



**THE TOUGHEST JOB  
YOU'LL EVER LOVE**

A few years ago, this motto was used to sell the challenge of Peace Corps work. It may not be Third World conditions, but PARENTS, USA find teaching hygiene to the uninitiated, scheduling the disorganized, coaching the uncoordinated, and mediating sibling squabbles challenge enough for one day. Across the globe, parents display generativity-- nurturance, productivity, and creativity-- in ways which become occasions for growth and satisfaction to both generations. A tape we received at our daughter's birth, "Earth Mother Lullabies from Around the World" (Pamala & Tim Ballingham, Earth Mother Prod., Inc., 1984) illustrates the universal wisdom of cuddling, rocking, and singing to infants that child development experts find critical to emotional attachment, language development, and even physiological wellness.

Children who thrive-- regardless of culture, class, or family type-- get two gifts from parents: warmth, or affection and affirmation, and discipline, or logical limits and nurturing of talents. Parents who support the child's self-esteem and self-discipline tend to gain the best results with the least stress.

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**Children who thrive...get two gifts from parents: warmth... and discipline**  
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Parents who thrive need support from friends and family, agencies and organizations, workplaces and communities: *recognition* of their efforts, *room* (such as flextime) to do well, and *resources* ranging beyond parenting classes to parks, children's museums, daycare and respite care. Then...they need "how to" classes or telephone helplines to learn about child development, communication, nutrition, teaching science or art. Effective programs help moms and dads embrace challenges joyfully, rather than protecting or lecturing.

Perhaps our best cue for how to help comes from what parents say:  
\*We can read more to know, but we learn as you go...most of us are doing the best we can, so give us credit and help us learn from (and for) our experience with kids;  
\*Please believe that my kids don't have frogs in their beds or lice in their hair every day...we don't act this stressed (or maybe we do) all the time;  
\*Just about the time you learn what works, it doesn't...children change in each stage and situation; empathize and help us find our way again;  
\*Not all families are the same...so respect our uniqueness as a single parent, stepfamily, or intact couple;  
\*We don't do it your way, but it works for us...maybe something from our culture could help the group;  
\*I know my kid...skip the advice; just appreciate how his personality/her friends/etc. drive me nuts and I'm halfway to making it better already.

**ROUNDUP ON THIS EDITION**

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
Specialist Adventures Schedule	2
Gopher Hole	2
Cut to the Chase: Priorities	2
TheoryBase	2
STATS and FACTS: <i>Parents and Children</i>	3
<i>It is Your Business:</i> Single Parents Keep Balance	4
<i>4-H Families</i> 4-H Projects: The P-C Challenge	4
<i>Smorgasbord:</i> Popular Programs	5
Extension Programs	5
<i>Encouraging Competent Kids</i> What Parents Can Do	6
Activities to Build Competency	6
<i>Positive Parenting in at-Risk Settings</i> Taking the Parent Role	7
Giving Parents a Head Start	7
The Nurturing Program	7
RETHINK: Anger Mgt. for Parents	8
Resources for Programs, Continuing Education	9
Public Policy Issues	9
PARADOXES: A PARTING THOUGHT <i>Don't Go Off the Deep Ends</i>	10

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**To nourish children and raise them against odds is in any time, any place, more valuable than to fix bolts or design nuclear weapons.**  
--Marilyn French  
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## FAMILY LIFE SPECIALIST ADVENTURES

- 1/2-6 **Community Action Planning Training, Billings**  
*"Learning the ropes" of the successful Oregon model to be available as support and facilitator in Wyoming.*
- 1/17 **Right from the Start: Marriage Preparation Programs & Opportunities, Wheatland**
- 1/23-25 **Subject Matter/RETHINK Training, Laramie**  
*Train-the-Teacher/Introduction for Educators interested in conflict resolution skills to apply in practice or teach.*
- 2/10 **TOOLS for Creating Community Connections for Families Workshop, Sheridan.** (see 3/16 also)  
*Hands-on-workshop co-sponsored w/ Parent Information Center, Buffalo, for families on ways to build strengths.*
- 2/21-25 **RETHINK Train-the-Trainer, Ft. Collins/Denver.**  
*Training for community collaborators in WY and CO and Extension educators from 4 states via Resiliency Network.*
- 3/4-6 **Consulting on Youth/Family** in Park & Big Horn Co
- 3/7-9 **Resiliency Network Curriculum Comm./Nashville.**  
*National planning/resource group compiling available materials on parenting, youth violence, and teen sexuality*
- 3/16 **TOOLS Conference, Douglas.** (see 2/10)

**GOPHER HOLE** "Gopher" is a popular name for electronic files accessed via Internet. Both Extension and 4-H (CYFERNET) offer "gophers," as well as universities, government agencies, and private organizations. Newsletters, program information, research, and statistical reports, grant announcements, and much other info appear on menus.

**THE NATIONAL NETWORK ON FAMILY RESILIENCY GOPHER (VIA EXTENSION SERVICE-USDA/CYFERNET) LISTS AMONG ITS RESOURCES THE 1994 NATIONAL PARENT EDUCATION MODEL CREATED BY FOUR SPECIALISTS TO GUIDE PROGRAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION. KEY PRACTICES OF THE MODEL, FEATURED IN A MAY '95 UW COMPRESSED VIDEO TRAINING, INCLUDE:**

**CARE FOR SELF--MANAGING STRESS, FAMILY RESOURCES; GIVING & RECEIVING SUPPORT; KNOWING STRENGTHS & GOALS AS A PARENT; COOPERATING WITH PARTNER**

**UNDERSTAND--CAREFUL OBSERVATION OF CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT & INTERACTION WITH THEIR ENVIRONMENT**

**GUIDE--MODELING DESIRED BEHAVIOR; MAINTAINING LIMITS & VALUES; TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY & PROBLEM-SOLVING; MONITORING A CHILD'S CONTACTS**

**NURTURE--EXPRESSING AFFECTION, COMPASSION; FOSTERING SELF-RESPECT, HOPE, KINDNESS; PROVIDE FOR BASIC NEEDS; CELEBRATING; SHARING CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**MOTIVATE--TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT SELF, OTHERS, THE WORLD; STIMULATING CURIOSITY, LOVE OF LEARNING; HELPING CHILDREN PROCESS INFORMATION**

**ADVOCATE--FIND, USE, & CREATE COMMUNITY RESOURCES; PROMOTE SUPPORTIVE CLIMATES; BUILD TIES WITH FAMILY, NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY**

**-A NEPEM MANUAL IS \$10 FROM KSU (913/532-6969)-**

## "Cut to the Chase"

### PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES FOR PARENTS

**Help Parents Help Themselves/Each Other.** Use natural helping networks (clubs, PTAs, teams, churches, neighbors) to launch formal or informal parent discussion/support. Train hospital, school, etc. staff to support and pass on information that helps parents help their kids/themselves.

**Lend a Hand to Distressed Parents** Offer emotional and practical support, low-cost housing, financial assistance, mentoring, and other special services to families most in need. Emphasize coordinated efforts among agencies.

**Create a Supportive Climate.** Guide workplaces, schools, businesses, churches, law enforcement, and agencies in looking at how they can make minor and major changes (scheduling, communication, day care) which offer parents additional flexibility and low-cost resources to support a child's development. Note how such changes build a climate which is more cooperative and productive.

### TheoryBase: The Logic Behind the Programs

Parent education has a long history of theory-grounded (although often weakly tested) models to explain and change children's growth and interaction with their elders.

**Psychoanalytic** approaches identify key tasks/problems of each stage and ego/ID conflicts (Freud, Erikson), responding to motivations behind children's actions (Adler), or working through personality differences (Jung, Myers-Briggs).

**Behavioral** models stress reinforcement of positive and extinction of negative behaviors by systematic external modification (chart & reward: Skinner), modeling and structured interaction (social learning: Patterson), or thinking skills for problem solving in everyday situations.

**Humanistic** models of parenting encourage building a child's autonomy, self-esteem, and skills for communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. Understanding of the child and high levels of interaction are prominent.

**Systemic** programs key on understanding and changing dynamics of power, affection, roles, values, problem-solving, etc. to facilitate positive development and interaction among family members and family support within the community.

**Feminist** curricula offer insight on consequences of gender and class inequity, models and skills for mutuality and change in communication, family roles, and community.

Parent educators need to become familiar with theories as a way to present a coherent (vs. topic-by-topic) approach to parenting. Also, it is important to compare theoretical frameworks to one's own philosophy of parenting and the specific needs of audiences.

Further insight on how theories fit is offered in Morgaine's discussion of paradigms for family life education in Feb. 1993 *Family Relations*, 41, (1), 12-17 (reviewed in the Summit edition of *Chinook*, June, 1994)

## STATS AND FACTS

### From the Mass Mutual Study of Family Values...

#### Most Important Family Values

(Percent indicating "One of the most important values")

Being responsible for your actions	46%
Providing emotional support for family	43%
Respecting one's children	43%
Respecting other people for who they are	40%
Having a happy marriage	41%

--Note: Top values reflect themes of ethics/morality, self and other esteem, family interaction, and diversity. Note the study does not ask what people do. Neither does it explain why "responsibility" is not most valued by a majority of parents (i.e., laziness, corruption, other preferences, taking responsibility for granted) or imply anything of their actions. Items further down on the list (i.e., Care of Aging Parents, Financial Security, Physical Fitness) might quickly become higher or lower values if personal circumstances changed. One dismal note: "Helping your Community/Neighborhood" was a top priority for only 14% of those interviewed.

#### Parents' Views of Family Values Then and Now

A lot of importance placed on... When...

Activities	Growing up	Today
Reading books to children	52%	76%
Celebrating achievements	42%	66%
Helping with school homework	54%	70%
Taking vacations together	54%	70%
Playing sports, games, other events	42%	56%
Watching TV together	29%	38%
Attending religious services	57%	51%
Having children do household chores	75%	64%

#### How Values are Transmitted

High percentages of adults indicate that they learned values primarily from family: Responsibility (86%), Supportiveness (79%), Respect for Others (77%), Morality (71%), Living to Potential (69%), Earning a Good Living (69%), Happy Marriage (69%), Faith in God (67%), Helping Others (54%), and Personal Freedom (29%). Religion influenced Faith (for 22%) and Morality (for 17%); Teachers affected Living to Potential, Helping Others, and Earning for 14, 11, and 10%. Friends' influence was negligible except for Freedom (13%) and Helping Others (12%). Very few cited TV as influential in forming their most basic and cherished values.

Source: American Family Values Study: A Return to Family Values. (1991). Springfield, MA: Mass.Mutual Life Insurance Co.

**Two-thirds of Americans say their own family life is "very" or "extremely" satisfying, yet 57% say American family life is "fair" or "poor"...Eighty-six percent of Americans say parents should have the most influence on values, but only 36% see parents as most influential.**

--MassMutual Study (pp. 19-20).

#### Best Ways to Strengthen Family Values

(Percent rating method as "extremely effective")

Spending more time together	53%
Parent teaching of family values	53%

--Values identified with modeling, teaching right from wrong, explaining why, consistent discipline, sharing stories, expressing expectations, citing examples (of siblings)  
--Other actions cited: Church/Synagogue or schools teaching about values, Better TV/movie role models, Less financial/job strain on parents, More responsibilities for children

#### Most Important Things to do with Your Children

(Percent citing each method: Women Men Total)

Teaching family values	50%	42%	46%
Being there when children upset	48%	34%	41%
Playing with children	38%	32%	35%
Going to church or synagogue	34%	38%	29%
Reading to or with children	37%	29%	33%

Other actions cited: Disciplining, guiding decisions, helping with homework, eating, doing chores, watching TV together  
--Note: Some studies indicate that father involvement is perhaps the most critical indicator of positive outcomes for kids (perhaps because mother influence is assumed, rather than because mom is unimportant). Thus the lower ratings by men are a cause for concern (or education).

#### Who's Answering? Clusters of Respondents

Six patterns of valuing were identified by the study:

**Family Enthusiasts** (24%), with the strongest family values, high value on marriage and religion

**Detached** (21%): high education, low value on traditional religion, morality; support of women's movement

**Traditionalists** (16%), valuing religion, conservatism; disdaining the women's movement

**Discouraged** (15%) dissatisfied at work and home, with relatively weak values

**Better Life-Than-They-Had** (13%) emphasize financial security, religion, strong family values

**Modern Nesters** (11%) pressured but optimistic

Source: American Family Values Study: A Return to Family Values. (1991). Springfield, MA: Mass.Mutual Life Insurance Co.

## ***It is Your Business*** **SINGLE PARENTS CAN KEEP BALANCE**

All parents, but particularly those going it alone, can benefit from organizing their own schedule and helping kids manage their own schedule. Plotting out a daily schedule to reflect priorities (vs. allowing schedules to be set by crises), to take on a predictable order (vs. being reinvented every day), and to maximize children's "doing for themselves" (vs. parents taking all responsibilities on themselves) can help parents become more competent and confident in managing. Often parents can teach one another by trading strategies which work (esp. if shared as life experience rather than advice).

For instance, morning rituals often include wake-up, getting dressed, eating breakfast, and organizing things for the day (homework for kids, reports or tools for parents). Parents can speed preparation by placing clothes or full school backpacks in the same place, just before they go to bed. Of course, there's no reason children can't help with these tasks. Showers can be arranged before bed to avoid tying up the bathroom in the A.M. Lunches can be placed at the ready in the refrigerator. Morning distractions such as TV, the dog, or toys can be placed off limits by mutual agreement. Healthy but convenient foods such as cereal, fruit, and bagels which children can get for themselves promotes self-reliance as well as speed. If the schedule still seems rushed, the alarm can be set 15 min. earlier (and bedtime adjusted). During the day, brief tasks like planning meals or outings can be sandwiched into breaks. Each day, emotional refreshers such as reading, music listening, relaxation exercises, or talking to a friend should be worked in at predictable times to recharge the batteries and avoid burnout.

For more ideas, check out "Working with Single Parent Families," Florence J. Cherry, Cornell Univ. Extension (via Kidsrights, 10100 Park Cedar Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210 (800/892-KIDS) or "Dancing the Work-Family Tightrope" in the June 1995 UW Work-Family Resource Kit.

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***The new code of communication with children...requires that messages preserve the child's as well as the parent's self-respect; that statements of understanding precede statements of advice or instruction.--Haim Ginott***  
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### **Ground Rules for Effective Discipline**

1. Set a few basic but clear rules and expectations beforehand (and involve children in making, enforcing rules);
2. Explain rules, options, consequences at child's level;
3. Enforce rules consistently, but to fit child and situation;
4. Check out all the facts/sides before responding (let child/children tell it from their own perspectives);
5. Discipline as soon as possible after the event;
6. Focus on learning from mistakes or making reparations rather than punishment (which leads to avoiding detection);
7. Never discipline out-of-control.

## **4-H Families** **4-H PROJECTS: THE P-C CHALLENGE**

While PCs (personal computers) are becoming more important in all aspects of children's learning, the larger issue is Parent-Child: How and how much to help and when to let a 4-Her take over projects by him/herself. At stake are ribbons or peer ribbing, reputation or reality, ego or education...it's a lesson in values and relationships as well as practical skills; and it's not simple black-and-white. Parents whose children win the big, long-term prizes (skills, self-esteem, and fair play) often demonstrate:

### ***Realistic Expectations***

1. Matching type and difficulty of a project to age/stage capacities and adjusting for individual experience, ability.
2. Taking a learning vs. winning attitude, seeing mistakes and others' successes as learning opportunities, pacing a child's progress, knowing persistence will pay long-term.
3. Balancing projects with other activities (chores, recreation, friendships, family events); Helping a child set his/her own schedule and finding the right blend of quality and quantity are keys to reducing stress and making learning fun.
4. Avoiding comparisons to siblings, peers, parent, artificial standards, or even his/her own past performance.
5. Facilitating a child's own learning style. Kids who learn "hands-on" need demonstration and practice, not forced reading of instructions; social learners need company, private learners don't want to be crowded.
6. Keeping promises (to be there, provide materials, etc.) to support and assist as would be expected of the child.

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***When parents are working harder than youth or projects become more stressful than enjoyable, it's time to reframe.***  
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### ***Rewarding Involvement***

1. Helping the child problem-solve for him/herself, starting with decisions on what project(s) to do. Adults play a key role--especially at first--in explaining options and possible consequences, guiding the brainstorming and experimenting process, demonstrating "how to," or aiding practice and evaluation of efforts. Open-ended (more than "yes"- "no") questions and critical thinking questions (sources, strategies, outcomes, etc.) help youth ponder all angles. As the child gains more insight, skill, and confidence, adults can help by suggesting new options or just getting out of the way.
2. Parents can help kids connect with resource people, books, videos, or learning events (vs. providing all the help themselves) and teach youth how/where to seek help.
3. Parental experience and encouragement may help pace the timing for completing various parts of 4-H projects.
4. Listening (to plans, procedures, or progress) and encouragement are critical roles. Parents should note that praise can be as unproductive as criticism since it can make youth dependent on external approval vs. internal motivation.

### Smorgasbord

#### POPULAR PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

##### HOW TO TALK SO KIDS WILL LISTEN

Authors Adele Faber (M.S.) & Elaine Mazlish (M.S.), 1981/1993  
Theory Base: Haim Ginott's Humanistic model  
Audience: Parents of 2-12 yr-olds  
Media: Video, Parent book, Instructor Guide w/audio tapes  
Topics: Helping Children Deal w/Feelings, Encouraging Cooperation, Alternatives to Punishment, Encouraging Autonomy, Praise & Self-esteem, Freeing Children From Playing Roles  
Evaluation: Participant response good; CSU-CES research positive  
Cost: About \$3 book; \$120 instructor guide; videos \$190 per set  
To Order: Faber/Mazlish Workshops, LLC, PO Box 37, Rye, NY 10580 (800/944-8584)

##### STEP: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

Authors: Don Dinkmeyer & Gary D. McKay, 1976  
Audience: Parents of children 0-12, w/teen & stepparent versions available  
Theory Base: Adler/Dreikurs' Psychodynamic models  
Media: leader's & parent's handbooks, 2 VHS, plus audioassette available  
Topics: 9-sessions; Why children misbehave and how to deal with it, How to encourage and build self-esteem, How to discipline by giving choices and consequences, How to deal with special personality traits  
Evaluation: 51 studies, most w/parent or child gains, avail. from publisher  
Cost: \$245.00  
To Order: American Guidance Service., Publishers Building, P.O. Box 99, Circle Pines, MN 55014-1796 (800-328-2560) Item #T6200

##### ACTIVE PARENTING TODAY

Author: Michael Popkin, Ph.D., 1993  
Theory Base: Eclectic, drawing strongly from Carl Rogers Humanistic and Dreikurs' Psychodynamic model  
Audience: Parents of 2-12 yr-olds, incl. ethnically-diverse; also Parents of Teens version  
Media: Video, Parent Manual, Instructor Guide  
Topics: Active Parenting Today and Every Day, Instilling Courage and Self-Esteem, Understanding Your Child's Thinking, Making Responsibility a Reality, Creating Cooperative Kids and Solving Problems Together  
Training: Nationwide workshops available  
Evaluation: 3 major studies w/ parent and/or child gains--see publisher  
Cost: About \$300  
To Order: Active Parenting, 810 Franklin Court, Suite B, Atlanta, GA (800/825-0060)

##### ASSERTIVE DISCIPLINE

Author: Lee Canter, 1988  
Theory Base: Behaviorist, w/several Behavior Modification techniques  
Audience: Parents of school-age children  
Media: 2 video tapes, workbook, parent & leaders guide  
Topics: Overall coping and guidance; special attention to homework  
Training: unknown  
Evaluation: unknown  
Cost \$179.00  
To Order: Canter and Associates, Inc., P. O. Box 2113, Santa Monica, CA 90406 (213/395-3221) Item #12223 and 1128-V

*Programs listed above represent a cross-section of programs from a variety of theory-bases. Many others are available and should be reviewed before selection for your audience.*

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**Unless we allow them to fail, sometimes grandiosely fail, we cannot allow our children to choose success.-Foster Cline & Jim Fay. (1990). Parenting with Love and Logic**  
(Colorado Springs: Pinon Press, 800/366-7788). .....

### Smorgasbord

#### EXTENSION PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

##### PARENTING RENEWAL

Author: Emily Wiggins, Ph.D., SC Ext. Family Life Specialist, 1989-91  
Theory Base: Eclectic, drawing mostly from Humanistic & Developmental  
Audience: Parents of children of infants, preschoolers, school-age (3 books)  
Topics: varied aspects of development  
Media: print materials  
Cost: Contact author  
Evaluation: Pilot tested with Extension clients in SC  
To Order: E.Wiggins, 243 Doyle Ag.Center, Clemson, Univ., Clemson, SC 29634-0315 (803/856-5719)

##### RESPONSIVE DISCIPLINE

Author: Charles Smith, Ph.D., KS Extension Hum.Dev.Specialist, 1992  
Theory Base: Eclectic, drawing mostly from Humanistic & Developmental  
Audience: Parents of children of all ages  
Topics: 49 guidance and discipline choices/alternatives  
Media/Cost: Home study course (\$2), "flash cards" Toolbox (\$3), factsheets (free), 30-min video (\$28), workshop Leader's Guide-call 913/532-5773  
Evaluation: Pilot tested with Extension clients in KS  
To Order: Kansas State university Distribution Center, 16 Umberger Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-3402 (ask also about Parents University (\$55) and ParentShare materials)

##### POSITIVE PARENTING

Author: Ronald Pitzer, Ph.D., MN Extension Family Sociologist, 1995  
Theory Base: Eclectic, drawing heavily from Humanistic, Developmental  
Audience: Parents of preschoolers, school-age children  
Topics: alternatives to Physical Punishment, Limits, Consequences, Listening, Anger, Challenging Behaviors.  
Media: Video-based curriculum w/90-pg. guide, handouts  
Evaluation: Pilot tested with MN Extension clients  
Cost: \$80; Order #6545-GO  
To Order: MES Distribution Center, University of Minnesota, 1420 Eckles Avenue, St. Paul MN 55108-6069; 612-625-8173 or 1-800-876-8636

##### EMPOWERING FAMILIES:

##### HOME VISITING & BUILDING CLUSTERS

Authors: C. Dean, Ph.D. & M. Cochran, Ph.D., Cornell University, 1984  
Theory Base: Focused on ecological/developmental framework  
Media: Training Resources Notebook, Facilitator's Manual  
Topics: Process of Empowerment, Respecting Values, Information & Referral, Skills for Home Visitors, Building Blocks & Stumbling Blocks, Dev. Empowering Relationships, Family Clusters/Skills, Facilitator Skills  
Evaluation: A variety of evaluations show positive impact on parent-child communication, parent involvement in schools  
Cost: \$25.00  
To Order: Family Matters Project, Dept. of Hum. Dev. & Family Studies, Cornell CES, Ithaca, NY 14853 (607/255-2531)

Recently listed: Building Positive Self-Esteem. Debby Zigun. (1995). Rutgers CES of Mercer County, 930 Spruce St., Trenton, NJ, 08648 (609/989-6834; FAX: 609/ 396-9573). A 61-page curriculum including facilitator's guide, evaluation, references, sample handouts, and transparencies. Describes interactive strategies: games, worksheets, manipulatives, puzzles, role playing

*Only a small sample of Extension resources can be listed. In addition to curricula, a wide variety of fact sheets and brochures are available on almost every issue parents face.*

## **Encouraging Competent Kids**

### **WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO PROMOTE YOUTH ASSETS**

- \*Give frequent, tangible expressions of love, care, and support to kids at all ages/stages.
- \*Use discipline and control strategies which set clear rules and limits, and negotiate reasonable consequences for rule-breaking and rewards for positive behavior.
- \*Encourage involvement in structured youth activities (music, sports, clubs, church, etc).
- \*Minimize attendance at drinking parties; band together with other parents to prevent their occurrence.
- \*Model responsible chemical use and vehicle safety behaviors.
- \*Make family helping projects, in which parents and children together give help to others in need, a priority.
- \*Encourage and reward achievement motivation, post-high school educational aspirations, and homework.
- \*Minimize overexposure to TV and other mass media forms.
- \*Emphasize development of positive values, including prosocial values and values of behavioral restraint.
- \*Advocate for effective schools and community youth-serving organizations.

Source: Peter L. Benson. (1993).  
*The Troubled Journey: A Portrait  
of 6th-12th Grade Youth.*  
Minneapolis: Search Institute.

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**Mothers of prejudiced children, far more often than mothers of unprejudiced children, held that obedience is the most important thing a child can learn.--Gordon W. Allport**  
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#### **AUDIO: Songs to Teach Parenting**-----

"Heroes," on Paul Overstreet's (RCA, 1990) album by the same name, affirms parents'/volunteers' caring. May open a strengths-based discussion of roles, challenges, and coping.  
"The Instruction Manual" and "Everybody's Doin' It" are among the profoundly humorous tunes about the challenges of family life available on Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer's "A Parent's Home Companion" (Rounder Records, 1995) likely to engender rapport and spark discussion.

### **ACTIVITIES TO BUILD COMPETENCY**

#### **With preschoolers...**

- \*Record and illustrate imaginative stories which spring from their play and family experiences or their creative genius
- \*Plant a garden (even one seed) and help it grow
- \*Use puppets to role talk out conflicts
- \*Teach how to chop, stir, pour, and flip and cook together
- \*Learn songs and poems to sing and repeat together
- \*Introduce simple chores (bringing in groceries, cleaning up making a peanut butter sandwich, selecting wardrobe, etc.)
- \*Provide a calm voice, hug, and teach feeling-words when they are distressed over events or relationships
- \*Help them make decisions about everyday choices

#### **With school-age children...**

- \*Introduce board games for problem-solving and social skills
- \*Read stories aloud instead of watching TV
- \*Teach telephone and door-greting etiquette
- \*Help your child organize his./her study schedule
- \*Introduce a variety of activities (Scouts, music, sports, school projects) and resource people to work with a child
- \*Teach outdoor skills such as pitching a tent, making a campfire, or using a compass

#### **With teens...**

- \*Help adolescent find a volunteer activity helping others that where he/she can enjoy, take leadership, be creative
- \*Role play assertiveness skills to avert peer pressure, adult exploitation and abuse
- \*Support independent learning experiences such as history fair, 4-H projects, science camps, foreign exchange
- \*Discuss characters, decisions, outcomes, etc. in TV shows, popular films and songs
- \*Work out a mutually-agreeable schedule that balances school/work/ and home time, friend and family priorities

### **GREAT RESOURCE BOOKS TO BUILD COMPETENCIES**

Charles A. Smith. (1982). Promoting Social Development in Young Children. NY: Macmillan. --best for preschoolers & social skill areas  
Dorothy Rich. (1988). MegaSkills. Boston: Houghlin-Mifflin. --late preschool/school-age emphasis  
Jolene L. Roehlkepartain. (1995). Building Assets Together. Minneapolis: Search Institute.--activities for teens to build assets

#### **VIDEO: Films to Teach Parenting**-----

"Father of the Bride" (1993) touches on issues of bonding, supporting and disciplining, teaching autonomy, accepting friends, and most of all, letting go, amid the trials of work, adult tasks and relationships, and social rituals of wedding preparation. Some scenes exaggerate reality, but offer humorous reframing and serious discussion-starters.  
"Second Best" (1995) portrays creation of an adoptive family with a single, middle-aged British postmaster a 10 year-old troubled boy. Processes of adjustment, bonding, and boundary-setting, healing and development are shown in realistic detail. Several scenes may help all parents, but especially those with "problem children."

## **Nurturing Positive Parenting in At-Risk Situations**

### **TAKING THE ROLE OF THE PARENT** *Duncan Perrote* **Wyoming PARENT**

As parents, we are all at risk, but there are truly unimaginable-unless-you've-been-there kinds of situations. Sitting among those court-ordered to attend a parenting class helped me reflect on my own frustration and helplessness as a parent. I wanted to provide the knowledge of children so crucial to avoiding abuse or resources and support to prevent neglect. Here's what I've found makes a difference:

- \*Begin with humor: Consider how different the world would be if each infant entered carrying instructions (for all the growing up stages);
- \*Acknowledge that parenting is underpaid, overdemanding, with little support or instruction, having too few rewards and often no clear measure of success or failure.
- \*Encourage stories of personal challenge, including your own. Voluntary disclosure, in a supportive climate, removes barriers.
- \*Validate helpless-feeling parents by reminding them that the world today is different from their growing-up.
- \*Help parents to reflect on where they learned parenting; appreciate their unique experiences. Among Indian peoples, for instance, two or more generations of boarding schools forcibly removed children from parent and grandparent mentors. In families where alcoholism, domestic violence, or neglect were typical, dysfunctional rules may be in place (sometimes unaware of what's wrong or how to "get healthy").
- \*Seek suggestions on what kind of education prepares us for this all-important job? What positive role models do parents want to emulate.
- \*Ask what strengths they remember from even an unhappy family life.
- \*Explore the impact of the social or physical environment have. Is it isolating or supportive? How can parents build support among themselves and for their children?

### **GIVING PARENTS A HEAD START** *Cheryle Walker* **Laramie Co. Head Start**

Responding to Children Under Stress, a 1994 Head Start training guide, is a gold mine of practical information and guided observation and reflection for anyone working with young children. Eight session plans for trainers and participants feature information on Responding to Stress, Head Start's Response to stressed families, Characteristics of Children in Multistress Environments, The Learning Environment, Daily Schedules/Routines/Transitions that reduce stress, Helping Children Cope, Supporting Parents, Problem Solving. In the segment on Multistressed Children (those chronically abused, neglected, or exposed to unsafe, overcrowded, or non-supportive communities), caregivers are advised to look for consistent evidence of:

- \*Developmental delays, esp. in language, physical or social skills
- \*Ambivalence about bonding with a parent or frequent caregiving to younger siblings
- \*Sleep problems, tiredness, difficulty using utensils, short attention span
- \*Quick mood changes, inability to relax, low self-esteem, attention-seeking, clingingness
- \*Intrusiveness, conflict in play or inability to cooperate with peers
- \*Aggression or withdrawal

Following Erikson's model of psychosocial development, suggested **Strategies to build trust** include:

- \*Announce schedule changes ahead
- \*Provide physical and emotional support and keep your promises
- \*Respond promptly to cries
- \*Set up opportunities for cooperation
- \*Offer dramatic play activities

**Strategies to build autonomy:**

- \*Open-ended activities, with no right/wrong rules, chance to come and go
- \*Opportunities to release tension
- \*Self-help as well as demonstration

### **THE NURTURING PROGRAM** *Jody Smith* **WY Dept. of Family Services**

The Nurturing Program is a course designed to help improve parenting skills for children ages 0 - 5 years. Major topics include behavior management, development stages, discipline techniques, how to nurture your child, handling my anger, helping children deal with feelings, improving children's self-esteem, toilet training, stimulating and communicating.

The materials are used by Family Assistance Workers in their work with families in homes. A worker may use the parts that are most appropriate for what a particular family needs. Each county office should have a copy of the materials.

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***I am firm in my belief that the future of our Republic depends on strong families and that committed fathers are essential...Therefore, I am asking Federal agencies to...engage and meaningfully include fathers...proactively modify those programs that were designed to serve primarily mothers and children...to explicitly include fathers...include evidence of father involvement and participation ...in measuring the success of programs...incorporate fathers...in government-initiated research regarding children and their families.***  
--President William J. Clinton, 1/95

## **Tools That Make a Difference for Parents**

### **RETHINK ANGER MANAGEMENT TRAINING**

**Paula Mintzies, Trainer**

**Institute for Mental Health Initiatives, Washington, DC**

The RETHINK curriculum being taught and evaluated across WY and CO is based on some well-tested findings about parenting:

- \*Understanding child development affects parents' attitudes and expectations** Unrealistic expectations are most typical of abusing parents; realistic expectations allow a parent to reframe rather than emotionally react
- \*Parent feelings easily affect the frequency, timing, and type of response given to a child's behavior** Discipline can escalate into abuse when the parent feels deeply embarrassed, disrespected, angry; unresolved anger is an often-cited trait of abusing parents; loss of control may be unpleasant or ineffective even if the child is not abused
- \*Practicing skills of anger control, troubleshooting, and child-support is critical to responding appropriately** in high-stress situations: New habits are born out of committed effort to change as well as more supportive networks of people
- \*Parenting, does not come "naturally,** especially on a busy schedule and with little support;" Learning "what works" and adapting these insights and skills to each child's stage and temperament holds the greatest promise for positive results for both parent and child

RETHINK draws from the developmental psychology of Erikson (1950) and social learning theory of Bandura (1971) and has been field tested with Baltimore Parents Anonymous, Washington, DC Family & Child Services, and others.

Understanding and practicing effective responses is a discipline or learning process which must begin with the parent, since he/she is the authority and role model in the home. The RETHINK program is designed as a prevention, intervention, and empowerment tool for parents to hear and experience (through role plays, songs, and discussion as well as description) **five critical components to handling anger:**

- \*What triggers anger:** Certain behaviors typical of each stage can upset parents (infant crying, toddler emptying drawers, school-age procrastination, teen messiness or lying) because they violate standards/expectations, goals, or sense of self/relationship.
- \*What anger is all about:** Anger is a feeling (parents' and child's) resulting from the perception of stress or danger, which can be a signal for fight or flight...or signal the need for constructive change.
- \*Managing anger constructively and destructively:** Focusing on solutions which see conflict as opportunity (opportunistic), work for parent and child (win-win), build respect and cooperation, and promote a pattern of problem-solving (long-term).
- \*Role-playing** (for experienced learning and practice) **the exercise of...**

#### **\*RETHINK skills:**

1. RECOGNIZE when you or your child are angry and when anger covers for other feelings (fear, shame, stress, fatigue)
2. EMPATHIZE and see the other's point of view; identify with feelings and experiences as a way to bridge differences.
3. THINK about that gets you angry and how you or your child might look at things humorously, constructively, more long-term.
4. HEAR where the other person is coming from; use active listening to clarify, identify, validate feelings as well as content.
5. INTEGRATE expressions of your anger with expressions of love and respect. Reassure without retracting rules or feelings.
6. NOTICE your (child's) body signals when angry (increased heart rate, change in breathing, headache, upset stomach, tension in your muscles. Also notice what helps you calm down and use that to gain control before engaging the other person).
7. KEEP the conversation in the present, focusing on causes and solutions to problems now, not old grudges.

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#### **How Anger Control Promotes Resiliency**

\*If we define resiliency as long-term stress-coping, positive social interaction, and achievement, the knowledge of self and others and interactive skills are resources which reduce the likelihood of emotional reactivity and escalating conflict and tend to promote confidence, competence, and cooperation in the face of personal and interpersonal challenges. In a word, anger control enhances energy gain and decreases energy drain inherent in handling daily stressors and traumatic events.

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### RESOURCES FOR PROGRAMMING\*

\*Thanks to Jackie Kirby, Ohio State-CES HDFL Associate; Billie Frazier, Maryland Human Development Specialist.

**The HOME WORK project** (created by MN-CES and the Nat.Net.for Fam.Resiliency) is a database of inexpensive, parent-friendly and culturally sensitive materials (grouped by NEPEM principles) for use by parents. Access via Extension-USDA gopher/Web or your state specialist.

**Learning for Better Living** - Para Una Vida Mejor  
This camera ready series of 53 bilingual fact sheets covers various family well-being topics: nutrition and health, food and safety, child development, family well-being and finances, and consumer issues. Each fact sheet offers English/generic Hispanic information, attractive graphics.

**Serving Families with Limited Resources** Bibliographies on over 100 Extension and non-Extension programs teaching about babies, discipline, family activities, parenting, health and safety, parenting apart, pre-parenting, preschool, prevention of child abuse and neglect, school-agers, special needs, and teen parents. To order, send \$5 to Cornell-CES, 480 North Main Street, Canandaigua, NY 14424.

**Parents: Show You Care.** Leaflets on showing love, having fun, building trust, raising "can-do" children, helping children like themselves, teaching children to behave for parents of pre-teens to support transition-to-adolescence. To order: Manager, Duplicating Services, 6200 Sheridan, Riverdale, MD.

### RESOURCES FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Selma Fraiberg. (1959). The Magic Years. NY: Scribner. A classic for appreciating young children's development.

David Elkind. (1981). The Hurried Child. Boston: Addison-Wesley. One of the best books on effects of social environment on child development. His recent work, Ties that Stress applies the same theme to families.

Levine, Katherine G. (1991). When Good Kids Do Bad Things. NY: Pocket Books.--Aptly titled "A Survival Guide For Parents of Teenagers," it humorously and straightforwardly approaches tough issues and practical strategies used by the author with her 367 foster children.

Linda Braun, Jennifer Coplon, Phyllis Sonnenschein. (1984). Helping Parents in Groups. Boston: Wheelock College. An excellent primer on how to do parent education.

The Prevention Report newsletter features principles and strategies for family-supportive practices among professionals in social work, family life education, and therapy. TPR is jointly-sponsored by:

The National Center for Family Centered Practice, School of Social Work, University of Iowa, 112 North Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1223 (319) 335-2200

Family Resource Coalition, 200 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60604 (312) 341-0900 (which also produces its own quarterly newsletter, FRC Report)

National Indian Child Welfare Association, 3611 SW Hood, Suite 201, Portland, OR 97204 (503) 222-4044

**PARADOXES: A PARTING THOUGHT**  
**Going Off the Deep Ends**

**Too much freedom...**

Johnny's kin have set no bounds;  
 He goes at will, he gets around.  
 No one's ever home, aware,  
 To tell him what to do...or care.  
 Unattached, he's disengaged;  
 Neglect has fueled his inner rage;  
 An armored image hides a pang  
 Expressed in cruelty,  
 bonds with gangs  
 Too much individuality  
 May threaten his longevity.

Like an open-lid corn popper,  
 Rita and her sibs are all over;  
 No limits, restrictions in the home,  
 They make decisions on their own  
 Growing self-reliance, flexibility  
 Or danger and anxiety.  
 Freedom from rules is quite hypnotic  
 Until the roles become chaotic;  
 Adapting life too much, it seems,  
 Is a coping nightmare, not a dream.

**Chaos in the midst of chaos isn't  
 funny, but chaos in the midst of  
 order is.**--Steve Martin

Talk in circles, lost in self;  
 Read the mind of someone else;  
 Say one thing and do the other;  
 Scream and beat "'cause I'm your  
 mother!"  
 Wear them out with endless words,  
 Never tempered, seldom heard;  
 Caught in webs of "me" or "us"  
 Stuck rigid or lost in chaos.

**A happy medium...**

Most parents of kids, Aaron to Zeta  
 Balance bonds and freedoms  
 as needed;  
 Giving space, with close connections,  
 Urging uniqueness,  
 with warm affection.  
 Changing how they care, as needed  
 So each child grows unimpeded  
 Togetherness and separateness  
 must blend  
 To keep love from going  
 off the deep ends.

**Although there is no absolute best  
 level for any relationship, some  
 families may have problems if they  
 always function at either extreme.**  
 --David Olson

Life is such a teeter-totter;  
 We need a pivot and a lever:  
 Room to think where're we roam,  
 A map to help us to come home.  
 Discipline that makes us free,  
 Tradition teaching flexibility.  
 Role models unafraid to fail  
 Or hike a new, uncharted trail.  
 It takes both order and openness  
 To cope with life's unexpected stress.

Touch her soul with empathy,  
 Let him feel and have his say.  
 Say it straight without the games;  
 Make the walk and talk the same.  
 Give us slack, forgive, forget;  
 Communicate...you might cope yet!

**Too much control...**

Mary's parents want to know  
 Everywhere she plans to go;  
 Who she's with and what they'll do...  
 Whatever weakens the family glue.  
 They're caring and protective folks,  
 But loyalty they force, not coax.  
 Sometimes feelings get so attached,  
 The tension makes them overreact.  
 Togetherness can run to excess  
 When families become enmeshed.

**Happiness is having a large, loving,  
 caring, close-knit family in another  
 city.**--George Burns

"Yes, sir," George says and knows  
 who's boss;  
 His place and manners never lost.  
 Routine and tradition guide his time,  
 He never has to use his mind.  
 The answers always same and sure,  
 From family leaders, who'd want  
 more?  
 But rigid rules are oft undone  
 And too safe often leaves no fun;  
 Adaptation cannot be prescribed  
 But day-to-day is clarified.

**Parenting & the Circumplex Model**

Poems above are inspired by family systems-oriented Circumplex Model of Family Functioning (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1989), based on empirical and clinical evidence that, while there are many ways of growing healthy families, families across many cultures and circumstances tend to experience fewer problems if:

**Cohesion or family closeness blends  
 togetherness and individuality...  
 Adaptability or coping with change blends  
 structure and flexibility...and  
 Communication is open and respectful, with  
 consistent verbal/non-verbal messages.**

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### ***It's the Law***

#### **FAMILY PRESERVATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

Fact Sheet, Administration for Children and Families, January 1996

Family Preservation and Family Support Services help state child welfare agencies and eligible Indian tribes establish and operate integrated, preventive family preservation services and community-based family support services for families at risk or in crisis. Most grant funds go directly to state governments or certain eligible Indian tribes, for expenditure in accordance with a 5-year plan. Some other grant funds are set aside for nationally-funded evaluation, research, and training and technical assistance projects. Beginning in FY 1995, grants will be made to state courts for improving foster care and adoption proceedings.

Family preservation services typically are activities that help families alleviate crises that might lead to out of home placement of children because of abuse or neglect. They help to maintain the safety of children in their own home, support families preparing to reunify or adopt, and assist families in obtaining other services to meet multiple needs. These include services to improve parenting skills and follow-up services to support adopting and reunifying families. Family support services, often provided at the local level by community-based organizations, are voluntary, preventive activities to help families nurture their children. These services are designed to alleviate stress and help parents care for their children's well-being before a crisis occurs. They connect families with available community resources, supportive networks, and opportunities to assist parents with child rearing. Family support activities include respite care for parents and caregivers, early developmental screening of children to identify their needs, tutoring, health education for youth, and a range of center-based activities, such as drop-in centers and home visiting programs. Some activities, such as parenting information classes, respite care, and assistance in obtaining benefits, may be considered both a family preservation and a family support service.

Linking Long-Range Planning with Funding: In FY 1994, states and eligible Indian tribes may use grants to develop 5-year plans for FY 1995-1999 to improve coordination of programs serving families with children. Formulation of the plan should include data collection and analysis and collaboration with numerous organizations which have experience in administering children's and family services. By making funds available for planning and by requiring the development of a comprehensive 5-year plan in order to receive funds in FY 1995, the design and delivery of family and children's services can be strengthened, reformed, and better integrated. For FY 1994, \$60 million is authorized; for FY 1995, \$150 million; for FY 1996, \$225 million; for FY 1997, \$240 million; and for FY 1998, \$255 million.