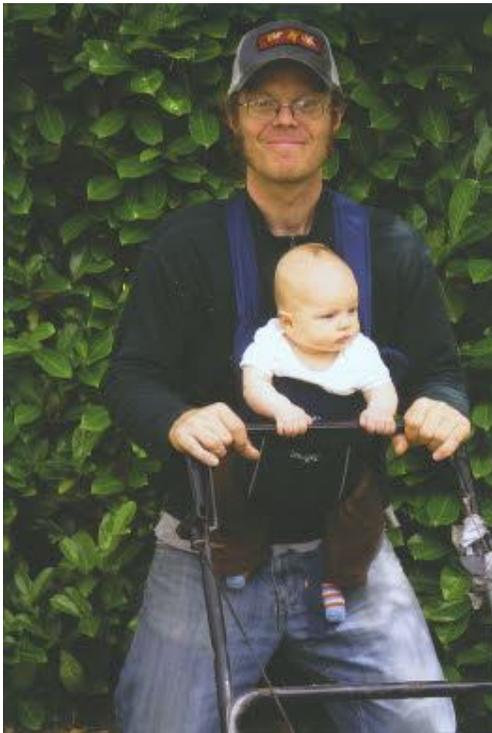
Group #5:

Breaking the Cycle of Abuse:

Overcoming unresolved issues, committing to non-violence

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #5



“It is difficult to provide for the needs of our kids if we are burdened by the weight of past pain, resentment and habits of violence”

Parenting Group Facilitator Comment:

“We needed a framework to offer to a fathers group and this looks very promising.”

Agenda Group 5:

Housekeeping

Review: last week and home assignments

Theme: Why children find family violence traumatizing

Discussion

Break

Discussion: Unresolved issues of our own losses, grief and trauma

Exercise: Practicing non-violent communication

Home Assignments:

Session #5 Feedback Form

Review: Main points from last week

We have to gain control over our emotional reactions to situations in order to model healthy ways of coping and in order to be fully available to meet the needs of our kids.

Using strategies like relaxation breathing, positive reframing and using our WITS can help us to stay calm and available.

We have to be cautious and commit to not using anger as a way to control others.

We can be sensitive to the way that our own behaviour can escalate conflicts and emotions during interactions with others and we can use the Non-violent Communication Script and Active Listening to reduce tensions.

Review Assignment... Developing our own personal coping plan

Activity: Rehearsing non-violent communication and active listening

Theme: Why children find violence in their families traumatizing?

Last week we explored the impact on our kids when they witness verbal fighting in their homes. We talked about how easily our emotions can escalate during disagreements and conflicts and how our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are all interconnected. It is clear that the more upset we become, the harder it is to think clearly. (Emotions up: Thinking down) It becomes a real big concern when we also regress to behaviour habits during times of stress that resort to aggression to get our own way. It is interesting how intense our emotional triggers become within our own families. We talked about the need to set an example for our kids on how to manage our emotions and work out our differences. And we tried to rehearse positive behavioural strategies to deal with conflicts and differences (non-violent communication). (Passive and Passive-Aggressive behaviour also not healthy).

Kids do not like witnessing the conflicts between their parents

How come?

What happens when they witness the fighting between their parents escalate to forms of physical violence?

Question for Discussion

What is the experience of children who live in a home where there is emotional conflict?

What does this do to their sense of security and developing personality?

What if the conflict between the adults escalates from verbal violence to physical violence?

Discussion: The impact of “Domestic Violence” on children

- We have modeled a very unhealthy manner of coping with frustration... children will behave in the manner that they have become most familiar with... conflict and fighting become normalized ways of interacting with others
- Younger children’s personal identity tied to care-giver... their security and sense of safety in the world is undermined... their self-esteem is damaged... they are afraid and often traumatized
- Children who are traumatized can not function well, socially, academically, emotionally

Hand-out # 23 and #24

Review together

Video: “Seen But Not Heard” (30 min)

Discussion: Lessons learned from the video?

- What is the impact on children who witness violence in their own families?
- How does fostering the most positive relationship that you can with the mother of your children benefit your kids?
How does it benefit you?
What are your personal obstacles and what can be done about them?

Break

Theme: Our own unresolved issues of Trauma and Grief can interfere with our ability to react in a positive manner in times of stress. Tension can cause emotional reactions to past, unresolved events and issues, to re-emerge and cause us to either over react or under-react (paralyzed).

Discussion: How do we know when we have unresolved issues?

- We have not dealt with them and our emotional responses to situations in our daily life become easily overwhelmed and over reactive.
- When we have suppressed our memories of past trauma, related to violence and abuse, we have exaggerated emotional reactions that are triggered off in times of conflict.
- We may need to go through the process of addressing our unresolved issues within personal therapy in order to function at our healthiest level. The benefits of personal therapy - clearing out our container so that we have the room and capacity to hold the needs of our kids, to be fully available to them (not distracted by emotional reactions that emerge from the suppressed issues of our past)
 - What does trauma or grief therapy look like?
 - Revisiting our experience, describing the details, confronting rather than avoiding or minimizing the impact on our lives
 - Why do men have such a hard time accepting support and going to counselling?
 - Last week we discussed the conditioning that we grew-up in within the culture of male aggression and that masculinity is typically measured by traits such as strength, bravery and independence.

- Acknowledging our vulnerability to our emotional needs is not a comfortable place for most males. Reaching out and accepting help implies our neediness and weakness, however, if we had been subjected to emotional or physical abuse of any kind we may need to see a professional counsellor to address these experiences and reduce their impact on our adult lives.

Some of us may also need counselling support to deal with alcohol and substance use, as well as mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety ... all have an impact on our emotional and behavioural function and on our ability to parent our kids effectively

- Accessing counselling What is available and where do we go?
- Medical Doctors as sources of referrals
- Mental Health Centers, emergency services
- Community-based support services
- Families in Transition
- Neighbourhood Houses

Discussion:

When we hold resentment and blame towards others, we carry a negative emotional weight that burdens us and makes our progress down our path more difficult. To get to the point where we can let go of the weight of our resentment, we have to see the benefits for ourselves in doing so.

If we have unresolved issues from our childhood, we are often stuck at that emotional age and regress to those much younger ways of coping when we are confronted by the triggers of our daily life. We are not vulnerable little children now and should not leave the burden of that weight to a child... we are adults with much more strength to carry a heavier weight. There is maturity and wisdom in letting go of the weight of our past hurt and resentments and putting it down if it doesn't benefit us to carry it. We may need personal support and encouragement to put the pack down and sort out our load...

Next week we will look at the research on the power of achieving forgiveness towards others (The forgiveness project)

Home Assignments

Continue to provide your child with nurturing, child-centered, positive attention and acceptance along with opportunities to develop their sense of competence in the world.

Write about the benefits for your children, and for you, of developing the most positive relationship you can with the mother of your children.

Describe your plan to alter patterns of conflict with the mother of your kids. What will you do if conflicts emerge?

Session #5: Feedback Forms

Handout #23: Through Children's Eyes

"At my house you have to be careful around my dad. He likes things a certain way. Sometimes he is nice. Other times he is mean. My mom and I try to be very good so he doesn't get mad. I hate when he gets mad. When he gets mad my mom gets scared. Sometimes he hurts her and she cries. One time she went to the hospital! Oh, I wish we could be better, so dad wouldn't get so angry. But, it never seems to work".

Each year, an estimated three to ten million American children witness violence in their own homes. The Domestic Violence Center encounters many of these children in their programs. Just as the above paragraph portrays, children often feel that the violence is their fault. In reality, they are the "silent" and unfortunate victims in the middle of a raging storm that is beyond their control or understanding. Children living in a violent home are confronted with many confusing and hurtful images:

"My baby sister was knocked out of my mother's arms when my parents were fighting. I think she hurt her head. It is black and blue.

I saw my dad make my mom's lip bleed and then bring her flowers the next day

My mom's boyfriend made threats to hurt me so my mom wouldn't call the police

All the neighbourhood kids saw my dad get taken away in a police car last night

My step-dad made me stay at his house to get my mom to come back to him

I found my mom crying at the bottom of the stairs and I didn't know what to do

When my dad is drunk he tries to get me to make fun of mom the way he does

My mom's boyfriend asks me a million questions about what mom does when he's not around.

It makes me uncomfortable. I had to live in a shelter and go to a different school where I didn't know anyone. I hated leaving my friends. I didn't even get to say goodbye. Why does this have to happen?"

When a family experiences domestic violence, the customary system of adult protection and care breaks down. In healthy family relationships the parents are advocates for the children in the face of violence. However, when the perpetrator is in the home, the child may have no where to turn for refuge from this trauma.

Numerous clinical studies have yielded evidence of the negative psychological, behavioural and emotional impact of family violence on children of all ages. For example, imagine what it would be like for a child to concentrate on school-work when the child's thoughts constantly drift to the horror you witnessed at home the night before. A Carnegie Council report on adolescent development in 1995 found that domestic abuse and neglect account for the majority of developmental problems that children face in this country.

If you were lucky enough to grow up in a violence-free home, imagine how drastically different your life would be if you would have had a parent who hurt the other, and you in the process. As an infant you may have had trouble establishing normal attachments and routines. When you were as a preschooler you would have suffered sleep disturbances. In your school years, you may have become withdrawn and depressed, and as a teenager you might have succumbed to, or acted out the violence you experienced as a child. Attention is now being drawn to the plight of children from violent homes. Intervention must begin early in order to prevent the cycle of violence from continuing.

Handout #24:

Impact on Children Who Witness Violence

Infants and Toddlers

- Ability to form secure and organized attachments will be threatened
- Learn from the example of parents to use aggression
- May associate loud noises or loud people with fear
- Fear and instability may inhibit social confidence
- Mother may be less available to meet the needs of her kids
- Increased rates of childhood anxiety, depression and social withdrawal
- Often engage in developmentally regressive behaviour (toilet training, clingy, needing security objects, dependence)

Younger and Middle aged Children

- Compromised school readiness and achievement
- Emotionally preoccupied with conflicts and may miss valuable social and academic developmental experiences
- Caught between two loyalties and identity confusion (father's hostility towards mother = rejection of them, father described as having a problem or bad = they have a problem and are bad)
- Higher rates of cruelty towards other children and pets
- Higher rates of attention problems, impulsivity, aggression and delayed social development
- Inappropriate sense of personal responsibility and self blame (ego-centric view of self in world)
- Exaggerated emotional reactions in times of conflict
- Difficult adjustment to social norms such as sharing, teasing, turn taking
- Higher incidents of somatic complaints
- Justification of violence in order to preserve acceptance of father
- Like children from homes of alcoholic parents or parents with mental illness, view their family as different or troubled and therefore view themselves as different or troubled

Adolescents

- Premature adoption of care-taking roles
- Premature independence/emancipation from family
- Intervening in physical fights can be a risk for harm
- Diversions and interruption of normal developmental trajectory to young adulthood (ie: independence, responsibility, intimate relations)
- Peer relationship problems: isolation, avoidance risk taking
- Use of high risk coping strategies such as substance abuse
- Difficulty establishing healthy relationships
- Cognitive distortions
- All-or-nothing interpretations
- Pro-violence attitudes
- Gender role stereotypes

(What About Me: Seeking to Understand a Child's View of Violence in the Family, A. Cunningham & L. Baker, 2004)

Handout #26

Group #5 : Home assignments

Continue to provide your child with nurturing, child-centered positive attention and acceptance, along with opportunities to develop their sense of competence in the world.

Set an example of dealing with conflicts and differences in a non-aggressive (or passive-aggressive) manner.

Provide 2 descriptions of the benefits that your kids receive when they witness you resolving conflicts in a non-aggressive manner.

Provide 2 descriptions of the benefits that you receive when you resolve differences and conflicts in a non-aggressive manner.

Describe your personal plan to alter patterns of conflict with the mother of your kids. What will you do if conflicts emerge?

Group #6:
The Impact on Children Who Witness Domestic Violence:
Developing further individual commitment and group support for non-violence

Handout:

Handout: Positive Parenting Principle #6



“Giving is a Selfish Act: We gain more for ourselves by giving to others”

Agenda Group 6:

Housekeeping

Review: Last weeks theme and home assignments

Theme: Breaking the cycle of domestic violence

Discussion: Understanding the impact of family violence on children

Exercise: Non-violent communication and active listening

Break

Discussion: The benefits of forgiveness

Assignments: Action plan for forgiveness

Feedback Forms

Review: Main points from last week

- Parental conflict has negative consequences for our kids and undermines their self-esteem, as their personal identity is connected to both parents
- Parental conflict that escalates to violence can be traumatic for kids and sets an example of using aggression
- Our own resentments and suppressed memories of trauma and loss can cripple our ability to function and to be the best dads that we can be
- Personal therapy to address unresolved issues of our own trauma and loss or for alcohol and substance use, as well as mental health problems, will support us to move on

Review Assignments

What are the benefits for you and your child of maintaining a positive relationship with their mother?

Theme: Understanding the impact of domestic violence (continued)

Video: - Watch "Something My Father Would Do"

Discussion: Reactions to the video

- Facilitator highlights statements made by each of the 3 men in the video, in particular; comments about the experience of having a violent father, how frightening that was as a child, realizing the same behaviour in themselves, not wanting to have their own children frightened of them, committing to non-violence and finding a way to become more nurturing.

Exercise: Before the break we will return to practicing non-violent communication and active listening, as a way of dealing with conflicts in our relationships

Break

Theme: Forgiving Others for Ourselves

We have to overcome the impact of our earlier life experiences of conflict, trauma and loss in order to be available to provide for the needs of our own kids. When we are burdened by resentments, our perceptions and experiences are negatively tainted and can be drawn into further negativity. The ability to resolve our past issues and move towards forgiveness frees us to be more giving towards others and will benefit our kids and ourselves.

Handout: **Positive Parenting Principle #6**

Discussion: There has been a lot of research into the benefits of forgiveness. We are not talking about expecting others to forgive us, but using forgiveness to lessen our own burden of resentments and negativity. When we live a life full of resentment we are more likely to respond to frustration with anger and a sense of entitlement that we deserve to be treated better. Forgiveness relieves our tension and allows opportunities for positive relationships to be formed and maintained. How can we demonstrate (model) forgiveness in our lives?

Video: The Forgiveness Project

Handout # 27: **Forgive for Good**

Handout # 28: **9 Steps to Forgiveness**

Discussion: Developing a personal forgiveness plan of action

Exercise:

In pairs use the Handout Action Plan for Forgiveness to discuss the steps that you could take in your life to overcome issues of resentment and possible steps towards forgiveness.

Group # 6 Optional Exercise

Exercise: Participants are shown paintings produced by Children Who Witness Violence support group. Kids were asked to produce 2 drawings:

- 1) picture of family - remembering a happy time
- 2) picture of family - remembering a time when dad was angry

Discussion:

Participants are asked for their comments about the pictures

Participants are asked to consider the experiences that these kids have gone through and what they may hope for their future

Group is asked to brainstorm something to offer the Children who witness violence group. Can we make something for them that communicate our message of hope for them? (Bracelets?)

Home Assignments

- Continue to offer your children child-centered attention and activities
- Use the Action Plan for Forgiveness Form to articulate the steps that you can take to address issues of resentment from your past.

Session #6: Feedback Forms

Handout #27

Forgiveness is more about the present than the past

(Frederic Luskin, Ph.D.)

In any hurtful situation the question is how much suffering you are willing to experience now from something in the past that you can't change. Since the past is immutable, it is never about the past.

Forgiveness means that you take information and re-perceive it, re-process it with information from the present so that you suffer less. The essence of forgiveness is that something happened in opposition to your wishes and you can't change it. The issue is, in the present moment, what can you do to suffer less?

It can work in two ways. One, you disentangle yourself from your over-connection to this person. And two, you get a life. These two strands have nothing to do with the past. When you disconnect yourself from that person, and when you get a life, your perception of the past will change. However, if you try to heal that situation without disconnecting and getting a life, you will just look back with pain. As you look at how you can suffer less, your compassion will grow naturally for both yourself and the person you need to forgive. You will begin to forgive to whatever capacity you choose.

I see forgiveness primarily as preventative and secondarily as something to work out. It is very secondary that you forgive one specific event. What you want to develop is the capacity to forgive when things don't work the way you want them to. And to really keep your heart open as much as possible, even when things are not going the way you want. If your airplane is late, can you forgive that and still enjoy the time you are waiting in the airport? Or forgive that there is traffic on the freeway, or that your friend is late? That is the quality I try to develop, the ability to forgive the things that can turn us off to life because they aren't what we want.

Three steps people can take to become more forgiving people

1. Begin by forgiving the small things. Work on forgiving traffic, long lines, late planes, the things that don't really matter.
2. Forgive those you love. We erect roadblocks, called grievance stories, which stop us from loving. The most important people to forgive are those closest to us.
3. Always practice first. You may not be ready to forgive someone today, but if you were, what would it sound like? Practice saying it to yourself, say, when you are alone in the car. That way, when you are ready to forgive, it is available to you.

Handout # 28

9 Steps to forgiveness

9 Steps to Forgiveness

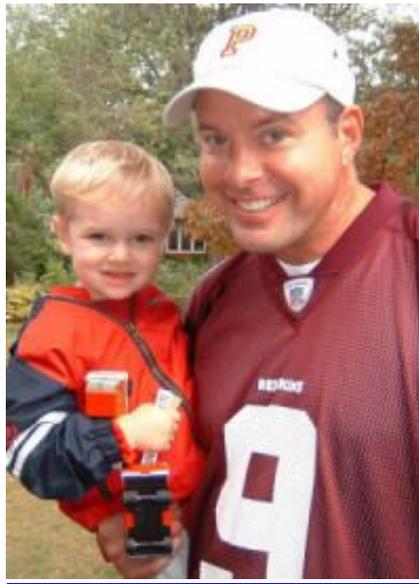
1. Know exactly how you feel about what happened and be able to articulate what about the situation is not OK. Then, tell a trusted couple of people about your experience.
2. Make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else.
3. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the person that hurt you, or condoning of their action. What you are after is to find peace. Forgiveness can be defined as the "peace and understanding that come from blaming that which has hurt you less, taking the life experience less personally, and changing your grievance story."
4. Get the right perspective on what is happening. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts and physical upset you are suffering now, not what offended you or hurt you two minutes - or ten years -ago. Forgiveness helps to heal those hurt feelings.
5. At the moment you feel upset practice a simple stress management technique to soothe your body's flight or fight response.
6. Give up expecting things from other people, or your life , that they do not choose to give you. Recognize the "unenforceable rules" you have for your health or how you or other people must behave. Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, peace and prosperity and work hard to get them.
7. Put your energy into looking for another way to get your positive goals met than through the experience that has hurt you. Instead of mentally replaying your hurt seek out new ways to get what you want.
8. Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who caused you pain power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty and kindness around you. Forgiveness is about personal power.
9. Amend your grievance story to remind you of the heroic choice to forgive.

The practice of forgiveness has been shown to reduce anger, hurt depression and stress and leads to greater feelings of hope, peace, compassion and self confidence. Practicing forgiveness leads to healthy relationships as well as physical health. It also influences our attitude which opens the heart to kindness, beauty, and love.

Group #7:
Skills and Strategies for Positive and Balanced Parenting:
Building our parenting relationship on a solid foundation

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle # 3



**“Attention is Reinforcing: so catch them being good!
If you want to see more of a particular behaviour ...
pay attention to it”**

Agenda Group 7:

Housekeeping

Review: Main points and home assignments from group 6

Theme: Building our positive parenting on a solid foundation. Investing in Relationship Enhancing Experiences: Play and Praise

Break

Exercise: Practicing giving praise, Parenting Self-rating Form

Discussion: Attention is reinforcing so catch them being good

Assignments: Tracking praise and daily appreciations

Feedback Forms

Review: Main points from last week

We have been reviewing the impact on children when they have been exposed to parental conflict and family violence

We've worked on improving our own ability to cope with frustration and model that for our kids through: Relaxation Breathing, Using Positive Self-Messages, and letting go of resentments

We have committed to providing our kids with a non-violent home and discussed the benefits for them and for ourselves of giving to others

Review: Assignments

Before we get started any comments about the home assignments?

Discussion: Personal plan for releasing the burden of resentment

Theme: Positive Parenting Begins With Building a Solid Foundation

We have invested time in this group preparing ourselves to be as giving as we can for our kids. We have explored the fact that in order to be the kind and compassionate involved father that they need... we have to have a sense of caring for ourselves and an ability to provide our own self-reassuring reminders. (Being our own compassionate and caring father). We have also explored how unresolved issues from our past, or life style choices now, can interfere in our parenting. We are going to shift our focus in our group now towards developing specific positive parenting skills and strategies.

Video: Show initial segment of Triple P "Every Parents Guide"

- Questions or comments about the video?

Discussion:

- Review the Webster-Stratten parenting pyramid (investing in a positive parent child relationship is the foundation)

- Positive Attention and Personal Involvement
- Child-Centered Play
- Communicating and Active Listening
- Problem Solving
- Empathy (showing that we understand)

- Everyone needs to feel special – connected and attached to the people they care for the most. Kids need to feel our affection for them... it is easy when they are babies and toddlers and gets more difficult as they age, maybe even harder for our daughters (discussion?)

- Investing in a positive relationship, developing our children's confidence and competence through active involvement, play, praise, acknowledgements, appreciations, opportunities for skill development (competence).

- Younger children in particular desire and crave their parents attention and approval... it can become a struggle as they become adolescence as they struggle to assert their independence and will act with an intention of minimizing the influence of their parents... however, support and involvement in their personal lives remains critical. Moving from Dictatorship to Democracy... less rule enforcement and more life management consultation.

Although parental attention and approval will matter more to younger children ... positive attention can remain a re-enforcer for teens

Positive Parenting Principle #7

“Attention is Reinforcing so Catch Them Being Good: If you want to see more of a particular behaviour ... pay attention to it”

Discussion: If the attention principle is true...

What should we do if our kids are doing something we don't like?
(minimal attention)

How should we react when our kids are doing something positive?
(maximum attention)

Break

Theme: Investing in our relationship with our child

Discussion: Spending time with our kids and investing in our positive relationship with them is the foundation on which positive parenting can be built. They need to know how much they matter to us, that they are important and that they are special... **be their biggest fan!**

How do we offer our kids child-centered attention (play)?

Video: Show video clip from Webster-Stratton on child directed play

Discussion: What activities do we do with our kids that offer them an opportunity to lead and be creative?

- Child directed play and undivided positive attention
- Descriptive language: play-by-play announcer
- Being our kids greatest fan
- The importance of praise: using descriptive and specific praise

Hand-out #29: **Using Praise**

- Be specific – describe what they did
- Be sincere
- The more immediate the better
- Be careful with back-handed compliments or sarcasm

Exercise: Practicing praise statements in the group

- Facilitator hands out a series of “positive child behaviours” (hanging up their clothes, coming to the table when asked, helping a younger sibling get ready to go out, feeding the dog...)
 - Facilitators model how to give specific and enthusiastic praise (“I really appreciate the way you came to the table as soon as I called you”)
 - Going around the circle: say a praise statement for the given behaviour (emphasize the importance of being specific)
 - Ask participants for other examples of behaviours that their kids may demonstrate and practice how to acknowledge them
 - Paying attention to the positives “Attention is Reinforcing”
- “If you want to see more of a behaviour - draw attention to it”
- Praise can be a very effective strategy to use to encourage our kids to behave better!
- Identifying behaviours you want to see more of

Reframing Problems into the Opposite/Positive (Handout # 29)

- Think of a difficult behaviour that you want to see changed - reframe it into the positive opposite and praise your child when you see that behaviour
- Facilitator models targeting a problem behaviour and identifying the opposite positive and desired behaviour... models the praise statements
- Facilitator encourages participants to identify problem behaviours that occur in their home and practice praising the opposite positive behaviour

Home Assignment

- Continue child-directed play
- Tracking praise for desired behaviours - Identify positive/opposite of difficult behaviour that you would like to see changed and keep track of “catching them doing the right thing” using the tracking form **Handout #29**
- Using daily appreciations - if you have daily contact with your child, offer them 2 appreciations each night

Session #7: Feedback Form

Handout # 29

Parenting Strategies: Self Rating Scale

<p>10 = I am great at this 7 = I do this most of the time 5 = I do this sometimes 3 = I do not do this very often 1 = I really struggle with this</p>
--

	Rating
<p>1. <u>Invest time in the relationship</u> Provide unconditional positive attention and child directed play</p>	
<p>2. <u>Catch them being good</u> Use praise, rewards, reinforcements and recognition liberally</p>	
<p>3. <u>Use empathy to show support, caring and understanding</u> Acknowledge the things that are hard for them Reassure them with a positive expectation that they can handle it Label and encourage feeling identification and expression</p>	
<p>4. <u>Ignore what you can</u> Try not to attend to misbehaviours that are not too inappropriate</p>	
<p>5. <u>Have clear rules and set consequences</u> Develop a clear list of family rules that states what they can expect for both cooperating (rewards) or not (consequences)</p>	
<p>6. <u>Label misbehaviour and remind them of the consequences</u> Provide clear warnings and cues before applying consequences Use the "if ____ then ____" formula"</p>	
<p>7. <u>Be consistent and follow-through in applying the rules and consequences</u> A rule is always a rule and the consequence should be applied "Make a believer out of them" "Not the severity but the consistency that makes the difference"</p>	
<p>8. <u>Stay emotionally neutral and calm</u> Decrease their experience of power over us by being able to get us upset, as this would reinforce their misbehaviours</p>	
<p>9. <u>Disengage from discussing, arguing or debating child misbehaviour</u> "Let the consequences do the teaching"</p>	
<p>10. <u>Model for them how to handle problems and conflicts</u> The most powerful form of guidance is through example</p>	

Handout #30

Practicing Praising our Kids

We can never give our kids too much positive attention or praise. We also have to be careful that we don't take their everyday positive behaviours for granted and forget to let them know that we noticed and appreciated what they have done. Kids need to hear from us specifically what we appreciate and that we are sincere.

Here are some everyday behaviours that we can catch our kids doing and offer them appreciation and praise for.

- ✚ Putting their things away after school
- ✚ Helping out with chores, like dishes, taking out the garbage, tidying the room
- ✚ Getting up and ready for school
- ✚ Heading off to bed when asked
- ✚ Getting off the computer when asked
- ✚ Turning off the TV when asked
- ✚ Helping their brother or sister with tasks like putting away their toys
- ✚ Being involved in activities like sports, music lessons or cadets
- ✚ Coming to visit their grandparents even when they would rather be with their friends
- ✚ Handling frustration or disappointment without emotional outbursts

Handout # 31

Tracking Praise: (Catching them doing the right thing)

Positive Behaviour You Want to See More of	Your Response to the Behaviour	Your Child's Reaction to Your Response
1.		
2.		

Developing a Closer Connection with our Kids Through “Daily Appreciations”

Find time to give your child undivided positive attention, like a check-in time after school or before bed. Find out how their day has gone. Use active-listening to show you are paying attention and trying to understand.

Offer your child 2 specific comments about things that you noticed today that were positive and that you really appreciate. Be specific and sincere.

Examples:

“Hey pal, thanks for putting all your stuff away after school... I appreciate the way you are helping out around here”

“You are doing a great job of getting your homework done without having to be asked... you came home and just got right at it so that you could be free to watch TV after dinner... great job!”

Group #8:
Communication Skills:
Active Listening & Empathy

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #8



“ Support Our Kids to Learn How to Think Not What to Think: Responding to emotional behaviour with listening, empathy and problem solving”

Agenda Group 8:

Housekeeping

Review: Last week main points and home assignments

Theme: Modeling effective communication skills and using empathy to encourage our kids to manage their emotional experiences rather than acting out

Break

Exercise: Responding to emotional behaviour

Discussion: Offering support to our kids when they are upset

Assignments: Active listening, empathy and problem solving

Feedback Forms

Review: Main points from last week

- Praise as a behaviour modifier
- Getting more cooperation through positive attention
- Pay attention to the behaviour you want to see more of

Review: Assignments

Facilitator shares his/her chart on reframing difficult behaviours into the positive and "catching them being good"

Ask for examples of home-assignments - How did it go?

Theme: Applying the positive parenting practices of listening, empathy and collaborative problem solving

- It is in our child's best interest to see us succeed in our other relationships... model success not conflict. Being assertive not aggressive, passive or passive-aggressive.

- Modeling our ability to deal with tension and conflict in a non-violent way creates a sense of security in their lives, boosts their self confidence and sense of competence. Because our kids identify with us they will internalize our success, showing them how to do it encourages them to do it (when we are managing our own emotional reactions well... we can expect them to!)

- We have to have open and honest communication in order to foster and maintain positive relationships. When things are not going in the right direction we have to be able to let others know and support them to change in the direction we desire.

- Communication skills are essential - skills can be learned through practice and self monitoring.

Discussion: When we are approached by somebody (like our child or their mother) who is upset ... How can we best respond in a manner so that the potential for escalating frustration and conflict is reduced? (Facilitator asks participants for their ideas)

Respectful and supportive communication is the key to avoiding an escalation in conflicts, with our kids and with others! Our reactions to others will be effective if we remain calm and listen rather than tell them what to do.

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #8

“Supporting Our Kids to Learn How to Think Not What to Think: Responding to emotional behaviour with listening, empathy and problem solving”

Theme: Responding to emotional behaviour and improving communication through Active Listening, Empathy and Problem Solving

Review Active Listening and Empathy (handout #32)

Active Listening is like a play by play announcer (similar to our skill of providing our kids with undivided child-centered attention when they are playing) offering running commentary about what they are observing

Important to offer eye contact, be sincerely interested

Describe what you hear, check-out with the speaker that you understand their point by describing in your own words what you think they meant and asking them... is that what you trying to say?

Showing that we understand a situation does not mean we agree with the person's behaviour (or even with their point of view)

Identifying the feeling that is behind the experience that the other person describes, indicates that we understand them and shows empathy

When someone believes that they are being heard and understood – it reduces their sense of frustration and they are more likely to be open to further discussion and accepting support

Exercise: Active Listening Practice

Facilitator asks each of the participants to write down 2 examples of problems that they think their child may be dealing with (i.e. getting teased or bullied at school, fighting with a sibling, not getting along with a step-parent, having a tough time doing school work...)

1) parent listens to the problem that their child is having and checks out the information that is being given to them to see if they have it right... don't let the story go too long, break it into manageable pieces ("let me see if I have this right so far... you said that ___ happened to you...Is that right?" if not ask for clarification and try again, if right than "Ok than what happened?"

2) Child using the scenario that you have been given, describe the troubling situation that you are in... make sure that the parent has it right when they ask

Facilitator models - asks for a volunteer who reads a situation and facilitator demonstrates Parent Role ... reflects back, asks for clarification and looks for opportunities to identify and validate feelings. Once the child feels understood and supported they may be calm enough to think through what to do about it, through the steps of problem solving (Handout # 33)

Exercise: As a group return to the situations that had just been practiced for listening and understanding...

Facilitator offers to practice walking through the problem solving steps as the parent.

Ask for a volunteer from the group to try another situation as the parent supporting

problem solving.

Discussion: How did it go ... any problems or surprises?

- When conflicts arise, we can decrease the intensity that the other person feels by showing them that we are listening. This is especially true if they really believe that we not only understand what happened but especially if we can show them that we understand how they felt... when we respond to others who are upset, with empathy and support, their emotional intensity is deflated rather than inflated and they may be ready to think through what they can do about it.

Discussion: Active listening shows we care enough to pay attention... Empathy shows we understand and supports them through validation - our investment in the importance of our relationship to that person is clear and this investment will pay us back. Problem solving encourages kids to make a plan and follow-through with what to do.

It is much harder to remain calm and provide a stabilizing supportive response to others when they are really upset. Being with someone who is emotionally intense can trigger off our own emotional reactions.

Does anyone have a recent situation that they can share when someone was upset and things got worse ... describe what happened... what did they say and what did you do? Ask them to get up and be that other person... facilitator tries to reflect back what happened (active listening) and identify the feeling (empathy and validation)

Questions, comments, observations...

Break

Video: Show segment Teen Triple P on "Handling Emotional Behaviour"

Handout:

Routine for dealing with emotional behaviour (Teen Triple P)

- Facilitator reviews routine
- Facilitators model routine (Situation: teen comes in and throws back pack and gets upset about something that happened at school)
 - model first what not to do... raise voice and get mad at behaviour
 - second time through, reflect back and clarify what happened, identify the feeling, if calm offer support to problem solve, if too upset ask them to calm down else where and return when they want help

Exercise: Participants are given scenarios where they have to respond to upset kids. Practice first time when child is not calm enough to talk it out and second time when they are.

Discussion: How did it go? How can you see yourself using this skill with others besides your kids (moms)?

Home Assignment

- Continue to offer undivided positive attention, child centered activities and praise to your child
- Try to look for opportunities to use active listening, empathy and support for problem solving with your child (or others) and observe the response that you get back when you use these skills

Session #8: Feedback Form

Practice: Responding to Emotional Situations

1. Your 13 yr old son has just walked in the door from school. Slams the door and yells as they are going down the hall. "I hate school... I am not going back there ever again."

(child – You (13 yr old boy) were on the school bus joking around and dancing to the tunes on your i-pod and a couple of older boys grabbed your i-pod and would not give it back. They teased and called you a wimp when you complained and through it out the window at the bus stop where you get out. The i-pod is cracked and you felt so upset you hit the bus with a stick from the ground. The driver got out and yelled at you and said he would be grounding you from the bus for a week)

2. Your 14 yr old daughter could be heard yelling on the phone. She slams it down and screams "Oh that witch... I hate my life! It sucks"

(child – You (14 yr old girl) just got a call from a friend from school who told you that everyone is talking about you and a boy named Jake ... apparently a girl from school who likes him and found out you spent time with him on the weekend has spread rumours about you going all the way sexually with him because you are a slut. You yelled at your friend because no one has stood up for you against this rumour.)

3. You are in the kitchen and can hear your two kids fighting in the TV room. You hear your 11 yr old son yell at your 9 yr old son " I'm going to kill you, you little jerk ... you are such an ass" The 9 yr old runs from the TV room to his room yelling "Dad he just kicked me!" as you step between him and his brother.

(child – You (11 yr old boy) just found out that your little brother (age 9) took your game boy last night from your room and lost it at school today. He is always taking your things and you keep asking your parents to do something about it but he doesn't stop. You have had it and kicked him as he ran away)

Handout # 32:

Responding to emotional behaviour

When our kids are upset, we can support them to be calm and manage their problem by; turning our attention to them, remaining calm ourselves and acting in a confident and reassuring manner. Kids need to know that we understand and can help them. By providing them with Active Listening, Empathy and Collaborative Problem Solving they will learn how to manage their emotions and handle their problems productively.

Active Listening:

- Turn your undivided attention calmly towards your child
- Give them eye contact and listen to what they are trying to say
- As they are expressing their emotions, find a space to reflect back to them what you believe they are trying to say... clarify what happened
- Be specific about the details they described, like a play by play announcer

Example: "OK... let me make sure that I understand what happened... you were in the living room with your brother and you were trying to finish your video game and your brother took over the controls... is that right?"

Empathy:

- Look for opportunities to validate their feelings and show them that you understand
- Helping them to identify their feelings and emotions will enhance their ability to understand how their thoughts and feelings affect their own behaviour

Example: "You felt really frustrated because you wanted to finish the game yourself and then you got really mad... I can understand how you felt ... I would feel upset too"

Group # 9:
Empathy, Problem Solving & Non-Violent Communication:
Encouraging our kids to learn how to think, not what to think

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #9



**“Kids need our support to learn
How to Think... not ... What to Think”**

Agenda Group 9:

Housekeeping

Review: Main points from last week and home assignments

Theme: Supporting our kids to develop problem solving skills

Discussion: Supporting our kids to learn to think for themselves

Break

Discussion: Dr. Ross Green, Collaborative Problem Solving

Exercise: Using the 5 step problem solving model

Home Assignments: Supporting problem solving

Group Feedback Form

Review: Main points from last week

- Responding with Active Listening and Empathy to emotional behaviour will encourage a more positive relationship and support our kids to be more receptive to further communication
- These skills will improve our relationships with others and reduce the tendency towards escalating conflicts

Review: Assignments

Theme: Helping our kids to develop their problem solving skills: How to think not what to think

Discussion: When someone is upset, we have many choices on how to respond, but the manner in which we do it, will influence the way things go... We have the opportunity to reassure and support them to work through their problem, to increase their self-esteem by feeling more confident and competent and to use and develop their skills in coping with frustration and solving their own problems.

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #9

“Our Kids Need Our Support to Learn How to Think... Not What to Think”

In the previous group we focused on supporting others by staying calm, listening and offering empathy. Empathy is effective when the other person (and we are focusing on supporting our kids) feel that we understand not just what happened but how they are feeling about it.

- The ability to express our own feelings and share them with others is essential in the development and maintenance of our most meaningful relationships. Way back in group #4 we spent time looking at ways to manage our own frustration better including expressing our feelings through words rather than actions. Here is the same hand-out (Becoming the Kind Father p.56, 57) again for Naming Feelings: The Words, and we can use this list as a reference tonight in our effort to develop our skills in supporting our kids to move towards problem solving.

Encouraging problem solving

- Review responding to emotional behaviour

- When our child is ready to talk about what they can do about their problem, we want to offer our support for them to learn “how to think not what to think”... we don't want to answer their problems for them, by telling them what to do, or rescuing them from every uncomfortable situation... we want to be there, to join them in deciding for themselves what they should do

Hand out:

Five-step Problem Solving

Review the steps together

- 1) What exactly is the problem?
- 2) What are all the possible things that a person could do about that problem? Brainstorm, be creative, be open, all ideas are accepted (none are rejected), have fun with it.
- 3) Review the possible solutions and make a pros and cons list of the potential outcomes, eliminating options with high risk for complications, conflicts, or uncertainty
- 4) Select the most appealing solution and create an action plan, listing the steps needed for success
- 5) Follow-through with the plan, monitor and review (If someone was supporting you to make this decision, set a time to meet together to review what happened and whether further problem solving is needed)

Before we get to the point of rehearsing this skill lets take a look at The Explosive Child video. Dr. Ross Green is a leading professional specialist in helping parents to learn how to support their special needs kids. Many of our kids will have an assortment of conditions and challenges that makes their every day functioning very difficult for them (ADHD, LD, OCD, Anxiety, Emotional regulation difficulties...)

When Dr. Green began his work in encouraging parenting responses to misbehaviour he first developed a system that basically stated... the response you choose should be based on what kind of behaviour was involved ... a system of placing behaviours into one of three baskets.

Basket A = Extreme behaviour that can not be tolerated, including safety concerns and violence

- When basket A occurs – respond by assertively taking control

Basket C = Behaviour which is annoying - but is situational, temporary and is not life threatening

- When Basket C occurs – respond by ignoring, distracting and attending to more acceptable behaviour (attention principle)

Basket B = all other misbehaviour

- When Basket B occurs – respond with collaborative problem solving

Eventually Dr. Green got to the point where he encouraged parents of special needs kids to focus on the Basket B approach whenever they could. (Notice the return of the balance point on the continuum model)

Video: The Explosive Child – collaborative problem solving

Discussion: Feedback and lessons learned from video

Give the kids opportunities to have control over decisions, give them desirable options to choose from

Break

Exercise: In groups of 3 (parent, child, observer)

- Take turns playing each role, by reading one of three situation scenarios where your child comes home upset. Parent first responds with the “routine for responding to emotional behaviour” (listens calmly, reflects back to clarify what happened, shows empathy by identifying and validating the emotional feeling and if the child is calm enough and ready offers to help problem solve)

- Use the Five Steps in Problem-solving hand-out to walk through the process of supporting your child to decide what to do. Make sure it is do able and that a clear plan of action has been developed.

Discussion: How did it go? Any concerns or Questions?

Home Assignments

- Continue to offer your child positive child-centered attention and activities, praise and appreciations

- Continue to monitor your own emotional reactions, use relaxation breathing and positive self-reminders. Communicate your needs calmly and use the steps in problem solving to make plans of action for yourself

- Look for opportunities to support your child towards solving problems that they encounter in their lives

Group #9 Feedback Form

Handout # 33: **Problem Solving**

Empathy is not the same as agreement – showing them you understand how they feel doesn't mean that you support what they did. Kids will need our support to think through what they can do about the situation that upset them. They will also need to be calm enough to think and may need a chance to calm down first. We can suggest to them ways to calm down and offer to speak to them once they are calm.

(Calming Routines: take time alone for relaxation breathing, positive self-talk, burn off physical energy by walking or exercise, listen to music ...)

Once your child is calm enough to talk you can support them through collaborative problem solving... "Would you like me to help you to think through what you can do about this?"

Five-Step Problem Solving

1. Define the problem

What is it that is bothering you?

2. Brainstorm possible ideas

Be creative and think of all the possibilities without judging

3. Review the possibilities

Consider the outcomes of each idea (How will you do it? How will it affect others?)

Will it result in your desired outcomes?)

Create a pros and cons list

4. Select the most reasonable and potentially constructive idea

Create a specific action plan

5. Follow through and review

Get together after they attempt their idea and see how it went

Two heads are better than one, especially during the brainstorming step. We should encourage them to come up with their own specific plans and offer to hear how it went. If they have broken a rule (like using violence) they should still have to make up for their mistake with an appropriate consequence.

Example: "I know you were upset, and your brother shouldn't have grabbed the controls but what is the rule in our home about hitting? How will you make up for that mistake?"

Group #10:

Family Structure and Expectations:

Developing household rules, expectations and agreements

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #10



**“Consistency is the key to Cooperation:
It is not the severity of the punishment
but the certainty of a consequence that makes a
difference”**

Agenda Group 10:

Housekeeping

Review main points from last week and assignments

Theme: It is not the severity of consequences that make a difference it is the consistency of our clear expectations and responses that will encourage cooperation

Exercise: Practice giving directions

Break

Discussion: Forming agreements and offering incentives

Home Assignments: Holding family meetings for household guidelines and consequences

Group Feedback Form

Review: Main points from last week and assignments

When someone is upset, we have many choices on how to respond, but the manner in which we do it, will influence the way things go... We have the opportunity to reassure and support them to work through their problem, to increase their self-esteem by feeling more confident and competent and to use and develop their skills in coping with frustration and solving their own problems.

By responding with calm attention, active listening and empathy others will feel supported and more able to deal with their own emotional reactions. Offering support and empathy does not mean we agree with what another person thinks or has done. Our kids can be supported but are still accountable for their own behaviour. Our expectations, rules and consequences should still be applied... but not in the heat of the emotional moment.

When our child is ready to talk about what they can do about their problem, we want to offer our support for them to learn "how to think not what to think"... we don't want to answer their problems for them, by telling them what to do, or rescuing them from every uncomfortable situation... we want to be there, to join them in deciding for themselves what they should do. The 5-step problem solving model can be a good routine to offer our kids support.

Review: Steps in Responding to Emotional Behaviour

- 1. Stop what you are doing and provide calm attention**
- 2. Listen and encourage them to tell their story**
"You are really upset... what's going on?"
- 3. Look for opportunities to checkout what happened by using**

Active Listening = Repeat back what they said (in your own words)

"OK so let's make sure I understand this... So your friend came up to you at school and told you that there is a big rumour going around... is that right?"

4. Look for opportunities to use Empathy = Validate their feelings by identifying and labelling the emotions

"You are really frustrated and angry that your friend has been involved in spreading these rumours... I can understand, I would feel the same way"

5. If your child is still too upset to think through what to do, offer to help them after they take some time to cool off. Make suggestions of things that you know help them calm down.

"I would like to help you think about what to do but you may need some time to calm down so that you can really think clearly... what would help do you want to go for a walk or

just go listen to music for a while? I will finish getting dinner ready and I will be here if you want to talk in about 20 minutes.”

6. When your child is calm use the 5-step problem solving model to help them think through what to do and to come up with their own plan.

7. Make a plan to meet again after your child tries out their plan and remind them they are still responsible for their actions if they have broken any rules.

“Let’s talk again tomorrow after school and you can let me know how it went. I need you to think about the way you reacted today though when you slammed our door and broke the vase. What is the rule in our home when someone breaks something? How will you pay for it?”

Practice Active Listening (again)

Step to responding to emotional behaviour written on white board
Ask the group again for examples of emotional behaviour displayed by their kids in their home.

Facilitators can model or participate with group members as the parent or the child.
Encourage participants to use Active Listening and Empathy and Problem Solving

Theme: Managing Difficult Behaviour

Video: Triple P

Discussion: Anything stand out for you on this video?

What were some of the main points? (use white board to generate discussion and highlight points)

Discussion:

Handout # 35:

Giving Clear and Specific Directions

One of the greatest and most frustrating challenges that parents face is getting the kids to cooperate and get things done when we need them to. Our own manner in the way we make requests, offer directions and respond to them will have a huge impact on their compliance. If we are calm, clear and respectful our chances of cooperation are enhanced.

1. Gain their attention in a calm and respectful manner

"Josh... can you look at me for a minute... thanks"

2. Tell them specifically what needs to be done

"It is time to get ready to go... You have 2 minutes to finish your game and turn the computer off"

3. Avoid listing off too many orders (chain commands)

"Turn off the computer, brush your teeth, comb your hair, put away your clothes, tuck-in your shoes, feed the cat, solve world peace..."

4. Avoid vague requests and questions disguised as directions

"Could you get ready?"

5. Remind them of positive reasons to cooperate

"If you get off the computer in 2 minutes, you can get back on when we get home and I will give you an extra 15 minutes on it tonight ... but 2 minutes is the limit if you want to use the computer again today"

6. Remember: offer specific & clear praise if they follow your request

"Thanks pal, I appreciate that you turned it off right away, that makes it easier for me and I have no problem with letting you back on tonight!"

Exercise: Practicing Giving Directions

Provide a list of situations for parents to address their kids and give them directions... offer feedback to participants, especially praising those who are calm, specific, clear, and offer incentives and praise

Child is still up watching the TV when they need to get ready for bed

Child is leaving their dirty dishes in their room

Child is walking through the house with shoes on

Child is teasing their brother

Child is bouncing their basketball in the house

Child is grabbing the cat by the tail

Break

Discussion:

We have explored how investing our time and positive attention with our kids will encourage them to feel good about themselves and develop desirable behaviours. We have also explored how the manner in which we react to our kids when they misbehave will have a huge impact on their immediate responses and on their developing personalities. If we try to control our kids with emotional reactions or threats of physical harm, the consequences can be quite negative. Not only will they not feel good about themselves, they can develop emotional problems related to fear,

revenge, or poor self-esteem. We can make our kids comply out of fear of our threats, but the long term costs are significant. Often kids learn to comply with the aggressive parent and can develop habits of defiance, deviancy, and disrespect when that adult is not around. When we use threats, emotional reactivity or aggression to make our kids comply, it also gives them permission to behave the same way. It may not happen in our home but they can develop significant behavioural problems in the community.

Theme: Clear and Consistent Household Rules and Consequences

Discussion: Quite often when counsellors are asked to assist a family with a child who has behavioural problems, they will begin by exploring what the rules are and what happens when expectations are followed or not. It is surprising how uncertain, vague and inconsistent the responses to those questions can be.

One of the ways to avoid the escalation of emotional conflicts in families is to ensure that household rules and consequences are clear, specific and consistently applied. Young children in particular will benefit from living in a home that provides the security of consistent and predictable routines. It is the predictability of parental responses that will develop compliance in kids! Parents who do not agree on expectations and consequences will provide opportunities for kids to split their parents support and defy authority. Parenting partners need to discuss their expectations and ensure they are on the same page or face the risk of conditioning their kids towards defiance and manipulation. It is more important to well being of your child to compromise and agree on your parenting approach than to insist on your own style.

It is a worth while exercise for families to sit down together and have a meeting to discuss and clarify rules, expectations and consequences. It is important to involve the kids in this discussion rather than telling them what the rules are and what will happen to them, especially if we threaten punishment. We will gain more cooperation and investment from the kids when they feel they have genuine ad valued input and when cooperation is emphasized as respected responsibility.

Handout # 35: **Household Guidelines and Consequences**

Exercise: Use the Household Guidelines handout to work through a couple of examples of getting the family to identify and write down specific rules and consequences. Stress the importance of emphasizing the positive consequences of cooperation, both tangible rewards as well as social rewards such as family members feeling safe, parents feeling they can trust kids, parents feeling less stress etc.

Review how the form is used, ask for examples of desired behaviours and ensure they are expressed in a positive way (not “no hitting” but “keep your hands and feet to yourself when upset”)

Describe how to use the form in a family meeting, encouraging the kids to be involved in describing the rules and being specific about the positive reasons to cooperate as well as what to expect when they do not. Remember to list not just the actions that parents may take but also the impact that child behavioural choices have on the family climate (less stress, mom and dad will appreciate it and be more available for fun...)

Humans learn from success (a rat in a maze... treats vs. shocks)

Important to ensure that the expectations that are described are consistently followed by the identified pos. and neg. consequences (reinforcements). We will be moving on to exploring the use of rewards and consequences more in our next groups but we will look at one example tonight of setting up a program in your home to address ongoing misbehaviours.

Discussion: One of the primary advantages of having a well defined and written out set of guidelines, with accompanying consequences, is that it can serve to mitigate conflicts. When we become upset in response to our kids misbehaviours, it often is no longer about the behaviour but about our reaction to it. Kids will focus on the emotion of the message rather than their responsibility for breaking rules. By having a list, we can remain more objective and refer to it more calmly and remind our kids of the consequences that they need to follow in order to make amends. We want to avoid becoming upset at our kids. We want to model for them managing our emotions, but kids will test the limits and often develop unfortunate habits that need to be altered. The most effective way to encourage change in our kids, is by reinforcing them for doing the right thing. Catch them doing it right and acknowledge and reinforce that behaviour. This will continue to promote positive relationships, boost their self-concept (confidence) and guide them in the right direction for social success (competence).

In our next groups we will focus closer on the use of logical and natural consequences, but it is worth looking at how this exercise of identifying the clear rules and consequences can be used in a systematic plan to encourage kids to cooperate better. When we have identified the positive consequences for cooperation and made them explicit, (and we do want to stay focused on the positive reasons for cooperation) we can use a monitoring and rewarding system to ensure that the kids receive consistent reminders and reinforcements for their positive efforts.

Handout # 36: **Daily incentive chart**

Exercise: In small groups (3 or 4) work together, to take the behaviours identified on the “Family Guidelines”, and identify at least 3 positive behaviours for daily behavioural goals incentive chart. One of the most important aspects of a reward program is in selecting effective and reasonable rewards. Work with the group to discuss the variety of rewards that you may be able to offer, but remember that enlisting the kids themselves to agree on the rewards will make the program more effective. The chart is meant to be user friendly and easy to apply, as behaviour included should be observable and either occur or not each day and not be vague. ie: Ready and out the door by 8:15 for school (not 8:16)

Discussion: Exercise feedback

Discussion: Why are charts and reinforcement systems effective?
Generate the sharing of ideas and track on the white board

By having a clearly defined set of rules and consequences we can remind kids what will happen and follow through. This will support consistency and predictability but also will reduce the pattern of escalating emotional conflicts when kids misbehave. Once we remind them then it is their choice to cooperate or accept the consequence. We do not have to rely on emotional appeals, threats and expressions of exasperation that only fuel our kids to be emotionally reactive back to us. We want to avoid our interactions becoming emotionally charged as kids will not focus on their misbehaviour but will focus on the emotional behaviour of the parent, often using this to justify their defiance. “My step dad is such a jerk he is always on my back and yells at me no matter what I do!”

The concept, of forming an agreement to provide reasons for cooperation is not complicated and should not make our homes into some kind of behavioural management program. The key point is that this is a format to remind us to offer them clear expectations and a reward for cooperating and not an opportunity to catch them doing it wrong and consequence them.

There may be times when we will want to help our kids fulfill their part of the bargain by making a clear list of steps to take (completes morning routine) as some kids with challenges may need that help. But as our kids mature and become teenagers we want to reinforce their ability to come to us and form agreements or contracts. That is very much an adult life skill to negotiate together in our relationships for mutual benefit.

An important concept in negotiating that we can encourage in our kids is for them to approach the other party when they want something with the question “What can I do for you so that you will provide me with what I want”, “How can I make it worth while for you?”, rather than a conflict based approach “If you don’t give me what I want then I won’t do what you want”.

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #10

“Consistency is the Key to Cooperation: It is not the severity of the punishment but the certainty of a consequence that makes a difference”

When we hope to encourage our kids to cooperate with expectations, the most important tool we can use is to have clearly understood expectations and consistent consequences. When household rules and expectations are clearly and simply expressed, and the reasons for following them consistently reinforced, then our kids are more likely to cooperate. The important point is to communicate well and follow-through consistently.

Home Assignments:

Continue to spend time with your kids in child centered activities, offering them praise, attention, empathy and support to solve their own problems.

If you have your kids staying with you in your home, take the time to speak with them about your household expectations and reasons for cooperating. Use the Household Guidelines to identify and list the positive and negative consequences (that will be applied) together with your child for following expectations.

Choose a couple (2 or 3) behaviours that you would like to see more of (getting out the door on time for school) and write them on the Daily Incentive Chart. Monitor cooperation, provide feedback to your child and follow through with a reward if it is earned.

Group # 10 Feedback Form

Handout #34:

Review: Steps in Responding to Emotional Behaviour

- 1. Stop what you are doing and provide calm attention**
- 2. Listen and encourage them to tell their story**

“You are really upset... what’s going on?”
- 3. Look for opportunities to checkout what happened by using Active Listening = Repeat back what they said (in your own words)**

“OK so let’s make sure I understand this... So your friend came up to you at school and told you that there is a big rumour going around... is that right?”
- 4. Look for opportunities to use Empathy = Validate their feelings by identifying and labelling the emotions**

“You are really frustrated and angry that your friend has been involved in spreading these rumours... I can understand, I would feel the same way”
- 5. If your child is still too upset to think through what to do, offer to help them after they take some time to cool off. Make suggestions of things that you know help them calm down.**

“I would like to help you think about what to do but you may need some time to calm down so that you can really think clearly... what would help do you want to go for a walk or just go listen to music for a while? I will finish getting dinner ready and I will be here if you want to talk in about 20 minutes.”
- 6. When your child is calm use the 5-step problem solving model to help them think through what to do and to come up with their own plan.**
- 7. Make a plan to meet again after your child tries out their plan and remind them they are still responsible for their actions if they have broken any rules.**

“Let’s talk again tomorrow after school and you can let me know how it went. I need you to think about the way you reacted today though when you slammed our door and broke the vase. What is the rule in our home when someone breaks something? How will you pay for it?”

Handout # 35:

Giving Clear and Specific Directions

One of the hardest and most frustrating challenges that parents face is getting the kids to cooperate and get things done when we need them to. Our own manner in the way we make requests, offer directions and respond to them will have a huge impact on their compliance. If we are calm, clear and respectful our chances of cooperation are enhanced.

1. Gain their attention in a calm and respectful manner

"Josh... can you look at me for a minute... thanks"

2. Tell them specifically what needs to be done

"It is time to get ready to go... You have 2 minutes to finish your game and turn the computer off"

3. Avoid listing off too many orders (chain commands)

"Turn off the computer, brush your teeth, comb your hair, put away your clothes, tuck-in your shoes, feed the cat, solve world peace..."

4. Avoid vague requests and questions disguised as directions

"Could you get ready?"

5. Remind them of positive reasons to cooperate

"If you get off the computer in 2 minutes, you can get back on when we get home and I will give you an extra 15 minutes on it tonight ... but 2 minutes is the limit if you want to use the computer again today"

6. Remember: offer specific & clear praise if they follow your request

"Thanks pal, I appreciate that you turned it off right away, that makes it easier for me and I have no problem with letting you back on tonight!"

Handout #36:

Constructing Family Guidelines:
Household Expectations and Consequences

<u>Expectation</u> Specific behaviour we really want to see	<u>Positive Consequence</u> What good things will happen when this behaviour occurs	<u>Negative Consequence</u> What will happen when this behaviour does not occur

Handout # 37:
Daily Incentive Chart

Daily Goal	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun

Daily Reward

(ie: 4 out of 4 = extra 15 minutes up, or , special treat in lunch bag etc.)

=

Weekly Reward

(ie: 22 out of 28 = special video and pizza night, or , each point = 35 cents towards weekly allowance etc.)

=

Home Assignments:

Continue to spend time with your kids in child centered activities, offering them praise, attention, empathy and support to solve their own problems.

If you have your kids staying with you in your home, take the time to speak with them about your household expectations and reasons for cooperating. Use the Household Guidelines to identify and list the positive and negative consequences (that will be applied) together with your child for following expectations.

Choose a couple (2 or 3) behaviours that you would like to see more of (getting out the door on time for school) and write them on the Daily Incentive Chart. Monitor cooperation, provide feedback to your child and follow through with a reward if it is earned.

Group#11:

Avoiding Parent Traps and Escalating Conflicts:

Providing clear expectations and warnings, while avoiding the escalation trap through preventative interventions for misbehaviour

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #11



“Kids Respond Best to Clear Reminders That Offer Them Specific Positive Reasons to Cooperate”

Agenda Group 11:

Housekeeping

Review main points from last week and Home Assignments

Theme: Ignoring, Distracting and Redirecting. Directed discussion. Using Grandma's Rule (The 'If Then ...' Formula)

Discussion: Intervention approaches for significant behavioural problems (ADHD, Conduct Disorder, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder)

Exercise: Practicing the "When ____ then ____" formula

Break:

Discussion: Preventative approaches, ignoring, distracting and humour

Home Assignments: Using the "When __then __" tracking form

Group Feedback Form

Review: Main points from last week

- Expectations need to be very clear and our responses to misbehaviour need to be consistent
- It is the consistency not the severity that makes a difference
- It can be very beneficial to develop a clear set of family guidelines, that specifies the consequences for cooperation and misbehaviour
- Kids will respond best to positive reasons for cooperation
- Providing social reinforcements such as praise, acknowledgement and specific appreciations along with contingent tangible rewards will encourage our kids towards the development of desired habits

Review: Assignments

- Use of family meetings to develop household guidelines: expectations and consequences (emphasize the positive consequences of choices)
- Use of incentive charts

Important Reminders:

Incentive charts are designed to offer positive recognition and encouragement and should never be used as a form of negative consequences or punishment. This can happen when the targeted goals are too hard for kids to achieve or when we use it to catch them failing and rub their face in it. We want our kids to succeed and gain the points (if they have earned them) Success breeds success. If they don't receive the incentives that we have agreed on then they will not buy into the program. Some parents also mess up the process by removing points that have been earned. For example, the kid has a particularly bad day and throws a tantrum, so the parent goes to the chart and deducts 10 points. If they have earned the points by doing the desired behaviour, then we must stick to our agreement.

Behavioural incentive programs work! When we have a significant concern about our kids and the way they are acting... developing a specific agreement to provide contingent tangible rewards, combined with sincere and enthusiastic social reinforcements, will be affective... when they are done the right way.

Optional Discussion (from group 10)

Dr. Gerald Patterson is a leading psychologist in the study of kids with behavioural problems

that become more serious. Dr. Patterson's work at the Oregon Social Learning Center, is based on premise of Social Learning Theory, which identifies the context in which kids live as shaping their personal development. His investigations have confirmed a relationship between the way kids behave and the parenting that they received. He uses the term "Coercive Parenting" to describe the use of threats and emotional reactivity as a way to try to make kids comply. Patterson points out that as these kids learn, through their parents modeling, to respond back with threats and emotional reactivity, a Coercive Cycle emerges that escalates tension and produces conflict. Children who come from coercive parenting homes are more likely to develop Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder and become anti-social.

Handout # 36: **The Veil Weed of the Coercive Cycle**

Video: Patterson: The Development of Conduct Disorder

Discussion: Questions and comments about C.D. and the use of behavioural incentive programs to address significant behavioural problems.

Refer group to front page of handouts

Handout #37: **Positive Parenting Principle #11**

"Kids Respond Best to Clear Reminders That Offer Them Specific Positive Reasons to Cooperate"

When kids are reminded about expectations and are warned of the consequences, than it reconfirms their responsibility for their actions. If they choose to misbehave, in the full knowledge of the consequences for their choice, then the focus remains on their actions and their responsibility to make up for it.

Discussion: We have explored ways in which to invest in a positive relationship with our kids and how to respond when they are upset or misbehave. We have also discussed the importance of catching them doing it right and offering both contingent tangible rewards as well as social reinforcements. Tonight we will continue to refine our strategies on ways to respond when things are not going well at home.

We have looked at the importance of paying attention to desirable behaviour, while being cautious not to pay too much attention or become emotionally reactive to misbehaviour.

When kids are being annoying we can try to use distracting by offering them the option of a more desirable activity. This can be quite subtle, by just pulling out an idea... while it is also effective at times to acknowledge their difficulty and make a suggestion.

" You are having a tough time playing together without arguing... maybe we need to find something else to do... how about getting the bikes out for a ride"

Or even more empathy...

"You are really getting frustrated with each other and maybe even a bit bored... lets find something else to do..."

Humour can be a great approach to distracting the mood or climate that someone else is projecting ... but there are some obvious dangers. If we poke fun at their situation, attempt sarcasm or tease them we may provoke resentment or anger. We have to know our kids and pay close attention to their reactions to our humour...

The parenting strategy of ignoring can be very effective in reducing misbehaviour but to do the skill well it is really an art. There is a big difference between ignoring, which is to not attend to something and to refuse to acknowledge someone... which is really a passive aggressive act. Ignoring a misbehaviour is not the same as ignoring the existence of the person. It is not "ignoring" when we say to someone "If you act like that than I am just going to ignore you" while you stare right at them disapprovingly.

Video: Webster-Stratten: Ignoring

Discussion: Questions and comments about the video and the use of ignoring, distracting, humour

Break

Theme: Grandma's Rule

Sometimes all of the empathy, listening, ignoring, humour and distracting has not worked and our kids continue to make the choice to misbehave. Quite often all it takes is a clear reminder and a warning of what will happen. There is an effective little script that is recommended that is often called the "when ___ then ___" formula or Grandma's Rule. "If you eat your dinner, then you can have some desert"

Handout #36:

The “When ____ Then ____” Formula (Grandma’s Rule)

“When You Have Finished Your Supper, Then You Can Have Your Dessert”

Exercise:

Participants are asked to generate a list of misbehaviours written on the white board. Facilitator demonstrates how to offer a warning using the “When ____ Then ____” script for a couple of examples.

Ask participants to practice in front of the group. Go around the circle and have group members select a misbehaviour from the list and use the “When ____ Then ____” formula to set expectations and offer incentives. Give particular recognition to participants who identify the emotional feelings behind the inappropriate behaviour as they address the situation.

Stress the importance of naming the desired behaviour rather than the misbehaviour. (When you do what is right ... than you get what you want!)

Reminders:

- Never offer a reward before the desired behaviour is received = a bribe!
- We can not offer too much positive attention when good choices are made
- Make sure that the incentives that you offer are realistic for you and meaningful to your child

Calmly reminding kids of the household rules encourages cooperation and provides an objective reference rather than a personal reaction. This should reduce the tendency towards emotional confrontations that can easily escalate.

“You guys are having a hard time getting along without arguing and fighting ... When you are getting along Then you will be able to use the Playstation (TV, Computer..)” ... “You need to find something else to do for the next half hour and if you can get along without arguing and fighting then we will turn the Playstation back on”

Home Assignments:

Continue to invest your time and involvement in positive interactions with your kids

Continue to practice positive self-messages and relaxation routines

Use the When____ Then ____ Self-tracking form to record opportunities to remind kids of expectations and offer them positive reasons to cooperate

Write in your journal your observations of your ability to incorporate positive parenting and relationship enhancing practices into your life. What impact has this had for you on the quality of your life experiences?

Handout #37: **Preventative interventions**

We have looked at the importance of investing in a positive relationship with our kids and avoiding getting drawn into emotional conflicts when they misbehave. Approaching our kids calmly, with support, understanding (empathy), rather than anger and punishment, will be more effective in encouraging their cooperation.

Despite all of our positive investment of time, attention and support... kids will continue to misbehave at times and will need our intervention. Before we move towards providing warnings of negative consequences for continued misbehaviour, there may be some effective **Preventative Approaches** that we can use to get them back on track.

Distracting: When kids are being annoying we can try to use distracting by offering them the option of a more acceptable or desirable activity. This can be quite subtle, by just pulling out an idea... while it is also effective at times to acknowledge their difficulty and make a suggestion.

" You are having a tough time playing together without arguing... maybe we need to find something else to do... how about getting the bikes out for a ride" Or even more empathy... "You are really getting frustrated with each other and maybe even a bit bored... lets find something else to do..."

Humour: The use of humour can be a great approach to distracting the mood or climate that someone else is projecting ... but there are some obvious dangers. If we poke fun at their situation, attempt sarcasm or tease them we may provoke resentment or anger. We have to know our kids and pay close attention to their reactions to our humour...

Ignoring: The parenting strategy of ignoring can be very effective in reducing misbehaviour but to do the skill well, is really an art. There is a big difference between ignoring... which is to not attend to something compared to refuse to acknowledge someone... which is really a passive aggressive act. It is not "ignoring" when we say to someone "If you act like that than I am just going to ignore you" while you stare right at them disapprovingly.

Handout #38: **The "When ____ Then ____" Formula (Grandma's Rule)**

When kids are reminded about expectations and the consequences that will occur, than it reconfirms their responsibility for their actions. If they choose to misbehave, in the full knowledge of the consequences for their choice, than the focus remains on their actions and their responsibility to make up for it.

One of the most effective tools that we can use in being clear and consistent with our kids and encourage them to cooperate is the use of the "when ____ then ____ " formula. This statement clearly articulates for the child what will happen when they make the right choice. It is more effective to remind them of the positive consequences for cooperating rather than threatening a negative consequence.

Grandma's Rule

“When You Have Finished Your Supper, Then You Can Have Your Dessert”

Other Examples:

When you have finished your homework... then the TV goes on.

When you have cleaned up your room ... then you can go outside.

When you can get up and out the door on time for school for one full week... then you can try staying up till 10:00 on school nights.

When you manage your frustration without yelling or swearing for one week... then you can have your friend stay over night

Home Assignments:

- ✚ Continue to invest your time and involvement in positive interactions with your kids
- ✚ Continue to practice positive self-messages and relaxation routines
- ✚ Continue to use listening, empathy, and supportive problem solving when your kids are upset and try to redirect misbehaviour through ignoring, distracting and humour
- ✚ Use the “When___ Then ___” formula to remind kids of expectations and offer them positive reasons to cooperate

Group #12:

Letting the Consequences Do The Teaching:

Natural and logical consequences, time-out and removal of privileges.

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle #12



**When We Become Emotionally Reactive to
Misbehaviour, The Issue Will Become Our Reaction
Rather Than Their Behaviour...
Stay Calm and Let the Consequences Do the Teaching**

Agenda Group 12:

Housekeeping

Review: Main points from last week and Home Assignments

Theme: Effective Use of Consequences

Discussion: Natural and logical consequences

Exercise: Responding to serious misbehaviour

Break:

Discussion: The effective use of quiet time, time-out and loss of privileges

Home Assignments: Guidelines and consequences form

Group Feedback Form

Review: Main points from last week

When our kids are having a tough time and are misbehaving, we can use a variety of strategies to try to influence them including; ignoring what we can, distracting with more desirable activities or humour, as well as other more supportive approaches that we have explored such as listening, empathy and problem solving.

When misbehaviour continues we can remind our kids about the household rules or expectations and provide a positive warning using the “When___ Then___” formula to give them reasons to cooperate.

Developing specific agreements, that offer contingent and tangible rewards for desired behaviours can be an effective way to encourage cooperation.

Review: Home Assignments

How did our efforts go to use “Grandma’s Rule” at home?

Any other comments or questions?

Theme: Children will learn from experiencing the reality of the consequences of their behaviour. They will not learn from our lecturing, emotional reactivity or from being protected from the consequences that should occur.

Discussion: Despite all of our invested efforts, children will naturally test limits and break rules. There are times when we will have to allow our kids to experience the impact of the consequences of their actions. While some consequences will just naturally occur, as parents we often also have to decide on consequences that should be applied when significant misbehaviours occur.

Consequences should be fair and reasonable, have a logical connection with the misbehaviour and should be applied in a non-reactive and neutral manner.

Natural Consequences:

The things that just happen in life as a result of behaviour

- if you don’t wear a rain jacket in the rain... you get wet

- if you don’t put your dirty clothes in the laundry... they won’t get cleaned

- if you keep banging your head against the wall ... you will damage the wall and it will hurt

- if you are mean to your friends... they won’t want to play with you

Facilitator asks for other examples (refer group to handout # 39)

Logical Consequences:

Matching a meaningful response, that has some kind of connection to the misbehaviour

- if you leave your bike out on the road again... then it will be locked up for a week
- if you are fighting with your brother over what show to watch... then the TV will be turned off
- if you spend more time than you are allowed on the computer tonight... then you can't use it tomorrow

It is more effective to describe the desired "positive behaviour than to draw attention to the misbehaviour "If you finish your homework ... then you can watch TV" rather than "If you don't get your homework done... then you can't watch TV"

Why is this positive framing of directions important?

Not always easy to remember to phrase directions so that we specify the desired behaviour rather than the misbehaviour

Examples:

- if you put your bike away properly... then you can continue to use it
- if you are getting along with your brother ... then you can watch TV
- if you get off the computer when you are suppose to... then you can use it tomorrow

Avoiding the parent trap of escalating conflict and tension

It is natural for kids to protest and resist our efforts to get them to alter their behaviours through the use of consequences. They will try to get us back when we exercise our influence over them. Our job will be to remain calm, clear, and specific about what is expected and what will happen as a result of their behavioural choices. Kids will try to draw us in to a personal conflict, as the resulting power struggle will no longer be about their behaviour but will be about our relationship with them. Remaining calm, non-reactive, fair and objective... while ensuring that the consequences do occur is the key to success.

Strategies for Applying Consequences

- Don't react when they announce they don't care what you do... just do it.
- Expect kids to become defiant, upset, reactive and perhaps nasty and abusive towards you when you apply consequences. They will escalate their protests in an effort to get you to back off or give-in. Ignoring what you can in the heat of the moment to avoid escalations will help. We can take the time to debrief and seek further restitutions once things have calmed down.
- Don't get drawn into trying to enforce a consequence when the child is physically resisting. Don't insist on applying consequences in the heat of the battle. If they are blocking you, remind them of additional future consequence and withdraw. Follow-through when things are quiet.
- Only use consequences that are realistic and that you are willing to do. Don't threaten to remove things that you are not willing to do. "You won't be allowed out for the rest of the summer" Say what you mean, mean what you say and do it.
- Make sure that you follow-through when a warning has been offered and kids make the wrong choice. If we do not follow-through than kids will assume that we do not always mean what we say. "Make a believer out of them!".
- Be willing to sit down and debrief conflicts when things are quiet. We should use these chats to support our kids to develop commitment towards improved behaviours as an ally. Continue to use listening and empathy when they are having to miss out on things because of their behaviour. "I know this is hard for you... you were really looking forward to going out with your friends" Offer to join them to problem solve what to do next time so that they don't loose out on things through consequences.

- Provide opportunities for our kids to suggest their own consequences or ways to make restitution. "How do you think that you can make up for what you did?"
- Once a consequence has been applied and is finished, make sure that we return to supportive and positive interactions. Help them to feel that they have made up for their mistakes and are back on track. Avoid prolonging their debt, shame and guilt by using passive aggressive behaviour towards them such as removal of attention or affection.

Positive Parenting Principle #12

When We Become Emotionally Reactive to Misbehaviour the Issue Will Become Our Reaction Rather Than Their Behaviour... Stay Calm and Let the Consequences Do the Teaching

When ugly incidents occur it is best not to talk about it for a while, but look for an opportunity to calmly meet together to address what happened and discuss how to make sure it doesn't occur again. Use the debriefing as an opportunity to form an agreement towards improved behaviour... look for ways to show listening and empathy and perhaps negotiate around expectations if the child is overly frustrated by limits... but ensure that they know that the way they behaved is not acceptable and ensure that the stated consequences are followed-through...

Video: Triple-P Directed discussion

Exercise: In groups of 3 (Parent, Child and Observer)

Observer reads out a misbehaviour scenario which includes a description of a heated confrontation last evening

Parent asks the child to participate in a chat and describes feeling upset about the problem ... asks the child for their thoughts and feelings about what happened... listens, clarifies, offers empathy... reminds them that they still have to have the consequence and asks the child how they can make sure this doesn't happen again.

Break

Discussion:

Consequences serve a valuable need, not just to encourage cooperation with expectations but also to allow our kids an opportunity to make up for their mistakes. Restitution is defined as an act to restore things to the way that they were (relationships). Once a consequence is completed, then we have to work on letting go of the issue and not carrying resentments. When restitution has been made we should not act in a way as to make the other person pay more for their transgression.

The differences between consequences and punishment Consequences should be used to maintain and protect relationships and as a way of making up for errors... not as a means for revenge or getting someone back.

Examples of logical consequences

- Typically fall into two varieties
- Loss of Privileges (examples)
 - Time-out

Using Time-out effectively

- Explain it to the kids
Have a graduated system
- quiet time or cooling-off space
 - secluded spot (room)
 - if refusing to go – significant loss of privileges
- Keep it short and related to their age
Time starts when quiet
Model cooling off ourselves

Video: 1-2-3 Magic

Discussion: Facilitator uses the white board to generate ideas.

What makes Dr, Phalen’s recommended approach effective?

- Clear and simple warning
- Consistent routine – always the same counting
- Avoids the 2 biggest mistakes that parents make
“Talking too much and reacting with too much emotion”

What situations may cause conflicts to escalate with this approach?

- Being ridged and non-empathic
- Over using to control too much
- Moving towards consequences without the investment in relationship enhancing interactions

Handout # 39:

Managing Difficult Behaviours in our Homes

- Review handout
Stress the importance of avoiding threats and consequences

Home Assignments

Continue to find ways to engage with your kids in positive relationship building activities, using play, praise, fun, empathy, listening, problem solving, etc.

Monitor the way you respond to misbehaviour and the methods that you use to set limits and apply consequences.

Use the Guidelines and Consequences handout (group #10) to ensure that you have clearly specified the 5 most important expectations of your home and the positive and negative consequences that will occur. Share this with your child during a quiet and non-confrontational conversation asking them for their ideas, feedback, and concerns. Ask them to help identify the fair and reasonable consequences that will be used during acting-out episodes. Use active listening to clarify what they say and reinforce them with praise for their participation. Including their ideas when possible will reinforce their sense of commitment and cooperation with the plan.

Session #12 Feedback Form

Handout # 39: **Natural and Logical Consequences**

Children will learn from experiencing the reality of the consequences of their behavioural choices. They will not learn from our lecturing, emotional reactivity or from being protected from the consequences that should occur.

Despite all of our invested efforts, children will naturally test limits and break rules. There are times when we will have to allow our kids to experience the impact of the consequences of their actions. While some consequences will just naturally occur, as parents we often also have to decide on consequences that should be applied when significant misbehaviours occur.

Consequences should be fair and reasonable, have a logical connection with the misbehaviour and should be applied in a non-reactive and neutral manner.

Natural Consequences:

The things that just happen in life as a result of behaviour

- if you don't wear a rain jacket in the rain... you get wet
- if you don't put your dirty clothes in the laundry... they won't get cleaned
- if you keep banging your head against the wall ... you will damage the wall and it will hurt
- if you are mean to your friends... they won't want to play with you

Logical Consequences: Matching a meaningful response, that has some kind of connection to the misbehaviour

- if you leave your bike out on the road again... then it will be locked up for a week
- if you are fighting with your brother over what show to watch... then the TV will be turned off
- if you spend more time than you are allowed on the computer tonight... then you can't use it tomorrow

Reminder: It is more effective to describe the desired "positive" behaviour than to draw attention to the misbehaviour "If you finish your homework ... then you can watch TV" Rather than "If you don't get your homework done... then you can't watch TV"

Handout # 40: **Strategies for applying consequences**

- Don't react when they announce they don't care what you do... just do it.
- Expect kids to become defiant, upset, reactive and perhaps even nasty and abusive towards you when you apply consequences. They will escalate their protests in an effort to get you to back off or give-in. Ignoring what you can in the heat of the moment to avoid escalating the conflict, will help. We can take the time to debrief and seek further restitutions once things have calmed down.
- Don't get drawn into trying to enforce a consequence when the child is physically resisting. Don't insist on applying consequences in the heat of the battle. If they are blocking you, remind them of additional future consequence and withdraw. Follow-through when things are quiet.
- Only use consequences that are realistic and that you are willing to do. Don't threaten to remove things that you are not willing to do. "You won't be allowed out for the rest of the summer" Say what you mean, mean what you say and do it.
- Make sure that you follow-through when a warning has been offered and kids make the wrong choice. If we don't follow-through, kids will think that we do not always mean what we say. "Make a believer out of them!".
- Be willing to sit down and debrief conflicts when things are quiet. We should use these chats to support our kids to develop commitment towards improved behaviours as an ally. Continue to use listening and empathy when they are having to miss-out on things because of their behaviour. "I know this is hard for you... you were really looking forward to going out with your friends" Offer to join them to problem solve what to do next time so that they don't lose out on things through consequences.
- Provide opportunities for our kids to suggest their own consequences or ways to make restitution. "How do you think that you can now to make up for what you did?"
- Once a consequence has been applied and is finished, make sure that we return to supportive and positive interactions. Help them to feel that they have made up for their mistakes and are back on track. Avoid prolonging their debt, shame and guilt by using passive aggressive behaviour towards them, such as removal of attention or affection.

Handout # 41:

Consequences should make amends and restore relationships

Consequences serve a valuable need, not just to encourage cooperation with expectations but also to allow our kids an opportunity to make up for their mistakes. Restitution is defined as an act to restore things to the way that they were (relationships). Once a consequence is completed, then we have to work on letting go of the issue and not carrying resentments. When restitution has been made we should not act in a way as to make the other person pay more for their transgression.

Consequences should be used to maintain and protect relationships and as a way of making up for errors... not as a means for revenge or getting someone back.

Examples of applying logical consequences

- Repayment for damages
(Hole in the wall – deduct \$ from allowance till paid for)
- Loss of Privileges
(TV, computer, bike, friends over, being grounded)
- Time-out
(Cooling off in a specific place for a specific period of time)

Using Time-out effectively

- Explain it to the kids
- Offer a warning when appropriate “If you continue to yell then you will have to go to your room”
- Have a graduated system
 - quiet-time or cooling-off space (chair at the table or sit on the stairs)
 - Time Out = secluded spot (room)
 - if refuses TO, significant loss of privileges (no electronics 24 hours)
- Keep it short and related to their age
- Time starts when quiet
- Time finishes when they have
- Model cooling off ourselves by taking breaks when upset. It is important to return to address the problem later so that the message is clear (calming down) and not a way to punish others by walking away.

Group #13:
To be Loving to the Mother is to Be Loving to the Child
Importance of Maintaining a Supportive Relationship

Handout:

Positive Parenting Principle # 13



“Our Ability to Work Supportively With the Mother or Our Kids is Critical to Their Sense of Wellbeing and Healthy Development”

Agenda Group 13:

Housekeeping (forms, phone calls, comfort, missed handouts...)

Review: Main points from last week and Home Assignments

Theme: Maintaining a supportive co-parenting relationship

Discussion: Why are kids so affected by parental conflict?

Exercise: Triple P - Supporting your partner

Break

Discussion: Understanding the forces that act against supportive relationships

Exercise: Personal goal setting for improved co-parenting

Session #13 Feedback Form

Review: Last week we explored the most constructive way to respond to our kids when they persist in misbehaviour. This included ensuring that we have invested in all of the positive preventative approaches that form the foundation of our relationship with our kids and following through on fair and reasonable consequences in a calm and matter of fact manner.

We also explored how to set expectations by using the "If ... then ..." formula and discussed how offering positive reasons for desired behaviours, is effective.

Refer to handout "Responding to Emotional Behaviour" to review the sequence of recommended steps. Discuss the use of separating at times of conflict, either by taking our own break or asking kids for a quiet time space. Discuss age appropriate use of time-out, avoiding physical force, and using a graduated sequence for quiet time, time-out and removal of privileges.

Are there any observations or comments about the assignment for the week, going over the 5 most important household rules and consequences with our kids? How did that go?

Theme: Investing in a positive working relationship with the mother of our kids is essential for supporting their healthy development.

Discussion:

We have now completed a brief overview of the various positive parenting strategies from our parenting pyramid... remembering to focus on the foundation of positive relationships and avoiding the use of confronting, controlling and delivering consequences as much as we can.

This week we will be taking a step back as we meet for our final few sessions, to recognize that as parents we have been human and have made mistakes. The important point now is to ensure that we continue our efforts to actively demonstrate to our kids that we care for them and that we also expect the best from them as well. We want to both nurture and guide them, and we will do our best to live the kind of life for them that we would want them to have. We know that the way that we behave will set an example and will give them permission to do the same.

There is not a lot that we can do about our own past behaviours that we may regret. Apologies are not enough, especially if they include excuses or blaming others, or if we make the same mistake again. If we take responsibility for our actions and the times that we have been over reactive, clearly state we were wrong and demonstrate our ability to avoid the use of negativity and aggression in our daily lives, than our kids will learn to believe and respect us.

Positive Parenting Principle # 12

Our ability to work supportively and positively with the mother of our kids is critical to their sense of wellbeing and healthy development

It is not always easy to avoid tension and conflicts in our relationships. Specific stressors in our lives, such as financial strain or pressure from work, can be intense and interact with our own temperament to trigger our negative reactions. The manner in which we deal with these situations will have a profound impact on the development of our kids. We have a responsibility to show our kids a healthy way we to cope and deal with frustration, particularly within our relationship to their mother.

Why are kids so affected by the quality of the relationship between their parents?

- The personal identity of younger children is not separated from that of their parents. Messages of rejection, criticism and negativity towards their mom, will be internalized and experienced as rejection, criticism and negativity towards themselves.

- Setting an example of blaming or criticising their mother enables them to do the same thing.

- Undermining the respect that they hold for their mom can empower them to challenge her authority and threatens her ability to provide for their needs.

- When the mother of our kids feels upset, frustrated, vulnerable, unappreciated and weak, then her ability to meet the needs of our kids is threatened.

If we want our kids to develop healthy self-esteem, with a sense of confidence and competence, we need to support their mom's ability to meet their needs. If our parenting relationship breaks down or if we have legitimate significant concerns for our kid's mother's ability to meet their needs, we need to seek professional help. The best thing that we can do for our kids is to help their mothers to be confident and competent in their own lives. Acting to undermine the confidence and competence of our co-parent partner has a direct negative impact on the health of our kids.

To be the best dads that we can be for our kids, we have to live a life that actively demonstrates our support for their mom. Co-parenting is a partnership that requires dedication, commitment and effort, even if we are no longer a couple. Many of the positive parenting strategies that we have been exploring in supporting our relationship with our kids can be used in our co-parenting relationships to encourage the most healthy experiences for our kids. Just like the Parenting Pyramid is a blue print for success with our kids, it also offers a reference for behaviours that invest in a foundation of success in all of our relationships.

Exercise: Facilitator uses the white board to explore with the group healthy vs. unhealthy ways to co-parent. Ask the group what specific behaviours demonstrate respect and support, especially in times of conflict, disagreement and tension. Look for opportunities to demonstrate or have group members participate in rehearsing:

Active Listening (Being Sincere, Genuine and Real) Empathy, Praise, Appreciation, Play, Problem Solving, Responding to Emotional Behaviour, Using non-violent Communication script, Forming Agreements, Offering Incentives etc...

Also, dads need to be proactive in intervening with the kids when they are disrespecting their mothers and do so without condemnation.

Ask for real examples of conflicts that have occurred and brainstorm approaches towards supportive and respectful interactions.

What personal strategies are we using to ensure that conflicts do not escalate?

- What are our self-messages
- How can we stay calm and positive?
- Caution against withdrawing ourselves or taking a passive position as if it is using the strategies of ignoring or time-out for calming, when it is really a passive-aggressive act against the mom.

Break

Video: Triple P: Supporting Your Partner

While video is on facilitators provide handouts Supporting Your Partner “Key Steps” and “Managing Conflicts”.

During video, facilitators write key points on white board and may stop the video for discussions on main points.

Discussion: Comments on video content?

What are the conflicts that occur with your partner?

What are the personal challenges that hold us back from the path for success in our relationships?

What are our personal goals for developing more successful co-parenting relationships?

Exercise: As a group, use the handout “Personal Success Plan” to identify goals for change and identify specific actions that participants will take to invest in an improved co-parenting relationship.

Home Assignment

Continue to offer our kids positive attention, nurturing, praise, reinforcing the behaviours we want to see more of and setting limits on behaviours we don't want to see.

Implement the Personal Success Plan developed in the group to invest in maintaining or improving our co-parenting relationship.

Handout # 42: **Maintaining a Supportive Co-parenting Relationship**

As parents we have been human and have made mistakes. The important point now is to ensure that we continue our efforts to actively demonstrate to our kids that we care for them and that we also expect the best from them as well. We want to both nurture and guide them, and we will do our best to live the kind of life for them that we would want them to have. We know that the way that we behave will set an example and will give them permission to do the same.

There isn't a lot that we can do about our own past behaviours that we may regret. Apologies are not enough, especially if they include excuses or blaming others, or if we make the same mistake again. However, if we take responsibility for our actions and the times that we have been over reactive, clearly state we were wrong and demonstrate our ability to avoid the use of negativity and aggression in our daily lives, than our kids will learn to believe and respect us.

It is not always easy to avoid tension and conflicts in our relationships. Specific stressors in our lives, such as financial strain or pressure from work, can be intense and interact with our own temperament to trigger our negative reactions. The manner in which we deal with these situations has a profound impact on the emotional wellbeing of our kids. We have a responsibility to show our kids a healthy way we to cope and deal with frustration, particularly within our relationship to their mother.

If we want our kids to develop healthy self-esteem, with a sense of confidence and competence, we need to support their mom's ability to meet their needs. If our parenting relationship breaks down or if we have legitimate significant concerns for our kid's mother's ability to meet their needs, we need to seek professional help. The best thing that we can do for our kids is to help their mothers to be confident and competent in their own lives. Acting to undermine the confidence and competence of our co-parent partner has a direct negative impact on the health of our kids.

To be the best dads that we can be we have to live a life that actively demonstrates our support for their mom. Co-parenting is a partnership that requires dedication, commitment and effort, even if we are no longer a couple. Many of the positive parenting strategies that we have been exploring in supporting our relationship with our kids can be used in our co-parenting relationships. Just like the Parenting Pyramid is a blue print for success with our kids, it also offers a reference for behaviours that invest in a foundation of success in all of our relationships.

Handout # 43:

What is a healthy relationship?

What is a healthy relationship?

It can be with a friend, a partner, a brother or sister or a son or daughter. Strong and growth oriented relationships are built on the following:

Respect

Is there a mutual respect for each other?

Appreciation

Do you feel special?
Does this person put you first?

Caring

Does this person really care about my feeling?

Communication

Can I express my thoughts and ideas and feel good?
Is it easy for both people to share and truly listen?

Flexibility

Are both individuals open to learning and growing?
Does it allow for differences of opinion?

Trust

Do both people feel they can trust each other?
How do I feel about this person's approach to life and me?
Do we respect each other's privacy considerations?

Giving

Do I feel the desire to do good things for this person?
Does this person give to the relationship in a genuine way?

Commitment

Am I being my best for this person?
It does not put unrealistic demands on each other?

Control

It allows for the equal sharing of power and control, neither one dominates the relationship?

Accepting

Can I be myself?
Do I feel any pressure to do things that I do not want to?
Do we work through our differences & feel good about forgiving?

Handout #44: **Managing co-parent conflicts**

Common Parenting Disagreements

- Financial stress
- Sharing of child care and household workloads
- Agreeing on Household Rules
- Type of discipline
- Who should discipline the children
- One parent soft “permissive” one parent tough “authoritarian”
- What is acceptable or naughty behaviour
- Parents being inconsistent
- Parents undermining each other
- Parents drawing the kids in to be their ally against the other parent
- Parents not actively backing each other up
- Children splitting the parents
- Children not letting the parents be alone
- Fighting in front of the children

Working as a Team

- Invest in your relationship
- Open and respectful communication
- Develop a routine to debrief your parenting experience
- Avoid discussions when upset, especially in front of the kids
- Avoid talking to your child about frustrations in your parenting relationship
- Actively step-up and support your partner’s child management problems

Handout # 45:

Supporting Your Co-Parent Partner: Key Steps

- When discussing differences, focus on your own behaviour
- Use the “Non-violent communication script”
When _____ happened, I felt _____, I would like _____
- Offer the kind words and actions that once came easily early in your relationship
- Work as a team by sharing your roles as parents
- If you are living together, talk to each other every day about the children and your family life
- If you are separated find a means of communication that focuses on the behaviours and needs of your child
- Praise and encourage each other when things are going well
- Support your partner when they are dealing with misbehaviour
- Plan to discuss your differences and problems privately, when you are likely to be calm and your children will not interrupt
- Use active-listening and empathy to demonstrate to your partner that you understand what they are saying and how they feel
- Follow the problem solving steps to form plans and agreements
- Seek professional advice if you fight in front of the children a lot or if you are not happy in your relationship

Group #14:

Taking Care of Ourselves:

Putting it all together - positive but realistic expectations of our kids and ourselves, personal support, and action plans for personal goal setting

Positive Parenting Principle # 14



“We need to develop and maintain a personal support network in order to take care of ourselves and Be The Best Dads That We Can For Our Kids”

Parenting Group Facilitator Comment:

“I really see the benefit of this as a way to change unhealthy family dynamics.”

Agenda Group 14:

Housekeeping: Last Group!

Review: Supporting your co-parent partner

Theme: We need to have a personal support network in order to meet our goals in providing our kids the best parenting that we can

Discussion: Reviewing course content on becoming the best dads we can be

Exercise: Identifying personal obstacles and setting goals

Break

Discussion: Feedback on group experience

Exercise: Participant feedback form

Session #14 Feedback Form

Review:

We have spent the last few weeks reviewing the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with our kids, how to respond to them when things are not going well and the importance of setting an example for managing our own frustration without aggression or violence.

We also explored the importance of letting go of resentments towards others as this frees us to be more positive and responsive to our kids and more receptive to other positive relationships. Maintaining a positive working relationship with the mother of our kids is critical in supporting their wellbeing.

Any thoughts or experiences participants want to share?

Does anyone want to share about their goal setting for the past week from their "Personal Success Plan" to improve the relationship with their co-parent partner?

Discussion:

As this is our last chance to meet together, we thought we should have a brief review of the content of our last 13 sessions.

Facilitator hands out the curriculum synopsis and positive parenting principle for each session. Also refers to **Handout # 46** on Balanced and Positive Parenting and the Positive Parenting Pyramid. Briefly review the key points for each group, allowing for comments and questions.

Theme: We need to have a personal support network in order to meet our goals in providing our kids the best parenting that we can

Discussion:

This is our last opportunity to meet and discuss our role as dads and our goal of being the best that we can be for our kids. We have covered a lot of material in this group and clearly our job of parenting can be rewarding but is not easy. It often takes a lot of personal investment, effort and sometimes sacrifice to be the best dad that we can be. This job is not something that we can do on our own... we need the support of caring, trustworthy and healthy individuals in our lives to support us.

Positive Parenting Principle #14

We Need a Personal Support Network in Order to Take Care of Ourselves and Provide for Our Kids Needs

As men we are not as good as the women in accepting personal support and developing supportive relationships. But as a parent we need to have a support network around us of individuals that we can express our concerns to and to gain personal support from in order to do our job. This is often members of our extended family, close friends, neighbours or even professional helpers.

Facilitator asks the participants to go around the circle to describe...

Who do we have in our lives today to turn to for support? Who are the people that we can trust, that care for us and will offer us the listening, empathy, advice and encouragement that we need?

If we can't identify a short list of people we are connected with... than what is our plan to develop a support network in our lives?

Brainstorm in the group for each other.

Handout # 47:

Exercise

Facilitators ask participants to refer to handout about the forces in their life that influence their parenting. Exercise asks them to identify areas that need support, actions they plan to take, and an individual they plan to speak to about this form.

Group # 14 Optional Exercise:

The 10,000 dollar pyramid game!

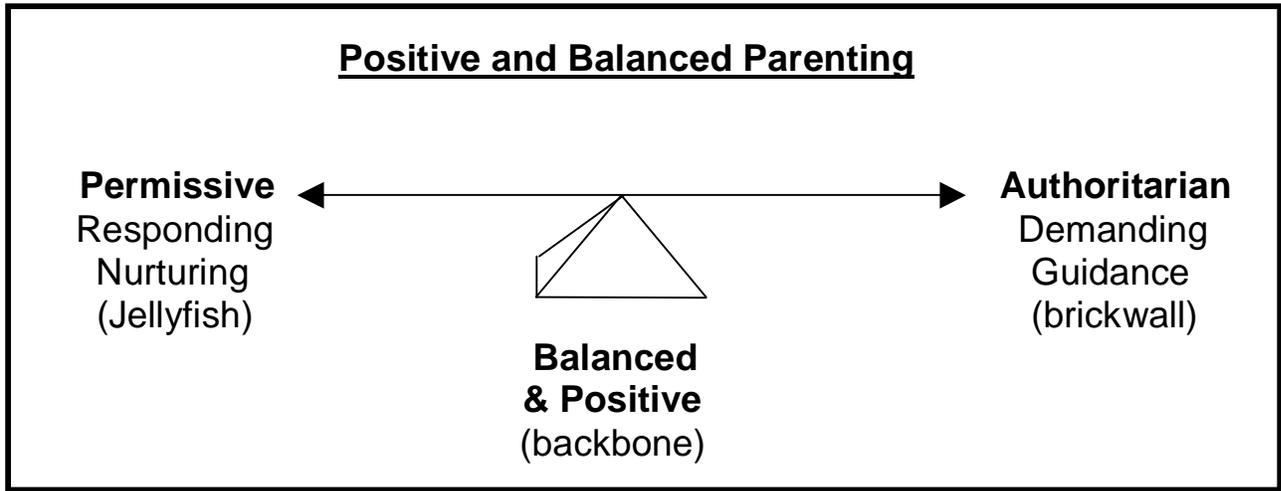
Participants will be divided into two teams
The Webster-Stratten Pyramid of positive parenting behaviours is posted on the wall.
Participants will send two volunteers at a time up to choose a scenario of a parent confronted by an upset and acting-out child. Participants demonstrate an interaction of the parent responding to their child and using the strategies from the parenting program.
Points will be awarded by the facilitators based on parenting strategies used in the demonstration: 50 for bottom level of pyramid, 40 for second level up, 30 for third level and 20 for top level approach (consequences).
Teams will take turns demonstrating skills and each team must send up different participants until everyone has had a turn.

Break – Celebration (cake)

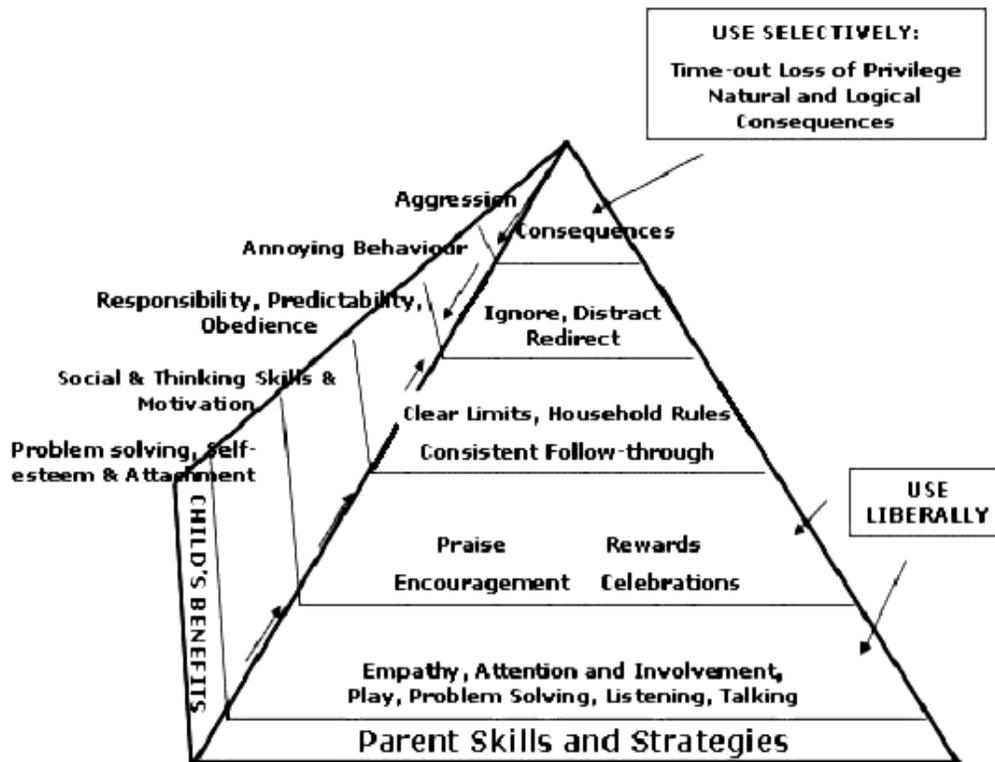
Program Evaluation

Handout group # 14 feedback forms
Handout participants survey forms

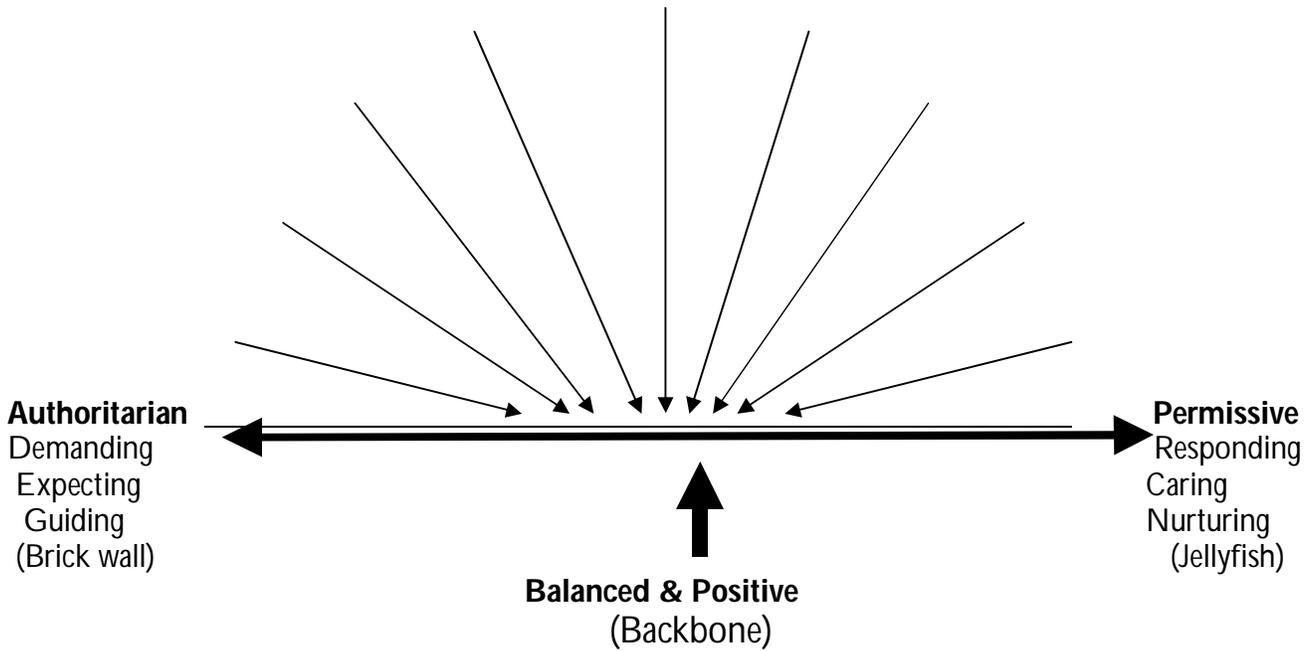
Handouts for Session # 14:
Handout # 46



Incredible Years Parenting Pyramid
 (Webster-Stratten – The Incredible Years)



Handout #47:
Forces Influencing Parenting



There are many influences that affect our ability to provide our kids with balanced, involved and positive parenting. Issues from our past (including the way that we were parented ourselves), stress in our personal relationships, financial stress, work situations, conflict with the mother of our children, characteristics of our kids, personal issues with substance use, our own emotional and physical health, and a lack of personal support... can all have profound influences on our parenting relationship with our kids.

Consider the forces that influence your parenting relationship and use the following goal setting form to **1) identify areas of your parenting life that need support 2) actions you intend to take towards change and 3) identify an individual from your personal support system that you will share this goal setting form with along with an agreement to review your plan of action.**

Forces that act against my parenting	Actions to counter this influence

Support person _____ Date _____

Review Date _____

RESOURCE REFERENCE GUIDE

Caring Dads: Helping Fathers Value Their Children. (Education and Support Group).
Website: www.caringdadsprogram.com

Father Involvement Initiative: Father Involvement Research Alliance, BC Counsel for the Family.
Website: www.fira.ca

Fatherhood: Indigenous Men's Journeys, (DVD) Dr. Jessica Ball, E-mail: jball@uvic.ca

Father Involvement in Parenting Young Children: A Content Analysis of Parent Education Programs in BC. (Unpublished Manuscript) Denise Hodgins (2007) University of Victoria, Department of Psychological Foundations in Education, Graduate Studies.

Fatherlessness in Canada, Canadian Children's Rights Council
Website www.canadiancrc.com

Forgive for Good, (DVD) Dr. Fred Luskin, The Stanford Forgiveness Project.
Website: www.learningtoforgive.com

Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers, A Resource to Support Parenting. (manuscript) Linda Baker, Allison Cunningham. Center for Children and Families in the Justice System, 2004. E-mail: ncfv-cnivf@phac-aspc.gc.ca
Website: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca ,

How to be Your Own Best Friend (1971). M. Newman and B. Berkowitz, Random House Publishing.

Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence Against a Mother Shapes Children as They Grow. (manuscript). Allison Cunningham & Linda Baker, Center for Children and Families in the Justice System, 2007. E-mail: ncfv-cnivf@phac-aspc.gc.ca
Website: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

National Fatherhood Initiative. (Fatherhood resources and networking)
Website: www.fatherhood.org

Nurturing Fathers (parenting education and support group)
Website: www.nurturingfathers.com

Non-violent Communication, (DVD) Dr. Marshal Rosenberg.
Website: www.cnvc.org

1-2-3 Magic, (parenting video) Dr. Thomas Phelan. Email: custcare@parentmagic.com

Relationships Without Abuse, (manuscript) 2004. Victoria Violence Prevention Society,
Phone: (250) 380-1955.
Website: www.familyviolence.ca

Seen Not Heard, (domestic violence video) 1993. Phone 1-800-263-6910.
Web-site: www.kineticvideo.com

Children See, Children Do, (video clip off U-tube) 2007. Preventing child abuse, Community Action Networks, Child Friendly Australia, Web-site: www.napcan.org.au or www.childfriendly.org.au

Something My Father Would Do: Overcoming Legacies of Family Violence, (Domestic violence DVD) 2007.
Family Violence Prevention Fund
Website: www.endabuse.org

The Incredible Years: A Parent's Guide, (parenting education program) Dr. Caroline Webster-Stratton.
Website: www.incredibleyears.com

Triple P : Positive Parenting Program (parenting education program) Dr. M. Sanders, University of Queensland Australia. E-mail: contact@triplep.net
Coping With Stress (DVD)
Supporting Your Partner (DVD)
Parenting Your Teenager (DVD)

What About Me! Seeking to Understand a Child's View of Violence in the Family, (manuscript) Allison Cunningham & Linda Baker, Center for Children and Families in the Justice System, London Family Court Clinic Inc. (2004), E-mail: research@lfcc.on.ca
Website: www.lfcc.on.ca

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Any worthwhile and effective community initiative requires many heads, hearts and hands to carry it from conception to fruition. I wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by the following people to the birth of *Fantastic Fathers; A Parenting Curriculum for Men...*

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Executive Director
Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society
RonSchwartz@familyviolence.ca

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Community Partners Letter of Invitation



FANTASTIC FATHERS



A Experiential Education and Support Group for Dads

The Family Violence Project is committed to the development of a parenting group for men. Men have a powerful and pivotal role in raising healthy and happy children. Many men have expressed a desire to learn alternative and more child-centered approaches to parenting. In response to them and their partner's requests, and in the best interests of their children, we have developed Fantastic Fathers.

Fantastic Fathers is designed to:

- engage men in a process of change of attitudes and beliefs towards child-centered parenting
- educate men in stages of child development
- create awareness of the issues as they relate to:
 - child mistreatment
 - violence against women in relationships
- provide the tools to explore age appropriate child misbehavior strategies
- support men via empathetic support of their partners parenting

Sessions will include:

- What we learned from our parents and hope to develop for ourselves
- Overcoming the negative parenting we received
- Modeling for our kids how to cope with frustration
- Accessing support and committing to a non-violent home
- Developing skills and strategies for positive and balanced parenting
- Communication skills: active listening and empathy
- Responding supportively to emotional behaviors
- Developing household rules, expectations and agreements
- Natural and logical consequences
- Reparative relationships: Respecting the mothers of our children and taking responsibility
- Personal support and action plans

If you are interested in joining our group and becoming a "Fantastic Father" and are willing to commit to 14 weekly sessions, please call The Family Violence Project at: 380-1955.

Our facilitators David and Jenny will contact you to confirm your eligibility and to gather some preliminary information before the group project begins.

Appendix B: Eligibility Criteria



FANTASTIC FATHERS



A Experiential Education and Support Group for Dads

Participant Eligibility for Fantastic Fathers (FF) Pilot Group

Criteria for **inclusion** include:

- willingness and ability to commit to attending the 14 sessions
- ability to take responsibility for abusive behaviour directed towards his partner and children (does not blame partner or child for his actions)

Criteria for **exclusion** include men who:

- have charges pending for spousal assault or child abuse
- are diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder or other co-existing problems such as alcohol dependence. (men engaged in concurrent treatment may be admissible)
- have a history of sexually abusing children
- are only being allowed supervised access to their children
- not acknowledging (minimally) their past abusive behaviour
- refuse to sign a contact partner form

Appendix C: Weekly Session Feedback Form

Weekly Session Feedback Form

Please take the time to circle the response that fits the best for you.

I found tonight's group interesting.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I found tonight's group helpful for me.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Suggestions or Comments

Appendix D (continued)

5. **In the past 4 weeks he consistently supported and respected my positive parenting.**

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree
Comments, example(s):

6. **He believes that sometimes kids need to be physically punished.**

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree
Comments, example(s):

7. **He takes full responsibility for any times he was abusive or violent toward me and/or our child(ren).**

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree
Comments, example(s):

Comments on the Fantastic Fathers program

Do you have any comments about this program?

Yes No

Comments:

Date: _____

Name: _____

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Appendix E: Pre and Post Participant Survey

Fantastic Fathers

Participant Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather information on how the Fantastic Fathers program makes a difference and how it could become more effective. The choice to participate in the survey is up to you. All responses are confidential, and the final report will not identify you.

Please show your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number.

1. In the past 4 weeks I took time together with my children to give them undivided positive attention.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree

How much time per week, on average, did you give them this kind of attention? _____

Comments:

2. In the past 4 weeks I was consistently gentle, compassionate and empathetic with my child(ren).

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree

Comments, example(s):

3. In the past 4 weeks I consistently listened to my child(ren) in ways that validated and respected their feelings.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree

Comments, example(s):

4. In the past 4 weeks I consistently used effective, positive parenting strategies to address my kids behaviours and needs.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree

Comments, example(s):

(Please Turn Over)

Appendix E: Coninued

5. In the past 4 weeks I consistently supported and respected my partner's (or co-parent's) positive parenting.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree
Comments, example(s):

6. I believe that there are times when parents may have to use physical punishment as a consequence for their kids behaviour.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree
Comments, example(s):

7. I take full responsibility for any times I was physically or verbally abusive toward my partner (or co-parent) and/or child(ren).

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree
Comments, example(s):

8. I know about several sources of information and support that may be helpful in developing parenting skills.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly agree agree not sure disagree strongly disagree
Comments, example(s):

9. Do you have any suggestion(s) about how this program could be more effective?

Yes No

Comments / suggestion(s):

Date: _____

Name: _____

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Appendix F: Parenting Strategies: Self Rating Scale

<p>10 = I am great at this 7 = I do this most of the time 5 = I do this sometimes 3 = I do not do this very often 1 = I really struggle with this</p>
--

	Rating
<p>1. <u>Invest time in the relationship</u> Provide unconditional positive attention and child directed play</p>	
<p>2. <u>Catch them being good</u> Use praise, rewards, reinforcements and recognition liberally</p>	
<p>3. <u>Use empathy to show support, caring and understanding</u> Acknowledge the things that are hard for them Reassure them with a positive expectation that they can handle it Label and encourage feeling identification and expression</p>	
<p>4. <u>Ignore what you can</u> Try not to attend to misbehaviours that are not too inappropriate</p>	
<p>5. <u>Have clear rules and set consequences</u> Develop a clear list of family rules that states what they can expect for both cooperating (rewards) or not (consequences)</p>	
<p>6. <u>Label misbehaviour and remind them of the consequences</u> Provide clear warnings and cues before applying consequences Use the "if ____ then ____" formula"</p>	
<p>7. <u>Be consistent and follow-through in applying the rules and consequences</u> A rule is always a rule and the consequence should be applied "Make a believer out of them" "Not the severity but the consistency that makes the difference"</p>	
<p>8. <u>Stay emotionally neutral and calm</u> Decrease their experience of power over us by being able to get us upset, as this would reinforce their misbehaviours</p>	
<p>9. <u>Disengage from discussing, arguing or debating child misbehaviour</u> "Let the consequences do the teaching"</p>	
<p>10. <u>Model for them how to handle problems and conflicts</u> The most powerful form of guidance is through example</p>	

1. D. Prette, Fantastic Fathers, 2007

Appendix G: Preliminary Evaluation Results

Fantastic Fathers Focus Group notes - Lessons Learned

What have we learned about what works well and what is challenging, in developing and delivering Fantastic Fathers? What would you do the same? Differently?

1. design
2. recruiting / registration
3. group process and content
4. individual contact and support – men
5. individual contact and support - partners

1 design

- What worked well was when we brought the advisors together. There was a lot of excitement about having a program with that kind of integrity in the community – fills a gap. Other service providers were happy to be part of creating something. It became a high performance team – they shared their vast knowledge openly. I was excited about the whole thing from day 1.
- It was a little overwhelming to figure out what would be included (in the curriculum) – it's such a huge area. Ron said: we need to find best practices. The more content you look for, the more you find. It was content heavy – sometimes I thought 'do we really need this much?'
- Good that you had that much content prepared – so you can choose if it fits for the kinds of guys in the group – draw on it...
- Was a pleasure to have enough money to pay people decently.
- Question mark/challenge on development of train the trainers manual (time required for this).

2 recruiting / registration

- Ended up with eight people registered. .
- Eligibility requirements were very rigid – no MCFD involvement.
- Timing and time of year – not coordinated with FVP programs - other groups here on Weds nights.
- Stigma wasn't the barrier – guys didn't have a concept that it was for guys who've done that.
- If we look at what we actually did, wouldn't have had to exclude...
- As a pilot they're not clients we're going to have ongoing contact with, or giving certificates or letters to, so MCFD involvement is not an issue.
- Treatment would be the same, regardless of whether you were abusive in the past.
- Two guys with young babies who'd grown up with violent homes, had substance issues, but didn't have a history of violence were in the program.
- Recommend in person presentations to different organizations – MCFD, referral agencies – about the results of the pilot and the upcoming opportunity to participate.

3 Group content & process

- Challenging working with this population - to keep them focused on themselves and not their partner's behaviour.

- Make guidelines on that explicit at the beginning.
- In feedback they said they'd like a code up on the wall. 'There's no excuse for abuse.'
- And accountability when you come back – yes, I did abuse the kids this week.
- It took 14 weeks to get past all the blaming.
- One guy said he didn't get enough on other resources available. We did that individually and that was more appropriate.
- Content on witnessing abuse in their own childhood – stuff came up; their history of being abused and witnessing abuse, e.g. recognizing that being yelled at by a spouse reminded them of their childhood abuse

4 Individual contact and support – men

- Tried to interview each applicant –was time consuming. Was good to do it ourselves, so we could begin to build relationship.... Was trying too hard – on my third phone call, some no-shows. Was helpful in screening.. You want to know the group, see what their issues are going to be.
- (one guy left to go drink, on the first session)
- 3/8. Normally half finish. One got called away to work, one moved to Quebec.
- Tried to phone the guys mid-week, and they did feel more connected and some used that time to discuss the content and how they were using it...
- The women loved that the guys were getting calls – keeping them accountable and providing some support.
- They had weekly assignments, they never got done. Talked about that mid-week – and still not done. Ended up doing it in group – 'if you filled this out, what would you have written?'
- Putting a practical component to the material, not expecting them to do written homework.
- Less talk about it, more practice.
- Did some exercises, and those were good. How to show empathy with your partner. We kept coming back to that for 3 weeks and some still didn't get it. Even with scripts. For some it's a learning disability. For some it's a preoccupation with 'what am I going to do next?'
- Next time: do a piece of this each week.
- It's well laid out curriculum – it's not so much about pulling stuff out, but going further with one thing they're not getting.

5 Individual contact and support – co-parents

- Challenge of how much time it takes to talk to them – you do the survey, and then they disclose 'I'm actually leaving him'.
- One woman didn't want to talk about anything. Trust issues, because we didn't meet with people face to face.

Appendix H: Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

1. Engaging community partners as advisors in program design is valuable.
2. There is an over-abundance of potential curriculum, and it is necessary to be highly selective in what is included.
3. Having extensive materials available for use as curriculum is valuable, so that the program can be customized to the unique mix of fathers in the group.
4. Conducting preliminary interviews with each applicant is valuable as a way to begin to build connection, learn what issues they face, and screen out those who would not be appropriate.
5. Eligibility criteria should be expanded to include fathers who have MCFD involvement and fathers who have not been abusive but are at risk.
6. It is important to coordinate the timing of the group sessions so that people in related groups can also participate in this, as a complementary service.
7. It would be helpful to review a code of conduct at the outset, expanding on the theme of 'there's no excuse for abuse', and post this on the wall throughout the program.
8. Individual support is an appropriate way to link participants to specific community resources that match their unique strengths and challenges.
9. Providing a list of community resources to all participants would complement individual referral work, and would enable participants to support their peers.
10. Doing mid-week check-ins with participants supports reflection on the program content and individualized dialogue about how they are applying it.
11. Expecting written homework is unrealistic.
12. There are many common barriers to learning the skills and knowledge offered in Fantastic Fathers, including learning disabilities and the need to un-learn existing communication patterns.
13. Exercises such as role plays are valuable in learning key skills, such as ability to empathize with co-parents.
14. Reinforcing core content is more important than covering the full curriculum.

Preliminary program modification recommendations for consideration:

Recommendation 1: Expand eligibility criteria to include fathers who may not have a history of abusive behaviour but who may be at risk of it due to factors such as experiencing it in their family of origin, substance issues, etc.

Recommendation 2: Provide presentations to partner agencies about the program, the revised eligibility criteria and the opportunity for fathers to participate.

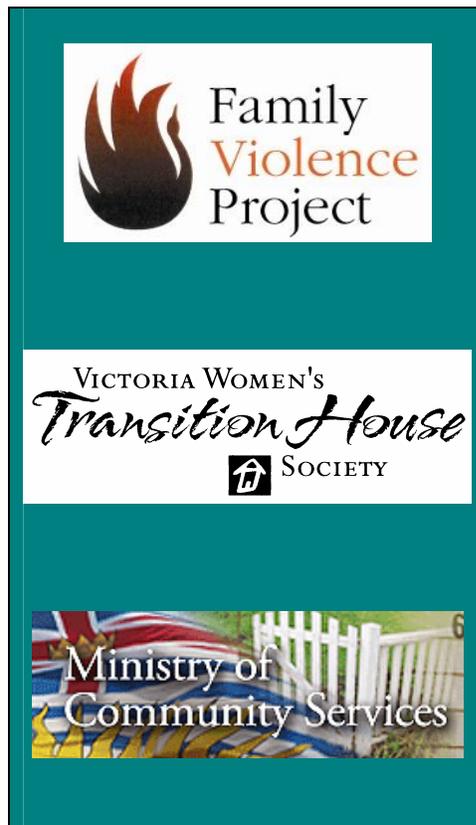
Recommendation 3: Recruit at least twice the number of registrants you hope will complete the program.

Recommendation 4: Identify core content, and follow up on that through multiple weeks.

Recommendation 5: Reduce the volume of content and increase use of exercises.

Recommendation 6: Eliminate the expectation of written homework exercises.

The Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society would like to thank you for your interest in Fantastic Fathers and would once again like to recognize the efforts of all those involved in its creation, including all those mentioned on the Acknowledgements page.



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