

# PARENT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE



William A. Howatt



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William A. Howatt

**Howatt HR Consulting Inc.**

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# Preface

I THOUGHT of writing this book halfway through what I now am calling its sister volume, *Teacher's Survival Guide*. At that time, I realized that not only are teachers today trying to survive in the classroom, but parents also are trying to survive at home.

Now, *Parent's Survival Guide* may not be the best title, because you don't want simply to survive being a parent; you want to live and enjoy this magical time in your life, helping your children become all they want to be. Our role is to create a solid foundation for them, so that they will have an opportunity to succeed in this game we all play, called life.

Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted set of instructions on how to be an effective parent. For many in today's world, parenting is challenging, emotionally taxing, physically exhausting, often simply confusing. Many parents often question themselves and support systems as to what to do and how to get through these years as easily as possible, bringing the least amount of harm to their children and themselves.

While life is exciting and often rewarding, a parent's daily challenges can include unstable environments, financial fears, threats to world peace, and political unrest. Other concerns include increases in violent crime, rising unemployment, decreasing government support, stress of relationships, an unstable health care system, and an increase in the breakdown of the traditional family via divorce and separa-

tion. In the midst of all this, parents have the challenge of preparing their children for all of the complexities that modern life brings.

The purpose of this book is to provide tools and insight for dealing with parenting challenges. Being a parent is truly a gift, because children are the greatest miracle that we have the opportunity to experience. They are unique, individually brilliant, and eventually will be parents themselves. Parenting is an adventure that requires you to be flexible, organized, and prepared for what could happen next.

Without question, society needs parents to take a much more proactive role in guiding our children. With continual change and new challenges, parents are required to become increasingly focused and engaged in their children's full development. Parents can't sit back and trust that the education system, babysitters, grandparents, step-parents, and whoever else we put into the parental role will be committed to a child's success as only a parent can be.

Now the question is, can parents teach their children ethics, morals, values, and also the law of the land? Yes, but first each parent must be aware of the standards that are acceptable and present these to their children as solid role models, by living what they are preaching (assuming all they preach is ethically, morally, and legally appropriate). Parents, who have one set of rules for themselves and another for their children, will many times be faced with disruption and disagreement. This leads to one of the biggest problems in today's home – inconsistency and unclear expectations. This concern will often fuel family problems.

Figure P-1 illustrates what I call the Parenting Circle of Success. I chose the word parent, instead of family, because

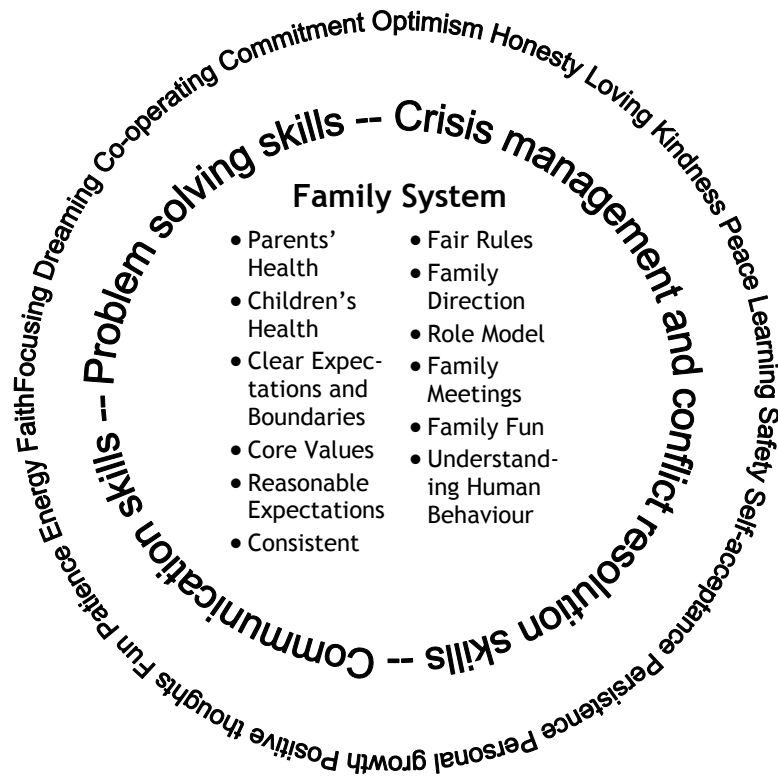


Figure P-1 - Parenting Circle of Success

the parent is the person who leads the family. The purpose of this text is to help parents create this circle and to pass on the learnings to future generations.

As a dad – Emily being 13, Thomas 10, and Patrick 8 – writing this book has been a fulfilling exercise in developing my own role as a parent. I feel the knowledge and skills presented here have helped, and will continue to help, me and my wife Sherrie to be more proactive and effective in sharing the role of guiding our children to adulthood.

There are many great writers on the topic of being an effective parent. Read and learn as much as you can, as

there is not one answer or solution for everyone. My wish is that, for the purposes of this book, you learn a few things that will help you to be the parent you want to be and for your children to reap the benefits of your compassion and desire to be an effective role model. Envision that you are not going to simply survive being a parent; but, in fact, you are going to excel in it.

Best wishes on your journey. It's guaranteed to be challenging and exciting.

– *Bill Howatt*

A daddy

## CHAPTER ONE

# Where to Begin

*Take the gentle path. – George Herbert*

*Billy, put your shoes away.*

*Billy, please put your shoes away!*

*Billy, I told you to put your shoes away – now!*

*Billy, I don't understand what your problem is, I've asked you five separate times to put your shoes away. Please – for the last time – put your shoes away!*

*Billy, that's it! No hockey this weekend. You never listen to me or your father!*

**H**AVE you ever had a dialogue like this with your child? If so, I can assure you that you're not alone.

Now, we all know there's no great effort involved for Billy to put his shoes away or to do a similar simple task – and seemingly little for Billy to gain by refusing or failing to obey. So why, then, would Billy choose to ignore your direction to put away his shoes?

The answer is that Billy sees the action of putting away his shoes as giving up one or more of his *perceived needs*: love/belonging, self-worth/power, fun, freedom, survival at

that moment in time. In the above instance, Billy may perceive that the *freedom* to choose what he wants to do is being threatened. He may also perceive that his need for *power* over self and the *freedom* to choose his own actions are being discounted.

Understanding choices such as these – which both children and parents make – is but one of many challenges parents face. Parents I work with often tell me, “OK, so he’s doing this to meet a need. Great! What do I do?”

The role of parenting is huge. Parents need to be aware that they can’t expect others to ensure that their children fully develop as healthy human beings. They need to be active in all areas of their children’s development.

This may seem daunting, but when we equip ourselves with the main ingredients, it becomes less overwhelming. I know of only one magic formula and it’s rather simple: It’s called *time*. Parents who spend time *with* their children have a greater chance of success, as long as this time involves only effective, healthy behaviours, and not behaviours that could be perceived as damaging to the child (e.g., emotional and physical abuse).

Parents can interact with their children generally in three ways:

- **FOR** – They can do things *for* their children. They can buy many neat toys and do nice things *for* their children, often to replace the lack of time they have available to spend with them.
- **AT** – They can do things *at* their children. They can use fear to control their children, but the results are usually only short term.

- **WITH** – They can do things *with* their children. They can spend time helping with homework or showing an interest in other activities. It takes not only quality of time, but quantity of time to become fully active in the role of parent. Parents who spend lots of time with their children in healthy behaviours have much less difficulty fulfilling their role, because they know where their children are at all times in their development. (See Appendix A for 75 things to do with your child and Appendix B to help you self-evaluate your preferred parenting style.)

Many parents compensate for not being around by doing things for their children. Others use external fear to get what they want from their children. Unfortunately, for many children, this practice of doing *for* and *at* does not meet their desire for healthy and involved parents. What they really want and need are parents who are loving, caring, consistent, firm, fair, honest, interested, positive role models, and – most important – around.

Types of Behaviour of <i>For</i> , <i>With</i> and <i>At</i> Time		
For	With	At
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy lots of stuff (e.g., toys, clothes, cars).</li> <li>• Give money.</li> <li>• Do work for them, such as their assigned household chores.</li> <li>• Give in to them all the time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend time daily engaged in dialogue.</li> <li>• Help with and show interest in their school and outside interests.</li> <li>• Book dates with family and children on a weekly basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yell.</li> <li>• Hit and spank.</li> <li>• Take privileges away all the time for misbehaviour.</li> <li>• Make threats.</li> <li>• Use intimidation.</li> <li>• Use fear.</li> </ul>

Table 1-1 – Types of Behaviour

The biggest gift parents can give their children is time. By spending time with children, parents show an interest and children learn to trust and grow with their parents. Parents who want and love to be with their children can share with them. Such parents are not just surviving parenthood; they are benefiting emotionally and are active and full participants in their children's development.

The sad reality is that many parents cannot spend as much time as they want with their children; therefore, they often feel it paramount to improve the variety of their children's adventures during their absence. The real key is to focus on doing things *with* children, so both parents and children benefit.

As you train and assist your child to grow and evolve, be aware of all the factors that influence and determine who your child is – factors such as ethnic and religious background, economic class, gender, physical or mental difficulties, language, previous history of trouble in school, interests, hobbies, style of learning, family structure, peers, and parent involvement. When you identify the factors that may be influencing your child, you can develop a better insight into behaviours that could lead them into difficulties.

Parents often worry that children change as they get older. However, they remain children. They have just moved from listening only to the authority (parents) to listening to their peers as well. The children haven't changed; the outside influences have changed. Figure 1-1, shows the external influences that may affect children's behavior.

The familial environment in which children live provides them with the foundation for many of their behaviours. With all of the external boundaries and pressures chil-



dren live with today, it's their family environment – especially how active and involved their parents are within this environment – that has the greatest effect. Parents who do things *with* their children assist them to work through issues and make healthy choices, regardless of the external forces.

As we look at the factors that influence children, it's helpful to become aware of how we form our own perceptions of the environment. We formulate our perceptions (some call them labels) based on our attitudes and beliefs, which, for the most part, are at a more conscious level of awareness than our core values. A good place to start is to be fully aware of and understand our own values. They can have a dramatic influence on how we look at our children and our entire life.

Once we are aware of how we develop our own core values, we can better understand how children can be influenced by external factors. Core values in today's children are influenced by four “generational clusters.” Children's core values come from a different generational frame of reference than their parents'.

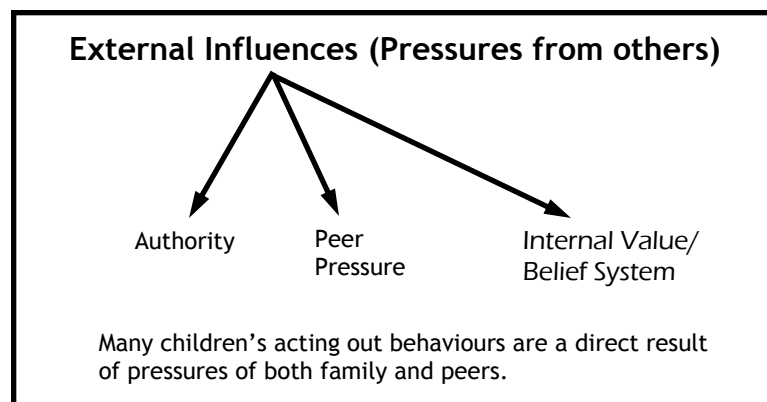


Figure 1-1 - External Influences (Kelman & Hamilton)

Morris Massey's theory of value programming identifies the four clusters.

- *Traditionalists* – Hold onto traditional beliefs, even though the world is changing with new problems and challenges (e.g., children *must* respect authority – no exceptions).
- *In-betweeners* – Programmed in the '40s or '50s; want to hold on to traditional views but are aware of the need to learn new values and beliefs. The result is a pressing need to find themselves (e.g., children *need to* respect authority).
- *Challengers* – Programmed in the '60s; no longer willing to accept traditional values without questioning them. This is the baby-boom generation and their belief systems have affected all of society due to their numbers (e.g., children *should* trust that authority knows what is best for them).
- *Synthesizers* – These are today's youth, who are trying to figure out where they stand, with the influence of three other value patterns preceding them and weighing heavily on them. They are concerned about damage to the planet and to society and with their future and opportunities to enjoy the good life (e.g., children *should do* what they believe is right).

When processing Massey's theory, consider the following questions:

- Where do you (and your partner) fit in Massey's four categories?

- Can you better understand why children and parents experience the conflicts they do?
- Can you see how society has created so many labels?
- Are you beginning to see the relationship between labels and attitude?

Many people live by an external locus of control. This term, commonly used in psychology, means that the environment constantly provides information that determines our present circumstances. The simple way to remember it is that when something happens outside our internal thoughts and activity, we believe we have no choice but to react to the external event. So, in essence, the outside world is running our lives. Though at times it may seem like we are being ruled by our children, we always have choices about how we think about a child's actions.

I have often heard people say, "I had no choice," or "he made me so angry." These are the people who are operating from the belief that the environment is controlling them through what is called the Stimulus-Response position. The problem is that the majority of the population, without realizing it, believes in Stimulus-Response psychology. People believe they have no choice in their behavior and that they are essentially forced to behave as they do. This model of living passes our power of choice to the outside world.

Effective parenting begins by moving away from the old mindset of believing in external control and toward the new thinking of internal locus of control, which is, simply put, we always have choice. We may not choose the circumstances; however, we are in charge of how we respond to them.

William Glasser, author of Choice Theory, provides a simple and accurate explanation of why human beings do what they do. Glasser explains that all child and adult behaviour has a purpose and is always a best attempt to meet individual circumstances at the moment of choice. The likelihood of a child turning out to be successful and happy is greatly dependent on having a positive childhood and effective parents.

By being effective role models, parents show their children that we all have choices and are responsible for our behaviour. Many writers are now challenging the effectiveness of discipline and reward and are coming to the conclusion that both are the same coin, but different sides. The key is that healthy development will best occur in children who are internally motivated to achieve happiness. It follows, then, that children can best develop these skills when they have parents who operate from and role model this position as well.

Choice Theory states that all behaviour is based on the individual's best attempt to meet one or more of the five basic human needs (see Table 1-2) and each individual has specific wants to satisfy those needs.

The five basic needs of all human beings:

- *Love/Belonging*: Human beings are driven to be a part of society; to receive and give love; and to belong to someone or something.
- *Self-worth/Power* (over self, not others) (achievement, recognition): Our need for power is often expressed through competition; it also can be expressed in the

achievement of something, which gives us a sense of self-worth.

- *Fun*: Glasser states that it is through laughing and having fun that children learn best; this need for fun continues throughout adult life.
- *Freedom*: A need for freedom provides the opportunity to make choices in our lives that will allow us to fulfill our needs.
- *Survival*: This need's main focus is to keep our bodies functioning and healthy. It's concerned with food, shelter, and clothing.

For each need we create individual wants that are called quality world pictures. Whenever there's a difference between what we want and what we have, we become frustrated. Additionally, we can only choose behaviors that we have learned, observed, or created. This is why many parents and children repeatedly display behaviours that are less than effective. They lack a toolbox of new behaviours to choose from and therefore continue to run the older, less effective ones.

In Figure 1-2, Glasser uses the metaphor of a front wheel drive car to explain total behaviour. He explains that the front wheels (Acting and Thinking) have direct control and choice, but the rear wheels have no alternative but to follow. We can control acting and thinking by choosing new thoughts or more effective new behaviours and our rear wheels of Feeling and Physiology will follow. This is what Glasser means by all behaviour being *total*. Whatever wheel we focus on affects all the others.

Having total control over the acting wheel and partial control over the thinking wheel, we influence the rear wheels to change behaviour. For example, if I were sitting at my desk and mourning a bad business deal, I may choose to feel depressed. But if my children came bounding into my office, I would smile and say hello, because we have a loving relationship. Within a few seconds, whether aware of it or not, I would be feeling better, because my actions and thinking had moved from the bad business deal to enjoying my beautiful children.

In the case of Billy, by ignoring his parent's direction to put away his shoes, he is allowing his perceived desire to dominate, while putting his parent in the second seat. If not mindful, the parent may get caught in a negative feeling. The key is to change your behaviour and try something different with Billy, so that your feelings will follow.

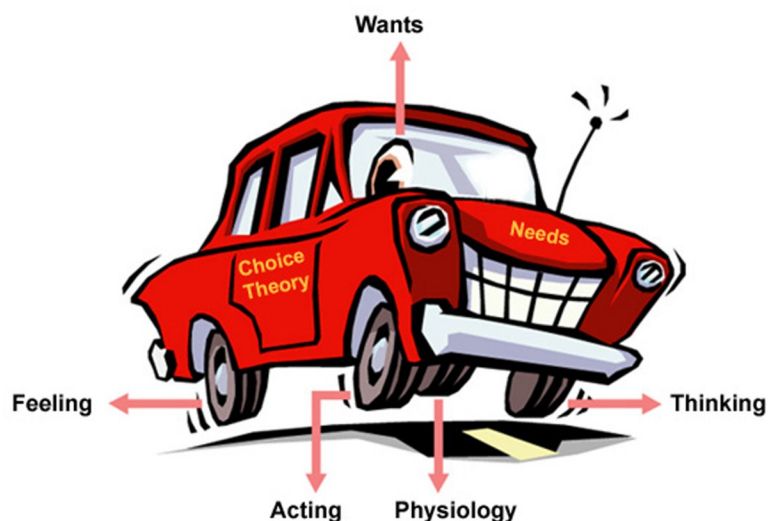


Figure 1-2 - Glasser's Total Behaviour Car

A challenge of parenting is to be aware that we are responsible for our actions and to pass this message on to our children. We need to teach our children how to meet their needs in healthy, responsible ways. Help them look for and understand the potential consequences of their actions and choices. Gossen suggests that when children perceive that their *basic needs* are being continually threatened, they become a much greater risk for acting out and choosing disruptive behaviour. Table 1-2 lists some behaviours that children may choose when they cannot meet their needs at home.

Glasser explains that using force/coercion to get a child to do something is not helpful to the child's development, because many only become defensive and hostile. Force is external locus of control and rarely works for the long term. Glasser wants parents to learn how to meet their children's needs, so that they do not feel a need to use force. When children learn how to meet their needs in a healthy and socially accepted manner, they are not a concern at home, school, or in other circumstances. I believe that children

<b>Behaviours Generated from Unmet Needs</b>	
<b>Acting-Out Behaviours</b>	<b>Withdrawing Behaviours</b>
• Fighting	• Not paying attention
• Complaining	• Skipping school
• Destroying	• Being depressed
• Stealing	• Day dreaming
• Sexual promiscuity	• Getting sick
• Swearing	• Abusing drugs and alcohol
• Threatening suicide	• Over-sleeping

Table 1-2 – Behaviours Generated From Unmet Needs  
(adapted from Gossen)

need to be taught that they always have choices, so they can learn that they are in control of themselves and responsible for their behaviours. To achieve this, they need to have role models who are living it – and that's you, Mom and Dad!

Glasser believes that children who have learned how to meet their needs in an effective manner will always choose the more effective behaviour, because all children really want to fit in. And I believe that if children were meeting their basic needs at home and in their social world, they would have no need of ever acting out. So a goal for parents should be to help children have the skills and knowledge to be able to meet their own basic needs effectively.

All acting out behaviour falls into two categories: verbal acting out and physical acting out. It's hard to comprehend during the moment of conflict, but Choice Theory clearly explains that all behaviour is just that – a behaviour. This acting out behaviour is really not a personal attack on you (though it may seem like it); the child is only trying to meet one or more basic needs. I must note that the child still needs to be held responsible for the behaviour and should not violate another individual's needs.

We all want to be prepared for change if we want to grow. However, using an analogy that Bruce Dawson calls the Christmas Tree, I explain that people don't really *change*, we only *add new behaviours* (see Figure 1-3); and we can return to old behaviours at any time.

A good example of this would be a child's success or enjoyment at a selected sport or hobby and the increase in self-esteem. If, however, the child feels pressure from a parent or others and stops the activity abruptly, they can slip back to the old behaviours and again experience low self-



esteem. What children focus on determines their self-worth and once they know low self-esteem, they can slip back if they don't take action.

As you learn new skills, it becomes clear that you are still the same person, only with new tools. Although the term *change* implies making some great alteration, this is not quite true. We really need only to *add* in order to change.

I believe that children today are entering the early adolescence stage much sooner (e.g., age 9 versus the traditional age 13), but appear to be more dependent on parents. For example, how many 25-year-olds do you know who are still at home? Any time a youth has a problem with psychosocial development, it can result in various labels such as 'slow starter' or 'late bloomer,' which can have a direct effect on self-esteem.

Alexander Wolf, a prominent child psychologist, provides an interesting perspective on the development of ado-

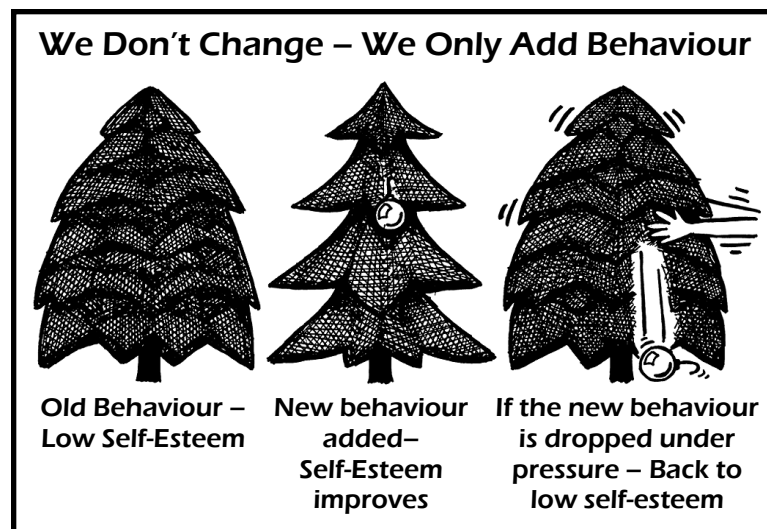


Figure 1-3 - We Don't Change, We Only Add Behaviour

lescents. He explains that, in the last 30 to 40 years, our society has taken a positive stand not to tolerate physical abuse. In other words, using physical force to control children is no longer accepted as healthy. He goes on to explain that, because of this, there now is a generation that does not fear adults. This is evident by the language and tone used by many youths. He explains that no one knew that the defiant behaviour of today's children may be one of the side effects of reducing corporal punishment.

I believe the solution to the above "side effect" is for parents to become acquainted with locus of control; develop a parenting toolbox with more options (choices); and believe they have the resources to parent effectively and with dignity.

As you look at your child, you may see two parts:

- *Home baby self*: This part wants no stress, anxiety, or responsibility and they want the parent to take care of them. They can be angry, demanding, and impatient.
- *Mature self*: This part is the opposite of the baby self. The danger here is that, when a child operates from the mature self, a parent can push too far and cause the child to become stressed.

The challenge for parents is to create an environment where children fall somewhere along the middle of the continuum between the baby self and the mature self.

My research leads me to agree with Wolf, that strict parents, who run an almost punitive military-like household, are much more likely to have children who act out as the baby self in school or in other areas. Parents need to realize

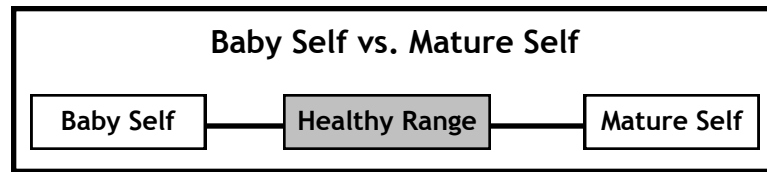


Figure 1-4 - Baby Self vs. Mature Self

that children are just that – children – and that it was not so long ago that they were children themselves. Though we may want our children to be responsible and compliant at all times, we usually fall short ourselves. Let's ensure, then, that we set realistic standards and take into consideration the human factor; we all want to be pampered at times. The goal of parenting is to coach children to the healthy range, as indicated in Figure 1-4.

According to Wolf, as the child moves to adolescence, parents will have to deal with four areas:

- Physical change.
- Cognitive change – starting to think like an adult.
- Sexual change – thinking about sex.
- Psychological change – the move of splitting dependency on the parents.

For parents of adolescents, I suggest you explore Wolf's writings, such as *Get Out of My Life, But First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl to the Mall?* Adolescent development is a phenomenon that's challenging and different for every child. From our personal experiences, we all know that it was challenging, but the majority of us still made it; and most of our children will make it, too.

As children mature, there's a natural separation from their parents as they develop their own autonomy. Remember this when your child makes a smart comment during a conversation and you are tempted to react immediately. It may be worthwhile to wait and talk to your child later, when they are not so involved in the baby self. For example:

BILLY: I don't see why I can't have more money. You gave Susan more this week.

YOU: Susan did extra work, which you could have done as well to earn more money.

BILLY: So? I still don't see why!

YOU: Billy, I'm sorry you don't see the point right now. (Say your closing remarks and separate physically from your child.)

Wolf's point is that you will go crazy trying to get your child to understand your logic all the time. He proposes that we need to function from the perspective that, "I may not be right 100 percent of the time, but this is my decision." When you make a decision early in the discussion and stick to it, you have fewer problems and your children know you are capable of making a decision and drawing clear limits.

Be aware that all children are not the same, and don't buy into the word *normal*. What's normal for one may not be normal for another. Help promote the idea that every child is unique and that everyone will grow up at some point – well, physically, anyway.

I support the following suggestions that Wolf introduces and believe they are invaluable when dealing with adolescents who are trying to navigate this stage of their lives.

**Wolf's Rules**

- Don't try to reason to the point where adolescents will understand the logic of your actions.
- Set clear boundaries and be prepared to enforce them.
  - ◊ Say the minimum that needs to be said.
  - ◊ Do what needs to be done.
  - ◊ Detach from the process.

When dealing with an adolescent in an argument, you are most likely dealing with the baby self, which is programmed to never quit. You need to stop the process.

**Parenting Styles**

As parents look at the development of their children, they also need to look at how they parent. Once parents identify their own personality type, they will better understand how their parenting style has a tremendous effect on their children.

John Gottman's book, *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*, is an excellent resource for parents. The traditional belief was that the primary emphasis of a child's development should be on cognitive development. However, with the work of Gottman and others, it's becoming more evident that emotional intelligence is a greater predictor of future success. What I find particularly interesting in Gottman's work is how he defines four styles of parenting:

*Dismissing Parents:* These parents treat negative emotions in the following ways: They ignore the child's emotions; they have no patience for the child's negative emotions; they use

distraction methods to quiet the child; they believe the child's feelings are irrational; and they show little interest in the child's efforts to communicate the emotions. These parents become overwhelmed, nervous, anxious, and are stressed by their child's negative emotions. They believe the child's emotions need to be *fixed* and take the stance that the child should not be allowed to dwell on the emotions.

Gottman goes on to state that children of dismissing parents are candidates for developing low self-esteem. They believe something is wrong with them because of the way they feel. They also have a difficult time controlling their emotions. The most insidious part of this is that the children feel that negative emotions are wrong, inappropriate, unwarranted, and of no value.

*Disapproving Parents:* These parents treat their child's emotions similarly to the dismissing parents; however, they have the additional traits of judging and criticizing their child's emotions. They greatly over-compensate for their child's negative emotions by setting specific limits; they over-emphasize traditional standards of behaviour and are extremely punitive when those standards are breached. They put time limits on negative emotions and believe that all problems should be corrected in a set time frame. They believe that the child's behavior is partially due to trying to gain power over them and that negative emotions make people weak and helpless (e.g., emotions such as sadness need to be quickly dealt with and eliminated).

Gottman believes that this type of parent leads children to the same outcomes and damage as the dismissing parent.

*Laissez-Faire Parents:* These parents treat their child's emotions in a laid-back manner. They freely accept all the negative emotions and offer comfort to the child who is expressing and experiencing them. They don't offer any real strategies on how to deal with negative emotions, nor do they teach the child how to cope with them. Thus the child does not develop problem-solving skills. These parents have the mindset that negative emotions are manageable only through time and there is nothing the child can do except ride out the emotion.

Gottman explains that this type of parenting does not teach children how to regulate their emotions or to cope with negative ones. These children have a difficult time concentrating, because they are forever dealing with emotions that they don't know how to handle.

*Emotional Coach:* This type of parent is the one I advocate as the crème de la crème. These parents look at their child's negative emotions as something of value and see an opportunity to develop closeness with their child. They can tolerate their child's negative emotions without judging or becoming impatient, and they are fully aware of their own emotions' impact on their children. They are not anxious that the negative emotions will be a concern. With the greatest respect, they value the child and their emotions and want to be able to assist their child to overcome the negative emotions in a healthy manner.

Gottman points out that when a child has negative emotions, the parent will greatly help by listening, using soothing language, and helping the child identify the specific negative emotion by giving it a name. The parent also offers

guidance and suggestions on how the child can effectively stabilize the emotion in a positive and learning manner. The parent's main emphasis is on teaching the child how to express the emotions, so that they do not become overwhelming.

Gottman states that using this type of parenting style will develop children who have trust and the ability to control their own emotions effectively through highly developed problem-solving skills. These children will have high self-esteem and will get along well with others.

As parents, we have the job of raising and guiding our children; because, in the end, it is their life to live and their job to raise the next generation. I do my share of reading and looking for what new research is saying. However, one of my best teachers in raising my children has been my wife, Sherrie. She takes parenting very seriously and is an excellent role model for me. I share a few of her best tips for effective parenting in Table 1-3.

### **In Summary**

Being a parent is one of the most challenging and rewarding roles that I know. When parents take the time to be *with* their children and to learn to be an effective parent, they will be much more at peace with themselves and, most importantly, their children will be much more content. Parents need to understand that no single theory or intervention will work best for every child. The best way for parents to work with their children is to first develop themselves by creating or adding new behaviours and skills.

The main ingredients of parenting begin with you. Parents can metaphorically help build tall, strong buildings or



small, humble burrows. Whether we like to admit it or not, the vast majority of the time, how our children grow into adults is based on how and what we teach and how we choose to role model.

### Sherrie Howatt's Top 20 Parenting Tips

1. Never hit! Ever!
2. Teach your children to use words instead of aggression.
3. Commit to spending large amounts of time with your children.
4. Show affection openly and freely to your children and your partner. State your affection as well.
5. Slow down and listen to what your child is trying or learning to say.
6. Laugh and play with your child.
7. Sing to and with your child – even if you can't sing.
8. Read to your child. Let them see you reading for yourself, then let the phone ring while you read.
9. Ensure your child's environment is safe, then let/help them explore it.
10. Get wet and dirty! Mud puddles, finger painting, and playgrounds – the activity is good for everyone, and even parents wash up easily.
11. When your child is hurt or upset, always comfort first, even though you just warned of the consequences.
12. Set boundaries for acceptable behaviour and then follow through by example.
13. When you need to say "No!," have options available.
14. Do not attempt to reason with children under 3.
15. Do not confuse your child with too many choices. Remember, you are the parent.
16. Be a full participant in your child's formal education.
17. Give your child a strong sense of extended family and the important role they play in that family.
18. Create an open home where your child's thoughts and friends are welcome.
19. When you make a mistake or misjudge your child, acknowledge you were wrong, say you are sorry, and forgive yourself.
20. Teach your child to love and take care of themselves.

One more from my mother:  
– KEEP A FULL COOKIE JAR –

Table 1-3 – Sherrie Howatt's Top 20 Parenting Tips

## CHAPTER TWO

# Healthy Parenting

*It's never too late to start to be with your children.* – Dr. Bill

**R**EGARDLESS of what you read or hear, if you're not healthy and don't feel good about yourself, your personal relationships, and overall health levels, you will not be the most effective parent you can be. It's imperative that you make wellness a major priority.

This chapter explores how you can maintain your wellness and reduce stress to healthier and more tolerable levels, both at work and at home.

### **Stress and Its Origins**

Salvador Minuchin's *structural family therapy*'s basic premise is that all family problems are developed from a dysfunction within the family structure. That family structure consists of the suprasystem, with its main components of family, community, and school, and the Subsystem of each (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

First, become aware of who is important to you. One useful exercise is to take the format of Figures 2-1 and 2-2 and write down your own suprasystem; then break it down into the smaller subsystem parts. This shows a picture of

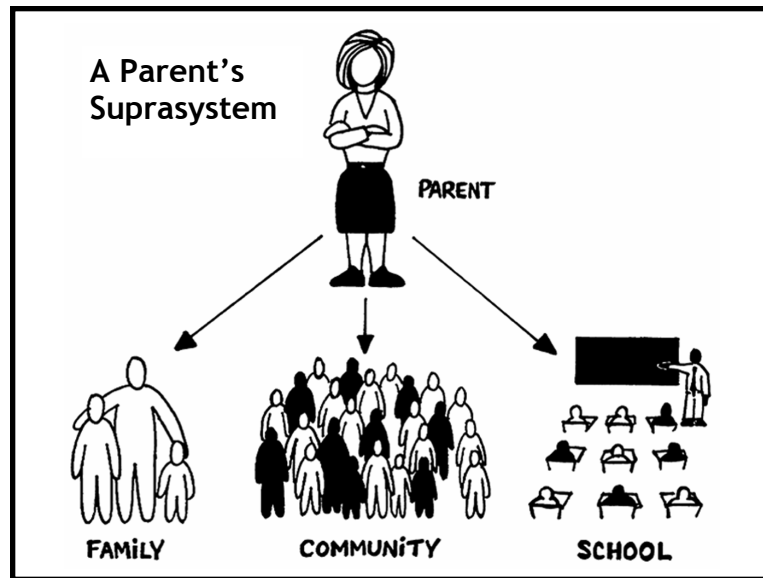


Figure 2-1 — A Parent's Suprasystem

those involved in your life and identifies the separate parts that require attention.

Minuchin's family therapy model will help you see how large your world actually is. This is important to know, because stress will affect all of the subsystems in some manner.

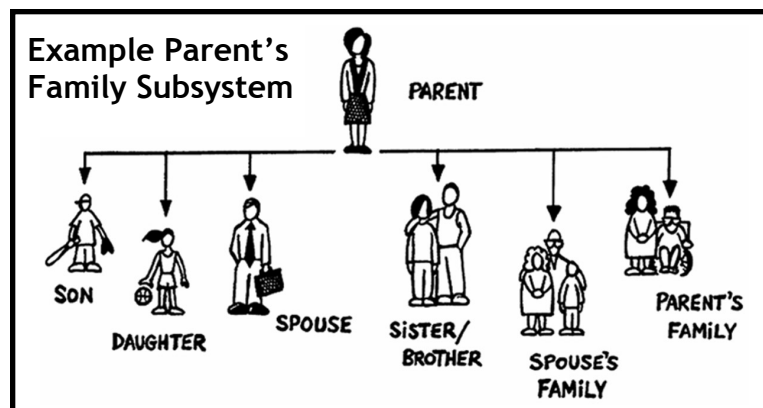


Figure 2-2 — A Parent's Family Subsystem

For example, a parent perceiving chronic work pressure may go home and argue with a spouse. The parent blames the problem on the relationship, when it's really the perceived work environment. So when addressing your health, first know what can be (or is) causing any stress.

### **Effects of Chronic Stress on the Body**

The famous Canadian stress researcher, Hans Selye, taught that a long, healthy and happy life is the result of doing things that are enjoyable and of value to one's quality of life. His text *Stress and Life* explains his General Adaptation Syndrome – the explanation of the body's or psyche's defense response to injury or prolonged stress. It consists of:

- An initial stage of shock or alarm reaction, such as getting children ready for school and rushing to work, starting the day's stress.
- A stage of increasing resistance or adaptation, utilizing the various defense mechanisms of the body or mind. We cope with, and tolerate, as much as we can.
- A state of adjustment and healing or of exhaustion and disintegration. Stress can take our body and basically shut it down. We usually call this fatigue.

The importance of understanding the General Adaptation Syndrome model is to become aware of what's happening to your body. If you continue to start the day without repairing most of the stress from the day before, you are at risk of serious physical and emotional breakdown.

As shown in Figure 2-3, the parent starts out the day already under some duress, because the previous day's stress

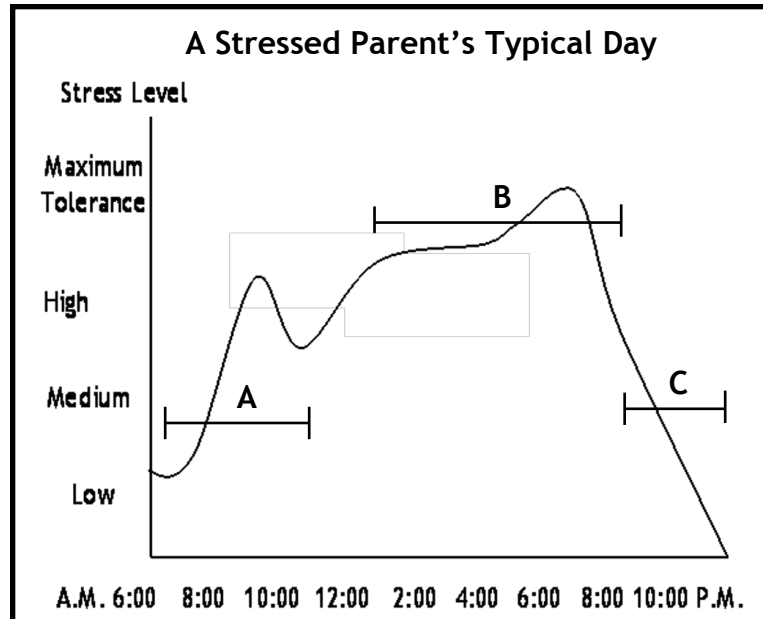


Figure 2-3 — A Stressed Parent's Typical Day

has not been entirely processed. The rush of getting the children to school creates a surge, but with coffee and the drive to work, the parent relaxes a bit. Then the reality of work, with its pressures and deadlines, peaks. The parent returns home; finds the house a mess; and no supper is ready. The stress level then spikes to its maximum tolerance, and, since it has been a long day, the parent can only maintain this level for a couple of hours until the body, in essence, psychologically crashes. Parents need to be aware that, if this cumulative cycle is not addressed, the ultimate victim is usually their own health.

### **How Stress Affects the Brain and Body**

As stress increases, parents can lose problem solving and organizational skills. They become forgetful, have increased anxieties, and may feel unsure of what to do.

When we are so stressed that we can't deal with what's usually easy for us, we are at risk of having negative self-talk and a negative feeling about our own worth as a person. Understand that this is inevitable for everyone under these conditions. The solution is to work on the root cause of the stress and use some stress reduction techniques, as outlined in the latter part of this chapter.

### **How to Keep the Brain Healthier**

Daniel Goleman has explained how humans have two types of mental intelligences – the traditional cognitive Intelligent Mind (IQ) and Emotional Intelligence. For optimum health, develop an understanding of both these intelligences and how the two communicate.

Goleman describes emotional intelligence as the ability to become aware of one's emotions and recognize them for what they are. He explains that individuals who have high IQs do not necessarily have emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence can be improved through information awareness and practice, just like IQ can be improved. Improving emotional intelligence reduces the chance of our mental processes turning on our *fight or flight* response when it is not necessary. An example of this is when we are late for an appointment. We may sense panic and fear; we continue to look at our watch and start to rush. If we are habitually late and have negative experiences from previous late episodes stored in our brain, the *fight or flight* mechanism will activate the emotional brain and we will be in the process of being “emotionally hijacked” (a sense of losing control and being overwhelmed by emotions).

Many times when we activate our *fight or flight* response, we are in no real physical danger. If we continue to engage in behaviour such as arguing over nothing, our bodies become toxic and can start to attack themselves, resulting in psychosomatic illness. The key point to remember is that our *fight or flight* response does not know if it's preparing us to run from an oncoming car or getting us to an appointment on time.

The only way to develop the skills needed to be healthy at high stress levels is to practice healthy living. Have a plan, such as a well thought out personal mission statement, to lead you in the direction of health.

### **Relationships**

Relationships can take many forms, depending on the partners and their individual personalities. How you parent is directly affected by the type of relationship you are in. If you are a single parent and are not dating, this section will not apply to you.

As you consider your current relationship, use the following descriptions developed by the famous therapist, Virginia Satir.

*A-Frame Dependency Relationship* — Both individuals are dependent on each other; there's little or no room for growth of either person.

*Smothering Relationship* — Individuals have a strangle hold on each other; there's no room for growth of either party and both feel trapped.

*Pedestal Relationship* — Partners love each other not for who they are, but for who they think they are; there's poor communication and they're emotionally distanced.



*Master/Slave Relationship* – One makes the decisions and expects the other to follow. There's one strong personality and one weak one, and no flexibility.

*Back-to-Back Relationship* — Some sort of contract exists in the living arrangement. Individuals live separate lives while leaning on each other but don't express love toward each other or communicate. If one grows, the other has to follow and is confined by the other.

*Martyr Relationship* – One sacrifices for others; it's a controlling relationship, because if one moves, the supported one is thrown off balance. Control is through guilt and feelings are suppressed.

*Healthy Love Relationship* – Two whole and complete people have happiness within themselves. Standing upright, they are able to lead their own lives; are flexible; are free to be individuals who are sharing their lives together; and have space to grow. They make a conscious choice to be together because of love, not for any feeling of unfulfilled emotional needs.

### **The Need for Balance**

Before we can truly parent to our potential, we need to balance our relationship to where we are safe and at peace. So, what type of relationship are you presently in, using the above criteria?

If you're single, you will need to screen any potential partners to ensure you are able to develop a relationship that is based on healthy love. Being a single parent is both challenging and rewarding, with the goal of raising healthy and happy children.

### **The Road to Personal Health**

People with high self-esteem usually are less stressed, so it's important to improve self-esteem. To do so, look inside and evaluate what you are presently doing that's not improving your self-esteem. Develop self-competency, which is the belief, knowledge, and skill of being productive and effective.

The key elements for improving self-esteem are:

- Take care of yourself. Look after your total health (exercise, rest, and diet). Relax . . .
- Develop support and intimacy. Have a solid and safe network of friends who provide a well-balanced and healthy support system.
- Be aware that we choose our thinking.
- Focus on positive self-talk versus the more used negative self-talk. If we can talk ourselves into misery, can we not talk ourselves into happiness?
- Be assertive. Stand up for yourself; express your feelings; and exercise your personal rights.

Self-esteem takes focus, awareness, and commitment to being fulfilled on the inside and to be able to feel good about oneself. One popular technique for obtaining personal balance is using meditation to help relax a busy mind and allow the mind and body can reconnect. Meditation is the best way to integrate the conscious and unconscious minds for mental and physical health.

Use guided visualization; everybody visualizes. Our daydreams, memories, and inner talk are all types of visualization. You can harness your visualizations and consciously employ them for bettering yourself and your life.

Practice progressive muscle relaxation to relax muscles and remove the tensions of the day.

I also promote the four pillars of health: exercise, diet, rest, and relaxation. If you feel strongly that you still may have a hard time, hire a coach to help you personally; you and your spouse as a couple; or your family. Sometimes an outsider can bring a tremendous amount of assistance to a family system, and with this will come increased health.

**In Summary**

Remember to take care of yourself, so that you can take care of your children. A stressed parent is an unproductive parent, and many times an unhappy one. When parents are unhappy, the risk is that the unhappiness will be passed on to their children, who learn the subliminal message, “Life is hard, unfair, and painful.” Let’s teach our children what life really is – “a time to enjoy, grow, love, and learn!”

## CHAPTER THREE

# Family Foundation

*If a home doesn't make sense, nothing does.*

– Henrietta Rippengen

**T**ODAY'S family is an active and living system. The key to building a quality family is to develop healthy relationships between all family members and to be aware of the damage to the family system when you focus only on individuals.

In Figure 3-1, you can see that each family member has an individual relationship with every other member. These relationships are unique and on-going. If, for example, a parent engages in a conflict with one child, or with the other parent, the whole system becomes unbalanced and every individual in the family is affected.

William Glasser explains that we cannot focus on discipline to build a healthy relationship; we need to learn how to create a system in which all family members can be successful (i.e., be safe, learn, grow, and meet their needs). This can happen by learning new skills and strategies.

Glasser suggests that the quality of a family will ultimately depend on how much trust the members have for each other, and this is established as children learn the answers to the following questions about you:

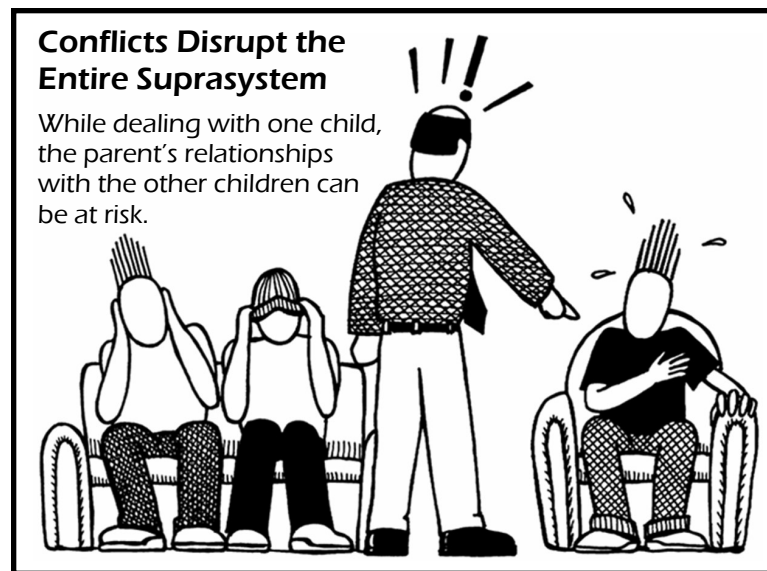


Figure 3-1 – The Family – A Suprasystem

- Who are you are?
- What do you stand for?
- What will you ask them to do?
- What will you not ask them to do?
- What will you do for them?
- What will you not do for them?

As family members answer these questions, they form individual frames of reference of what they believe you value. James and Woodsmall (1988) state that “values govern all human behaviour.” They explained how an individual develops set attitudes about children like Billy (see Figure 3-2). The figure shows how attitudes and beliefs are at a more conscious level of awareness than values and core values. To distance ourselves from the labeling of children, we must

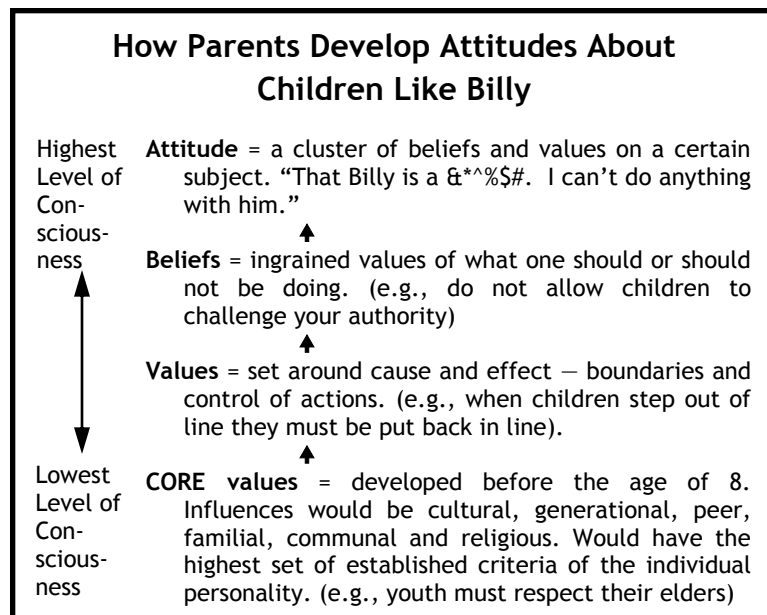


Figure 3-2 — Adapted from James and Woodsmall

first explore each of our own values. Through this process, our core values will begin to emerge.

Parents need to develop with each child healthy scripts that serve as a common ground and an understanding of how we develop values. Families with common core values are congruent and happy. One key to quality in a family is when parents can explain and show each member the value of what they promote as parents and how it will help to improve the future quality of their lives.

Unfortunately, many parents feel stressed and fearful of adolescents and their potential acting-out behaviour. This observation is the “us (parents) versus them (children)” scenario and leads to a finger pointing attitude, anger, and frustration.

Too many children are going through stressors of their own – the sense of hopelessness with no future; wondering about the value of education as they see peers and family members graduate with no jobs in their future; and peer pressures.

Many children today are living too much in hope and fear. For example, they *hope* they'll do okay in life; *hope* they get a few breaks; and *hope* their peers like them. Yet fear seems to underscore the hope as their general sense of powerlessness and helplessness become more apparent.

Too many youth also are losing hope due to the *Academic Illusion* – those who have studied and sacrificed to get the appropriate pieces of paper have not found employment. Some of these brilliant academic minds find it difficult to find a job or see a positive future. Parents need to build a foundation of open communication and a family system in which all members are working for the same purpose and in the same direction.

### **Communication is Key**

The key to building a family is to have healthy and strong communications. Following are some teaching points from James Dugger to help you communicate with your child.

- Be flexible. Be prepared to change role expectations and rules when they no longer are appropriate.
- Model positive behaviours. Most children model their parents' behaviour. If you drink five beers every day when you come home from work, your children will see this as acceptable behaviour and have tendencies to model this.

- Let children be responsible for their own behaviour.
- Talk with your children and help them to rely on you for emotional support. By talking about problems and issues important to them, you can negotiate changes in roles and rules.
- Accommodate each child's unique attributes.
- Find time to be *with* your child. Have a routine when you and your child can talk; choose a time that's conducive to communication and set a "date" with each of your children.
- Respond; don't judge. Use "I" statements (e.g., I hear you saying . . .)

### **Creating Role Descriptions**

A proactive approach to building a healthy family system is to have children and parents clearly define their roles. I suggest you start defining roles with your children as early as age 5. Since perception and roles are paramount for maintaining peace and building a quality family, this exercise is an excellent tool to clearly define each family member's role (Table 3-1). It should be updated once each year by the entire family.

### **Building a Family Road Map to Happiness**

Author and parent Stephen Covey has clearly demonstrated that a family life plan, with weekly family meetings, is a very powerful tool for keeping families in balance and together.

Scott Peck, world renowned psychiatrist and writer, teaches us that one of the biggest problems in society is the



Creating Our Roles	
What the parent's job is. 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	What the child's job is. 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
What the parent's job is not. 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	What the child's job is not. 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
Parent's Signature _____ Date _____	Child's Signature _____ Date _____

Table 3-1 – Creating Our Roles (adapted from Gossen)

lack of conscious thought. He uses the analogy of how people never go on a vacation without consulting a map or road sign, but they often do not spend any time thinking about who they are or what their purpose is in life. People need to think about where they are and evaluate if they are on the right course for quality.

The process of building a family life plan provides the foundation for establishing rules, boundaries, and limits – the criteria by which parents and children will conduct themselves.

### **Family Life Plans**

Following is a model for building a family life plan:

1. *Get family members' buy-in:* All family members need to have some contribution and participation in building the family life plan.
2. *Explore the purpose of the family life plan:* To be more specific, add supporting objectives.
3. *Explore pictures:* Family members share what they want individually and collectively.
4. *Explore beliefs and values:* Define the values that are the pillars your family will operate from.
5. *Final draft:* Write out your family life plan. It should be a one-page document that includes what each family member needs and the values that are driving the family plan. Have each member sign the plan.
6. *Revisitation:* Revisit the plan as a family, after two weeks, four weeks, eight weeks, and six months, and then annually. Revisitation is important to ensure the family is on track.

There's no right or wrong way to complete a family life plan. The key is the process and the commitment to meeting all family members' needs.

### **Addressing the Issue of Discipline**

I don't like discipline, because everyone has their own paradigm. What I do like, and recommend you try, is problem solving skills. I believe children who break rules cannot ef-

fectively meet their needs, so issues need to be resolved if they are to succeed. Curwin and Mendler provide the following points to consider while formatting a personal discipline plan:

- Focus on increasing appropriate behaviour and work to stop disruptive behaviour.
- Develop interventions and a discipline approach that fits your personal ethics.
- Focus on problem solving and helping children learn how to make better decisions.
- Role model appropriate behaviour.
- Ensure that all children are clear about your expectations.

I implore you also to adhere to the standards and boundaries of the family. Nothing will defeat the purpose of these exercises more than you having one set of rules for your children, and another for yourself. If you break a rule, it needs to be addressed in an appropriate manner. When children have an opportunity to be a part of the rules, it's an important lesson in learning personal responsibility and becoming accountable as a part of a healthy, viable community.

When enforcing a rule, it's important to have on hand, not only the rules, but the approach and consequences that the family has agreed upon.

### **Family Rules**

Creating rules is ineffective unless we have a clear definition of their purpose and the roles of who will enforce them. For example, rules could cover family boundary violations, fam-

ily core values, and the family life plan. Society creates laws to set minimum standards of behaviour. In the home, we create rules. I encourage families to work on life plans, to enhance civility, and to focus on what is possible – not the minimum standards. The purpose of rules is to create the lowest tolerable level of acceptable boundary violation of any particular family member. Family rules need to be made as much as possible with the children, but parents need to reserve the right to make executive rules that are not negotiable.

For older children, these would include drugs, crime, and sex; for younger children, hitting, pushing, and yelling. Parents need to ensure their children are clear about what is acceptable and what is not.

I recommend that you consider the rules that Barbara Coloroso lives by as a parent:

- Kids are worth it.
- Treat children how I want to be treated.
- If it's working and leaving both the parents' and child's integrity in place, leave it.

When creating family rules, keep them simple and concise, so all members are clear. For example:

### **Howatt Family Rules**

*Respect* – Treat people the way you want to be treated.

*Honesty* – Provide family members with true information.

*Health* – Be involved in behaviours that are healthy.

*Trust* – Trust that what Mom and Dad ask is for your and others' good.

I also promote to my own children six critical life messages from Coloroso:

- I believe in you.
- I trust in you.
- I know you can handle it.
- You are listened to.
- You are cared for.
- You are very important to me.

I believe that when a rule is broken, it needs always to be thought of as a time for learning. If a rule is broken, discipline needs to be carried out in a way that the child is clear

### **Tips for Dealing With Broken Boundaries**

- Understand the child's goals, behaviour, and emotions.
- Be both firm and kind. Many do one or the other – not both.
- Don't try to be a good parent. Don't over-protect; allow your child to experience consequences.
- Be consistent in your actions.
- Be realistic in your expectations.
- Encourage independence – let your child find their own identity.
- Don't be over concerned with what others think. This is your child, not theirs.
- Recognize who owns the problem.
- Talk less; act more.
- Refuse to fight or give in.
- Let everyone share responsibility.
- Model positive behaviours.
- Listen.

Table 3-2 – Tips for Dealing With Broken Boundaries  
Adapted from Dinkmeyer and McKay; Channing.

on what needs to be done differently – for the purpose of learning. Table 3-2 provides an example of how to deal with broken boundaries for positive growth.

When a family boundary or rule is broken, three things need to be accomplished:

- *Restitution* – The child is given the chance to fix the breach. This allows them to learn how to think and take responsibility for their actions.
- *Resolution* – Learning the skills needed, so it will not happen again.
- *Reconciliation* – A time for the rule breaker to spend with who or what has been offended, so each can see the true goodness in us all.

I believe families can start to add the above model to their life plan, so all members understand how the family will address broken rules. Relying on the wisdom of Coloroso again, the child has a chance to grow and learn as long as the discipline consequences are:

- Reasonable for the breach.
- Simple to carry out.
- Valuable for all parties to increase learning and self-growth.
- Practical and sensible.

When making rules with your children, it's important that you define the consequences. Children need to know what the natural progression is, and parents need to be firm, fair, and consistent. I recommend you create your family proce-

cedure for addressing breaches of rules. The following four-step example is only a suggestion. It's important that both parents and children have input, so there is ownership.

### **Examples of Different Consequences for Broken Rules**

The following section is intended to act as a guide for setting out consequences with your children for breaches of family rules.

1. Is it important enough to address, or do I as a parent need to cool down and think about the situation? If it's me and not the child, I need to create a plan for me. Once I cool down, then I may need to address the issue. The point is, never discipline when you are in a rage or angry.
2. Warning.
3. Opportunity for the child to come up with a creative solution to solve the situation and demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills, and attitude to be a participating member of the family unit.
4. The parent oversees the implementation of logical consequences for breaking the rules. For example, if a child is disruptive and abusive to a parent and does not choose to comply or establish control of their own behaviour system, the logical consequence would be issued by the parent. The consequences need to be pre-planned so the parent is in control and there is less chance of allowing emotion to rule the judgment.

For chronic offences, parents will benefit from using a structured problem solving model. (See Chapter 4.) Serious and chronic rule breaking may need to be referred to outside professional help for guidance.

It's important that you share my belief about physical discipline (e.g., spanking). I believe that spanking or hitting only teaches children to use force when they are scared, frustrated, exasperated, or wanting to make a point. It's never appropriate; it creates fear; and too often it leads to violence. There's always a better way to discipline than hitting children.

Some parents believe children already have too much fun and say that less fun would not be a problem. When the home is part of a child's quality world and a place of value, the potential for the child to be difficult will greatly decrease, because they will want to be there. This mindset helps children to be creative and gives them a sense of self-direction and fulfillment.

If you currently are not using humour, you can learn how to, and have more fun. There are humour workshops and readings to assist in developing humour skills.

Too often, families are labeled by children as *no fun*, and staying home will hurt them some way socially. These children are falling into what Merton called a "self-fulfilling prophecy": whatever one holds in one's mind (even subconsciously) usually will occur in one's life. The result is the child does not want to be at home, or finds home boring. I believe parents need to be proactive and work to create a home where children want to be.



**Guidelines for a Healthy Family Foundation**

- Parents need to ensure their own health and wellness.
- As a couple, be committed to each other in love and devoted to being loving parents.
- Develop family rules that will change as your family grows.
- Have each member develop personal plans of how they want to live their lives.
- Develop a family life plan that starts when your children are babies. The trick is to commit a period of time each week, month, and year to explore the effectiveness of the life plan, with the emphasis on changing it to meet the needs of your family.
- Hold a family meeting once a week to plan out the week's schedule, and compare individual timetables to avoid frustration.
- Eat as many meals as a family as possible – with no TV.
- Promote weekly themes, such as movie night, and do them consistently, regardless of children's behaviour.
- Spend time with your children and ensure you have at least 30 minutes of special time with each child once per week, like a date. Don't hesitate to schedule it.

- Separate parents' stuff from kids' stuff. Children don't understand what paying bills means. Do parent stuff as much as possible in parents' time, not children's time.
- Plan family vacations together.
- Do as many activities together as you can, such as camping.
- Take an active role in your children's interests, so you have common ground to talk about.
- Create rules together when appropriate.
- Play together – have family fun.

**In Summary**

To lay the foundation for a family means that everyone is aware of each other's roles, family direction, and the consequences for breaking family boundaries. The benefit is that when you do this, everyone will be communicating to put the process in place, and the communication between children and parents will help to enhance trust, relationships, and family security.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Solving Problems

*Out of clutter, find simplicity. – Albert Einstein*

PARENTS tell me that communicating and problem solving with their children are a constant challenge, but I have found that families who lay a solid foundation for communicating are in a much better position to solve issues as they arise. Whenever possible, involve children in their own problem solving and discipline. I have been counselling for 18 years and understand the value of a structured, step-by-step model, so I have developed the Parent's Counselling Model (PCM – Figure 4-1) as a tool for solving family conflicts. The model is intended to be a road map to solutions. You are the vehicle. Following are the six steps.

*Step 1. Build Rapport* – This first step makes the rest easy. Figure 4-2 shows that, for parents and children who get along, there is an overlap of common interest. This common interest, in Choice Theory language, is the sharing of Quality World pictures. If you want to be successful in helping solve your children's problems, you must have some common ground with them (e.g., sports, music, other hobbies). You need to spend time *with* your children.

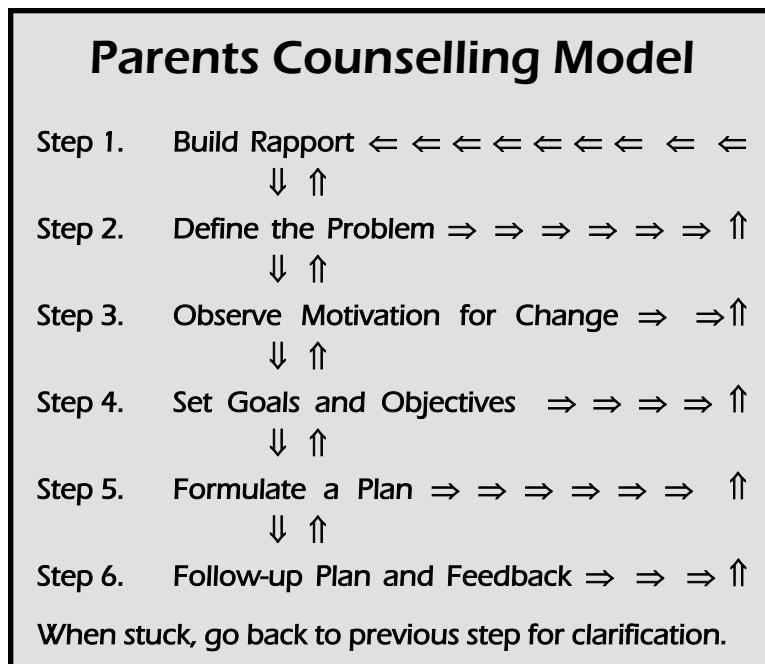


Figure 4-1 — Parents Counselling Model

*Step 2. Define the Problem* – The primary goal of this step is to obtain as clear a picture as possible of what's happening in the child's life, without increasing any resistance. From my experience, children display resistance when:

- They don't trust the parent.
- They don't understand what the parent is doing.
- They don't want to give up the old behaviour, because they can't see any other better options.
- They feel helpless and have a "give-up" mentality.

To assess the problem, you must be genuine, caring, non-judgmental, interested, supportive, compassionate, and willing to help your children grow. At the end of this chapter,

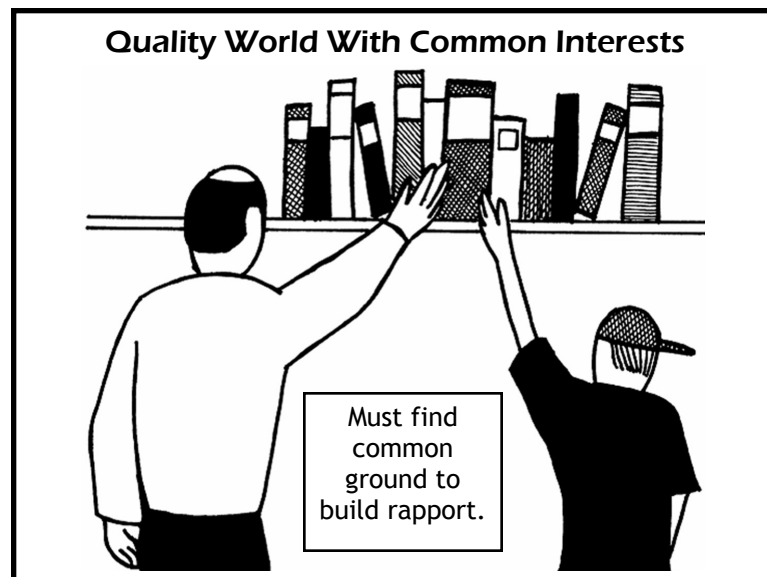


Figure 4-2 – Quality World With Common Interests

the PCM Problem-Solving Checklist will provide you with a reliable and consistent method to explore the problem and design a way to help.

If you have a difficult time determining the problem clearly, I recommend using Carkhuff's 5 W-Hs:

- Who was involved?
- What was involved?
- What did they do?
- Why and how did they do it?
- When and where did they do it?

*Step 3. Observing Motivation for Change* – There are times when a child is not ready or prepared to do anything about a problem (even though they have identified the problem or concern). If children are not prepared to address an issue, you

must allow them to experience the natural or logical consequences, as long as the safety of self and/or others is not at stake (e.g., abuse, violence).

The following frame of reference will assist you in assessing a child's readiness for change and provide a model to help move the child through the change (see Figure 4-3). I define change as when children learn new behaviours that help them believe they are in better control of their lives.

One major frustration for parents is when children refuse to believe they have any issues that require them to change, or when they show a lack of motivation for change. Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross call this stage the Pre-

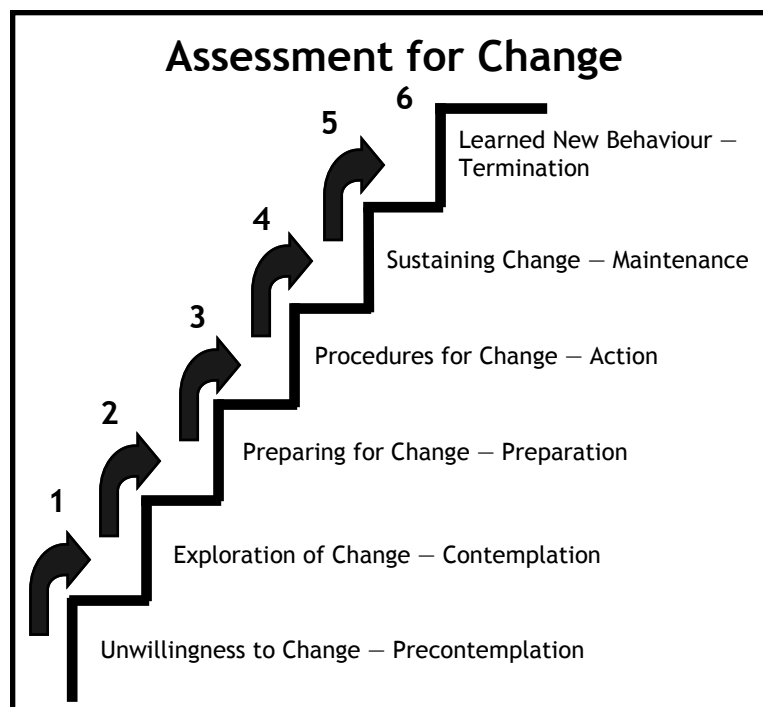


Figure 4-3 – Assessment for Change  
Adapted from Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross

contemplation Stage. It has been defined as the Unwillingness to Change Stage, where children are not psychologically ready, nor motivated, to address the presenting issue. They present with an unwillingness to change their present position, or have had insufficient time to process the information, and don't yet see the value in any new behaviour.

You must remember that you can only work to motivate children; you can't change them. When a child is in this mode, continue to build rapport and have them explain to you how the current behaviour is helpful.

When the child starts to have dialogue and show willingness for change, it's termed the Contemplation Stage. This stage has been defined as the Exploration for Change Stage, where children begin to make inquiries and explore the "what ifs," their potential, the effort required, and the new skills, knowledge, and attitude they will need to achieve the desired change (e.g., peace).

When a child is concentrating and focusing on change, it's the Preparation Stage. This has been defined as the Preparing for Change Stage, where you primarily serve as a resource and instructor to assist the child in developing the foundation skills necessary to learn new behaviours.

When the child is finally ready to initiate change, it's the Action Stage, defined as the Procedures for Change Stage. When children reach this point, they usually are highly motivated to set a specific goal to reduce their concern area.

One important caution – if the parent is in the action stage and the child is still in contemplation, there will be resistance. Parents need to start from where the child is, and then move forward. We cannot force solutions.

*Step 4. Setting Goals and Objectives* – In this stage, ask children what they want. Goal setting is the core foundation of this model. If we consistently pick and set goals for them, they will eventually resist. Our expectations need to be in relation to the child's potential. To expect a child to change two or three behaviours at once is most likely doomed to fail. Work at resolving one behaviour at a time and get the new behaviour on the road to habit. Treat all children as unique individuals and remember – no two are the same; they all learn and process the world differently.

To help solve a child's concern, there must be an identified goal. Form 4-1 (Page 57) will help brainstorm a plan.

*Step 5. Formulating a Plan* – In this step, depending on the child's motivation level, you and the child negotiate what the plan of action will be. It's important that the plan be specific, measurable, and time-limited.

The main objective of the plan is to meet the needs of all parties involved. Whenever possible, the plan should be child centered, meaning children need only to rely on themselves for success. Also, make a plan that allows for quick, measurable success, so the child can feel and identify immediate success and potential. Plans should never be overwhelming with no chance of success. Think big, start small, and build slowly. Expect relapses – they're a part of learning. Once the plan is developed, ask questions to test it with specific "what if" questions.

It's often much more effective if the child signs the plan, as a written commitment to it (see PCM Problem-Solving Checklist, pages 58-61). In essence, the child has signed a contract to further the development of personal responsibility.



*Step 6. Follow-Up Plan and Feedback* – Always follow up any plan. If we go to the effort of using this model, and the child is open to trying it, we must follow up when we say we will.

Becoming frustrated and upset will never excite children to change for the long term, so choose to stay calm and cool, and allow the law of natural consequences to be. It's the responsibility of the child to work as hard as you to resolve the problem, because it really is the child's problem – you can only offer guidance and support. If you are working harder than the child, ask yourself who needs to be the one putting in the effort.

## WORKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Betty Kingsbury, a Music for Young Children™ teacher in Kentville, Nova Scotia, offers some advice for parents of young children.

There will be times when your children will need to complete a task, even if they don't want to. Here are a few hints which you may want to try to help discourage the “no” and “I don't want to” responses. You will soon discover which will work with each child.

- Never **ask** a child if they want to do something. *Do you want to do your homework . . . Tidy your room . . . Practice your music*, will invariably be answered with “No” by most children. But if you approach the task with, *It's time to . . . Or, Let's . . . or we need to . . .*, you will be more likely to get a positive response.
- Offer to help whenever possible. No child likes a solitary task.

- Keep the task age-appropriate. “Clean your room” will be overwhelming to most children, but “Let’s tidy your desk,” would be much more manageable and not as discouraging.
- Don’t expect co-operation when your child is tired or hungry. After a meal or snack is a much better time than late afternoon or just before nap time.
- Don’t interrupt a favourite activity, such as a special TV show, and expect the child to be co-operative. Let the child know, however, that when it’s finished, there will be something to do.
- Choose a specific time of day for things like homework and try not to vary it. It will be more likely to become a habit in your child’s day if it’s understood that right after supper the work will be done.
- For possible problem areas, such as music practice, set a timer. Start with five minutes and gradually extend the time. Children will often respond with, “But I’m not finished,” when the bell rings. If this happens, set the time for a few minutes more and have them stop when the time is up. They won’t feel as if they’ve been working forever.
- Whenever possible, give your child a choice of jobs to be done. This gives them a sense that they have some control.
- Realize that your attitude will rub off on your children. If they know you are frustrated, angry, or tired, chances are there will be an argument.

- 
- For some children, small rewards work wonders. Some choices might include a new book, a trip to a museum, or a meal out at a favourite restaurant after a set number of days. Charts with stickers are helpful to use for keeping track of tasks completed. When they fill a row with stickers, they receive the pre-chosen treat. These charts can be made or purchased at some toy or school supply stores.
  - Be sure to encourage and give praise when deserved. You can usually find something to praise in what has been done.
  - Don't make your child feel guilty if the task is not completed perfectly. Recognize what has been done and perhaps save something for the next day.
  - Recognize that if the child is uncooperative or cranky, they may be ill, overtired, or overwhelmed by your expectations.
  - Encourage children to share their accomplishments with others, their family, friends, teachers, or visitors to your home. Reading, singing, or playing an instrument for others all contribute to building self-esteem and confidence.
  - Don't be timid about discussing responsibility as your children grow toward school age. Let them know that everyone has responsibility for something. Their first responsibility may simply be to take their dishes from the table to the sink or dishwasher. As they grow, you can slowly add others.

- Let your child know that “I can’t” is not acceptable in your home, but “I’ll try” is, and that it’s OK to make mistakes.
- Construct a PLEASE STOP sign from red Bristol board. If your little one is doing something they shouldn’t, put the sign in front of them. It can save some angry words.
- Make or purchase name tags to let family and friends know what was accomplished. A name tag may read, “Today I tidied my books.”

### **In Summary**

The goal is for families to experience happiness rather than conflict by developing plans for dealing with and resolving problems in effective and proactive ways.

### **Parents’ Guidelines for Solving Problems**

Following are 10 tips to guide you in keeping your cool as you deal with difficult situations and work with your child to reach a conclusion that is satisfactory to all.

1. Believe that parents are important in solving problems.
2. Focus on the facts of the problem; avoid opinions.
3. Deal with the problem now; don’t let it grow.
4. Avoid blame; it only creates pain.
5. Be creative and excited to help.
6. Be firm, fair, and consistent.
7. Be kind; it keeps minds sharp.
8. Never say never.
9. Communicate with the intent to learn.
10. Follow up on what you say and do.

Table 4-1 – Management Strategies for Problem Solving.

<b>Parents Counselling Model Goal Setting</b>
Name _____ Date _____
<b>A – Goal-Setting Plan</b>
What do we want to improve? _____ _____
What will things be like once we have reached the goal? _____ _____
What resources do we have to reach the goal? _____ _____
What do we need? _____ _____
<b>B – Goal Plan</b>
What will we do today to help reach the goal? _____ _____
What is our step-by-step plan for reaching the goal? Steps _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Parent's Signature _____
Child's Signature _____

### PCM Problem-Solving Checklist

CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

*See page 60 for detailed help for completing the checklist.*

1. Have you developed a rapport with this child? Circle Yes No  
If yes, evidence to support this perception \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If no, what is your perception? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. **Concern Areas** (problem)

Child's perception \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's perception

Do you agree with the child's perception? Yes No

Your perception \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. **Motivation for Change**

What stage is the child in? Circle appropriate category and provide a brief note to support the assessment.

Pre-contemplation Contemplation Preparation Action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. **Goals Wanted**

Short-Term Goals Identified Yes No

Long-Term Goals

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Skills Assessment**

(Point out child's strength to build on to solve problems.)

Strengths \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Action Plan** (be specific – time, categories, evaluation, and action plan)

Note: referrals if using.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Follow-ups and Evaluation**

(List dates, times, and initial and date on completion)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Comments****Parent**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Child**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **PCM PROBLEM SOLVING CHECKLIST**

The PCM Problem Solving Checklist (Form 4-2, pages 58-61) is an effective method of tracking what you are doing, and it is strongly encouraged that you incorporate it as part of your problem solving strategies.

#### **How to Use the Checklist**

*Section 1* – This is a reminder of how important it is to build rapport. If you don't have rapport, you can't help a child solve a problem in a mutually beneficial manner.

*Section 2* – This section compares your perception of the problem area with that of the child's. If you believe the child's perceptions are out of line with yours, seek to understand their internal frame of reference and then explain your position. Negotiate and come to an agreed upon concern area. Remember, if the child doesn't buy into it, the chances for change are minimal.

*Section 3* – Once the concern area is determined, assess the child's motivation for change. If it appears there's little motivation to work on the main concern, the plan of action may be to help the child become motivated to work on a plan.

*Section 4* – Be clear about the desired goal, so you and the child have a clear focus.

*Section 5* – Develop a skills assessment inventory. Take the opportunity to point out the child's strengths around building a resolution for the concern area. It helps set the stage for success.

*Section 6* – The action plan is the "doing section." It details what the child is going to do, when, where, how, and with



whom. It needs to be challenged and explored in detail for troubleshooting potential problems.

*Section 7* – List specific times and dates for follow-up and specific details for evaluation.

*Section 8* – You or the child may have a few general comments that may be valuable to record.

*Section 9* – Both you and the child need to sign and date the Checklist.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Conflict and Crisis

*Having the potential to see beyond conflict  
allows for solutions. – Dr. Bill*

IN all homes at one time or another, the family has to deal with the task of resolving conflict or addressing an unruly child. One of the 20th century's most famous lawyers, Gerry Spence, states in his book *How to Argue and Win Every Time*, "We must argue – to help, to warn, to lead, to love, to create, to learn, to enjoy justice – to be." We do not, however, need to tolerate violence and abuse.

Conflict in homes most always comes from some family member not having a need met. The conflict, if not resolved, will often grow to the point of acting out behaviours and even aggressive violence. Parents are not only projecting violence to their children, but children now, it seems more than ever, are projecting violence towards their parents. The purpose of this chapter is to provide parents with a crash course on how to address conflict and acting out behaviours.

One of the most relevant books a parent can read to support this chapter is *Green Eggs and Ham*, by Dr. Seuss. Sam-I-am is trying to have his friend eat green eggs and ham. When the friend says *no*, Sam-I-am continues to make the same request, while remaining non-judgmental and creative.

To be creative, non-judgmental, and not take things personally are challenging skills to learn.

Dr. Seuss teaches the importance and benefits of behavioural flexibility for creating solutions. Parents need to be flexible so they can create or use alternative behaviours to solve a problem. To have behavioural flexibility, you will need a toolbox full of useful interventions.

This chapter will introduce a variety of tools to help decrease the number of conflict/crisis situations. Don't expect a few techniques to work for every child, but the more skills you develop, the more behaviour flexibility you will have and the safer you will be.

Flexibility will enable you to work effectively with a wider variety of children's concerns and crisis situations. Although you will be exposed to a variety of ideas there's no better judgment in a potentially violent situation than your gut instincts. Using this instinct and the suggestions offered here will help you reduce the likelihood of getting hurt or falling victim to unnecessary violence. No matter how much *with* time you have with your children, the day will come when there will be conflict. It's an occupational hazard of being a parent; however, how prepared you are will determine the impact of the situation on you and your children.

I strongly believe that children must be held responsible for their own behaviours, and we must be held responsible for never giving up on children. For this to happen, it's important that we uphold the family's and society's boundaries in a firm, fair, and consistent manner; children who breach these boundaries need to face the natural and logical consequences of their behaviour. Too many parents think they need to solve all the problems in-house, and if they can't,

they are not good parents. This is wrong. It's important to know that there's a point when you need to call for outside support (e.g., police and counsellors), when what you are doing with your best intentions is not working.

Good parents know that they are unable to control a child's behaviour, thus they teach their children to own their own behavior. I have found that parents too often take co-ownership of the child's problems but don't help the child initiate a new behaviour. For example, one mother, whose son beat her regularly, would not call the police, because she thought he would get into trouble. My question is, if she lets the behaviour continue without intervention, when the son eventually grows up, what behaviours do you think his future wife and children have to look forward to? We do our children no favors by ignoring serious misbehaviours. Regardless of the behaviour, parents need to set the benchmark and teach children what is acceptable and what is not.

### **THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION**

One critically important parenting practice is good communication, and the basis for all good crisis intervention is a basic understanding of communication and how it works.

One useful way to explain human communication is through the transactional communication model (Figure 5-1). At any time in communication, there's a tremendous amount of information being exchanged and processed at high speed between two people. James and Woodsmall (1998) state that in all communication, people delete, generalize, and distort the content. As you are aware, many times you ask children something, and they respond as if they didn't hear your point; they only offer theirs. In fact, they have

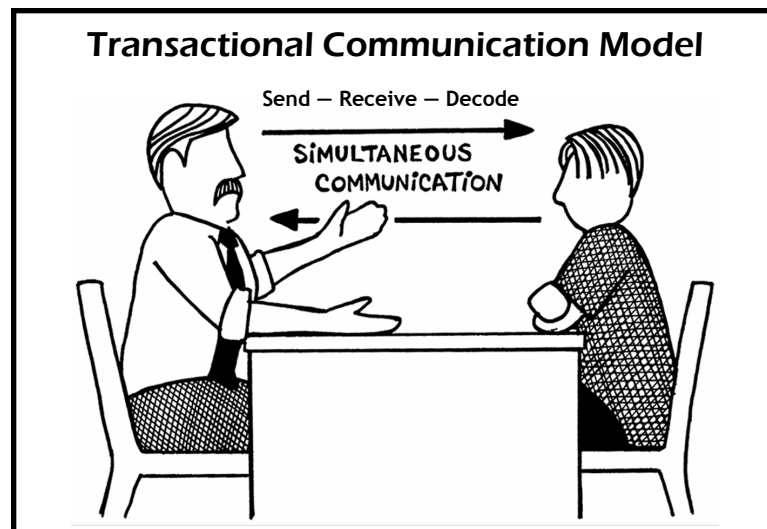


Figure 5-1 – Transactional Communication Model

deleted some content. Be aware of this, re-frame your content, and try again. For example, “Billy, I appreciate your point, and I would like to suggest you now consider . . .”

This will help lower and deflect your child’s anxiety and will also help you strengthen your relationship by building more common ground. Good communication involves listening. It also is important to understand that what a person is trying to communicate, or send, may be received in a completely different context than was intended.

### **Communication Blockers**

As with all communication theory, there are important considerations as you develop communication skills. From my experience, there are blocks to communication that need to be removed before it can be improved. A few examples are as follows:

- *Diagnosing* – Labeling the child's behaviour.
- *Judging* – Making a negative statement about the child.
- *Lecturing* – Telling what you think is wrong with the child.
- *Ordering* – Providing no alternatives for the child.
- *Prying* – Asking the child 'why' questions that are personal.
- *Preaching* – Challenging what the child's ethics should be.
- *Providing answers* – Telling the child, without their permission, what you would do in this situation.

To keep the lines of communication open, avoid these "blockers" as much as possible. When you do block the communication, recognize what has been done and correct the situation by apologizing, if appropriate. It's important that children see you role model how to correct mistakes.

#### Communication Points to Remember

1. Be patient.
2. Make a plan of how you are going to deliver tough messages.
3. Talk out your plan with peers.
4. Make a plan in writing, if necessary, and carry through your conversation.
5. Help the child explore alternative solutions.
6. Explore alternatives through brainstorming.
7. Assist the child in choosing a solution.
8. Discuss the probable results of the decision.

Table 5-1 – Communication Points to Remember

Not allowing children a vehicle to argue or to work out family conflict is an injustice and unacceptable. Without it, we rob our children of an opportunity to show their individual creativity and to build one of the most important skills they will need in life – expressing and defining their opinions or points of view. We must allow children to argue in an atmosphere where fear is reduced and where learning and growth are supported.

### Tips to Talk

1. Make Time. Be prepared to listen; set a specific time and place if the present isn't appropriate.
2. Observe your child's desire to be with you, such as: hanging around you more than usual; finding excuses to be near you.
3. Find your talk location (e.g., one-on-one; quiet place; car ride). \*Often an activity-related talk such as this will seem less threatening to the child.
4. *With time* doesn't always mean *talk time*. If the child becomes silent, don't press the issue. If after several minutes the child still hasn't opened up, suggest another meeting. "Sometimes I don't feel like talking either. That's OK. Why don't you think about it, and we can sit down again on . . . at . . ."
5. How to be with a child:
  - Safe eye contact – don't stare them into the ground
  - As few interruptions as possible
  - Physical reassurance, such as patting the child's hand or arm
  - Patience
  - Confidentiality
  - Open-mindedness
  - Honesty regarding emotions
  - Expression of genuine feelings
  - Ability to deal with the situation in the present
  - Ability to view the individual and situation as unique
  - Sincerity
  - Non-judgmental words or actions
6. Conversation wrap-up and, if necessary, plan to meet again.

Table 5-2 – Tips to Talk

### ADDRESSING FAMILY CONFLICT

The remainder of this chapter offers a variety of approaches to address conflict in the home. Since no two situations are the same, having a variety of tools in your 'active intervention toolbox' will help you to have behaviour flexibility. Crisis/conflicts in a home can fall on a continuum from minor (e.g., Billy didn't pick up his shoes when asked) to major (e.g., Billy gets into a fight).

I believe that the only way to be prepared for a crisis is to be mentally prepared. It's not practical to figure out what to do as you go – there are simply too many variables.

No matter how minor the crisis or conflict, pay heed to the following advice: "Always use good form, always be effective parents, and follow through on your actions." The phrase *good form* means, be aware of all of your micro skills and develop your own style.

There will be times when things will become personal; however, you need to have an outlet to get things back into perspective, and yourself back in personal control (such as a proactive health and well-being plan). You will burn out faster and be less productive if you are not prepared for crisis and conflict situations. Everything in this chapter will be useless unless you practice, experiment, and mentally prepare yourself for all the various situations that may occur.

### DEALING WITH FAMILY CRISIS

To address any crisis situation you may encounter, such as a child losing a relationship; having an accident; suffering an illness; calling you from jail; coming home high on drugs; getting pregnant, the following Six-Step Model, developed by Gilliland and James, will be an invaluable tool.



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**Crisis Management Model**

*Step 1. Define the Problem:* Before you address a child, be clear in your mind what the problem is, who has the problem, and the intended outcome.

*Step 2. Ensure Safety:* Never put yourself in a dangerous situation. Create boundaries to ensure your personal safety, as well as the child's.

*Step 3. Provide Support:* After you address the child, assure they have your support and access to community resources.

*Step 4. Provide Alternatives:* As you approach a situation, be prepared to use a variety of skills. The alternatives you have available come from preparation and will pay huge dividends.

*Step 5. Make Plans:* Have your resources and alternatives available to quickly create a plan of how to address a child. You don't have time on your side in the majority of situations. Be confident in yourself and continue to apply different combinations until the situation is resolved. Help a child in conflict make a plan based on the resources available. When a child is in serious crisis, you may need to give more directives. A good sign that children are starting to cope more effectively is when they start to be more creative and begin to problem solve again.

*Step 6. Get a Commitment:* After any situation, get a commitment that the child will address the situation to the best of their ability with the knowledge and skills available at that moment. It's important that children learn to use the past only to recognize what they have done that's good. Discourage using past memory for self-torture. The plan is solidified

when you can get the child to make a written or verbal commitment. It's my experience that a written commitment is often more valuable.

### **Addressing Acting Out Behaviour**

Acting out behaviours can create a crisis for both you and your child. I define crisis as: when individuals or systems are overwhelmed and unable to access behaviours that would improve the present situation.

Before introducing interventions, it would be helpful to have a clear idea of how you currently address conflict. Thomas and Kilman provide five ways in which people react to conflict. Which is yours?

- *Competing*: The parent responds in an aggressive manner, perceiving that there's a power struggle with only a win-lose conclusion.
- *Collaborating*: The parent is assertive but also highly collaborative: looks for a win-win solution.
- *Compromising*: The parent takes a middle-of-the-road stance, willing to give up something but never fully gives up nor collaborates with a child.
- *Avoiding*: The parent avoids conflict and prefers apathy.
- *Accommodating*: The parent is non-assertive and gives in to children all the time.

Which one represents your method of dealing with conflict? How is it working?

The philosophy of the remainder of this chapter is based on the assumption that you want to be a collaborator during

conflict (or at the very minimum, a compromiser). Although all positions deserve some merit, I believe in working toward the goal of becoming a collaborative problem solver.

The value and benefit of working from a collaborator's position is that you and the child can maintain your positions in a healthy manner while seeking to understand the other's position. This may take more time up front when learning, but will pay huge dividends down the road for both of you, because the child learns how to communicate and negotiate wants and true needs in a socially acceptable way. As Glasser teaches, if new behaviour is to become meaningful, the individual needs to understand its value and benefit. It takes a great deal of role modeling to show children that they will get further in life by collaborating, not competing; and that they also will be much happier and satisfied.

A few questions for a competing parent to consider are:

- How is competing working for you?
- Are you getting tired of always competing for control?
- If you could have a chance for more collaboration and you did not feel like you were losing control, would you be interested?

As you explore the interventions in this text, you will quickly find that all we have to resolve conflict are our knowledge, skills, and attitude. The best any text can provide is knowledge. It's your responsibility to grow with it and develop the skills through practice and personal growth. As for attitude, the ball is in your court.

Glasser teaches that people in crisis often can't tell what's causing them to be upset. The *fight or flight* reflex

can't recognize or categorize what the perceived threat really is. For example, the threat could be a mad, charging elephant, or a bossy two-year-old little girl. When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive and you perceive one or more of your basic needs being threatened, your system will turn on its protective *fight or flight* response.

### The Cycle of Acting Out Behaviour

To work with any challenging child, it's important that you are aware of the behavioural, emotional, psychological, and spiritual components that are involved in the situation. Both you and the child can go through this cycle, because when you both have a chemical dump of the *fight or flight* response, a small situation can escalate and become out of control.

Once you learn the biopsychosocial model of acting out (Figure 5-2), you will have a better chance of choosing self-

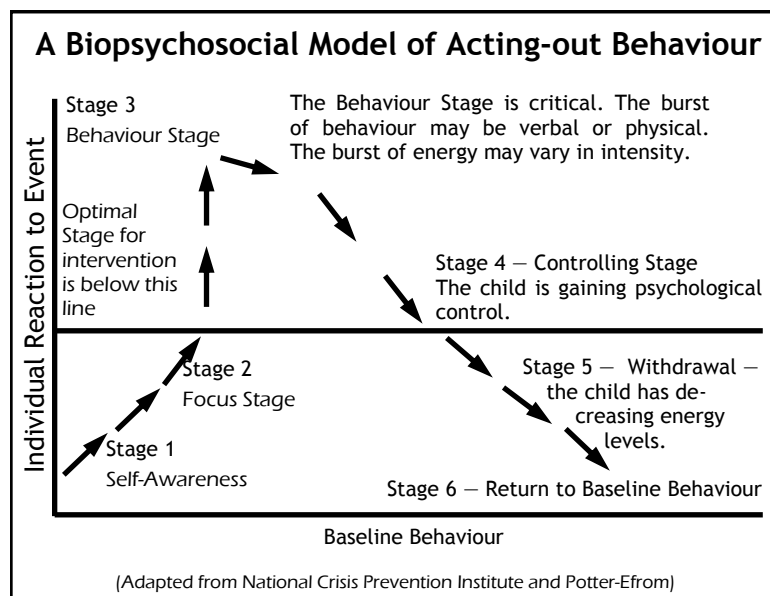


Figure 5-2 – A Biopsychosocial Model of Acting-out Behaviour

control in challenging situations. And when you are able to maintain your self-control, there's less fuel for the conflict to escalate and a better opportunity to resolve it. The following will explain the different steps of how a child moves through this model.

### **The Escalation of Billy**

When Billy perceives that one or more of his basic needs (love, power, fun, freedom, survival) are being threatened, the emotion he usually chooses to regain control is anger, due to his frustration (unmet needs). Figure 5-2 shows how Billy starts to lose control of his system; it indicates optimal times for active intervention and times to avoid intervention, except for providing support and protecting other children and oneself.

A clear model of how a child cycles through anger will help you know when and where intervention will be most successful.

*Stage 1. Self-Awareness* – Billy perceives that his needs are being threatened when you tell him to put away his shoes. He may not be aware that one of his needs is not being met; however, he is aware that he doesn't want you addressing him, and he progresses to the next stage. He may not have done anything inappropriate yet, but he's working from his own perception system, which leaves him capable of moving fast to the next cycle and being one step closer to losing control.

*Stage 2. Focus Stage* – Billy starts to turn all his attention to what is creating (what he believes are) painful emotions; begins the *fight or flight* chemical dump; and becomes exclu-

sively focused on the parent. In this stage, there can be a sudden change in their non-verbals, such as body posture, facial expression, body movement, closing of hands, or colour change in the face.

It's imperative that you are aware of the correct micro skills needed to avoid further escalation (explained later in this chapter). Even with the best interventions, Billy may go to the next stage; however, the more skills you have, the less chance Billy will continue to feel threatened.

*Step 3. Behaviour Stage* – At this point, Billy's behaviour system is frustrated and he has no choice but to choose a behaviour. This is a crucial point. It's at this point many children believe that the environment is controlling them; they truly believe they have no control. You must be cautious at this stage. It becomes imperative that you work from a non-aggressive stance and stay on the defensive.

In this stage, Billy will have an increase in his anxiety that will be recognized first by a change in his non-verbal communication. As he becomes overwhelmed with emotion and has a difficult time forming rational thoughts, it's a scary moment for him. He can quickly have a burst of acting out behaviour – verbal or physical.

This burst of energy is the natural way for him to release tension, but you don't want this release directed at you. After the surge of energy, there will be a decrease of intensity, which is the first sign of control. This is usually a short stage, if not challenged.

**SAFETY NOTE:** It's critical that you don't challenge the child in this stage, but there may be exceptions to this rule when personal safety is an issue. At this time, Billy has toxic

chemicals in his body from the initial response. If he cycles through this perception-anger-danger-release sequence again, he has the potential to act out with increased intensity. He needs time to reconnect with his environment and regain psychological control.

*Step 4. Controlling Stage* – Billy is now able to start processing information. This includes not only internal information (e.g., “I must gain control”), but also external information (e.g., Parent [to Billy] “It appears we are both a little upset. Let’s take a few minutes before we talk”). It remains important that you not challenge or press him, as this may precipitate cycling through again.

*Step 5. Withdrawal Stage* – As Billy withdraws his energy and interest, he is no longer “acting out.” He now will re-integrate himself into his environment and start to process other stimuli. He now is attempting to meet other needs. He initially got angry because he perceived his parent was challenging his self-worth. After the incident, he may (if given the opportunity) immediately begin working to meet his belonging need, because he wants to fit in to the family and not to be looked at as being out of control.

*Step 6. Return to Baseline Behaviour* – In this stage, Billy’s psychological, physiological, and physical behaviour systems all begin to settle down. However, even when he appears to gain control, it will take between 24 and 72 hours before the physiological system will return to pre-elevation levels.

One major point to understand about this model is that children are not the only ones to go through the stages. What usually happens is that the parent is one step behind the child. When the child is entering the controlling stage,

for example, the parent may be in the behavioural stage. This is dangerous, because you may start to direct energy towards the child, which may re-elevate the conflict.

Just because you are an adult doesn't mean you are immune to the loss of psychological reasoning indicative of the behavioural stage. I've heard numerous stories of when the child acted out, then the parent lost control and the child ended up being the one to defuse the situation. The self-control that you need is directly related to Internal Locus of Control and the ability to improve your emotional intelligence.

#### **MICRO SKILLS FOR ADDRESSING CRISIS/CONFLICT**

Following are micro skills to assist you in addressing your children's behaviour, whether it's mild or severe. This section is intended to increase your verbal skills to help you reduce the potential for conflict and crisis situations.

*Active Listening Skills* – Use active listening skills to be more effective in a conflict or crisis. The following three points are an adaptation of Egan's work on how to use active listening skills:

- You must want to hear what the child has to say.
- You must genuinely want to help the child at that time.
- You must see the child as someone separate from yourself – a unique person who has their own feelings.

Dugger teaches that using active listening skills during an argument is the first step to defuse a potential conflict situa-



tion. The following five-step technique has been modified for parents:

1. Focus on the issue or behaviour, not the child.
2. You don't have to agree with the child, but it's crucial that you respect their right to a difference of opinion and acknowledge their sense of value.
3. Avoid absolute statements, such as "you always" or "you never."
4. Own your position by sending "I" messages.
5. Focus on the content, use your skills, and suspend your emotions.

You may not always be able to avoid arguments or conflict by using active listening skills; however, you will be able to minimize conflict and build rapport.

*Avoid Attacking Self-esteem* – In any intervention, be aware of the language you use. It's not what you say to the child, it's more how the child receives the information that counts. Also, avoid making comments that imply a threat or are threatening to a child's self-esteem (e.g., "You're always in trouble, and this time I am going to . . .").

When you make statements to children, be prepared to carry them out. If you fail to follow through, you run the risk of losing your own self-esteem and the child's respect; however, if the statement is in the form of a threat and is carried through, the child's self-esteem will be at risk. You must avoid threats, because they create an opportunity for friction and also give the child opportunity to reciprocate with another threat.

*Purposeful Statements and Questions* – Purposeful statements and questions will help build rapport and gain insight into the child's view of the world. To work through a conflict, have the information, not only from your view of the world, but from the child's as well. The following section will help you ascertain what is happening from the child's frame of reference.

- *Probing questions* open up or invite the child to make further comments or provide more information.  
Example: "Billy, I'd like to know more about what's happening in this situation."
- *Clarifying questions* are designed to clear up any misconceptions you may have regarding the information provided.  
Example: "Billy, when you say he picks on you, what exactly do you mean?"
- *Justifying questions* are used to clarify any information that you heard the child say at an earlier time.  
Example: "Billy, earlier you said Sam was picking on you, now what I'm hearing you say is that it's Fred. Can you please explain to me who is really picking on you?"
- *Consequence questions* explore with the child their perception of the consequences or perceived outcomes.  
Example: "Billy, if you keep picking on Sam, what do you see is going to happen?"
- *Summarizing statements* are used after the child has delivered their message. You summarize the child's message using your words to ensure clarity and to show you were listening.

- *Validating statements* acknowledge the value of the child's position. During questioning of the child's view, it's important to validate their position.  
Example: "Billy, I understand that this is a tough situation for you."
- *Encouraging statements* keep the child talking to assist you in obtaining more information.  
Example: "Billy, I have heard you so far, can you please tell me more?"
- *Paraphrasing statements* allow you to restate what the child is saying and what it means. In other words, you are guessing the child's view of the world. If they disagree, you can simply try again.  
Example: "Billy, you're frustrated because you don't know what to do now."
- *Selective Attention* is a questioning technique that focuses on bringing the child back on track to discuss the topic at hand.  
Example: "Billy, I understand from listening to you that Sam and you have had a previous run-in. Could you tell me more about what happened a few minutes ago between you two, so we can solve this concern?"
- *Positive Assets* are statements that point out a child's positive behaviour.  
Example: "Billy, I see you were able to clean your room. Good job! I appreciate this positive gesture."

*"I" Messages* (assertion statements that promote self-responsibility) – An "I" message is a dignified, clear way of

expressing pleasant and unpleasant feelings or thoughts to children. An “I” message contains these components:

- A statement of behaviour that’s found to be objectionable (e.g., “When I saw you toss a glass . . .”)
- How you felt (e.g., “I was concerned”)
- Reasons for your feelings and/or expectations of better future behaviour (e.g., “Because it disturbed the meal . . .”) Wait for child acknowledging your statement before going to the new desired behaviour.
- State what you want (e.g., “In the future, will you agree to not toss your coat on the floor?”)
- Check for compliance (e.g., “Do you know how to do that?”)
- Review (e.g., “Quickly review for me what you will do.”)
- Thank you (e.g., “Thank you and/or I love when we work things out.”)

The power of “I” messages is your role modeling the importance of taking responsibility for your own perceptions.

*Reality Therapy Questioning* – Reality Therapy is a powerful method for defusing crisis and conflict and to re-establish safe boundaries. Reality Therapy is action language – it will get children to self-evaluate the action quickly, so that they can make new choices.

Example of a Reality Therapy evaluation question:

PARENT: Billy, whose shoes are those?

BILLY: They’re mine.

PARENT: What's the rule about putting shoes away?

Or (if met with a challenge)

PARENT: If you continue to do what you're doing, what do you think is going to happen?

The following examples have been developed by Gossen to help set and maintain limits. These techniques will save time, minimize conflicts, and reduce the chances of the crisis escalating:

Step 1. What are the rules? (If no response, state the rules.)

Step 2. Can you do this?

Step 3. If no verbal response, such as OK, just pause, then say, "Thank you, I appreciate it."

*For establishing roles:*

Step 1. What's your job/my job? (This is built around earlier established boundaries – see Chapter 4.)

Step 2. What's my job if you don't follow the rules we agree on? (This is also built around earlier established boundaries.)

*To get a child back on track:*

Step 1. What do you want?

Step 2. What are you doing?

Step 3. Is it working for you?

Step 4. Do you want to make a new plan? (If child does not want to make a plan, move on to step 5.)

Step 5. What's my job if you continue doing what you are doing?

*Using Direct Boundary Statements* – The purpose of boundaries is to make clear and concise limit statements so children know exactly where you are and what boundaries they are about to infringe upon. When children act out, their behaviour has the potential to escalate into anger – both verbal and physical.

Example: “Billy, please stop pushing Sandra, (pause) and eat your supper. Thank you.”

The statement needs to identify the stop behaviour, the start behaviour, and then an acknowledgement.

*The Power of Silence* – When parents are dealing with challenging situations, one of the most effective strategies is to be quiet, especially when the child is in the behaviour stage of acting out. Your presence alone will help the child. It also gives you and the child time to process information and to become aware of what’s happening. This will allow the child to vent feelings and collect thoughts and you to collect yours. One of the keys to reducing the intensity of a situation is to buy time so the child can gain control – silence may allow this to happen.

*Responding to a Critical Child* – Sometimes children are critical of their parents. The following is an adaptation of McKay and Fanning and is intended to help you deal with a critical child.

- *Acknowledgement:* This type of response allows you to simply agree with your critic – the child. Acknowledgement quickly and effectively deflates a critic. When the child hears you agree, both of you are able to protect your self-esteem.

Example:

BILLY: I wish you'd pay more attention. I'm having trouble following your directions.

YOU: You're right. I should not assume you understand what I'm saying all of the time.

- *Clouding*: This is a token response, and not necessarily accurate. You're appearing to agree and the critic can be satisfied with that. But the unspoken, self-esteem-preserving message is, "although you may be right, I don't really think that you are."
- *Probing*: This is a response to vague criticism – you must use probing questions to see where the criticism is coming from, its intent, and its meaning.

Example:

BILLY: You never listen.

YOU: Never?

BILLY: You don't even care.

YOU: Don't care?

*1-2-3 Magic* – Use Dr. Phelan's 1-2-3 Magic with children between ages 3 and 8 to get them to comply with boundaries. The first step is to explain how you will address disruptive behaviour, then follow through. In a short time, you will see the magic of 1-2-3. The following example shows the basics:

*Step 1.* Billy is picking at his brother. You hold up one finger and say, "Billy, that's one." Don't say anything else.

*Step 2.* If he continues the behaviour, wait five seconds, hold up two fingers, and say, "Billy, that's two." Don't say anything else; don't add emotion or dialogue.

*Step 3.* If he still continues the behaviour, wait another five seconds, hold up three fingers, and say, "Billy, that's three. Go to your room and take five (minutes)."

*Does It Really Matter?* – Gossen promotes something I truly believe — does it really matter? If it does, then you should intervene. The basic premise is that the overall attitude and beliefs of parents may sometimes create problems. Gossen believes parents should ask themselves, "Does a particular behaviour really matter?" or "Is it a behaviour worth intervening in?" and answering "no" lets them selectively ignore the behaviour. However, if the behaviour is a serious breach of boundaries, then the parent should intervene.

*Yes, if. . .* – Gossen also suggests using a "yes, if . . ." instead of a "no, because . . ." statement as much as possible. The "yes, if . . ." technique tells children they can continue their behaviour if they can show that the objective will be met. It's a wonderful method to promote self-responsibility and problem solving skills.

Example:

BILLY: Can I go to a movie tonight with Tom?

YOU: Yes, if you can tell me how you will get your homework done, how you will get home, what time you will be home, and the consequences if you're late.

*When It Gets Too Emotionally Hot* – Barbara Coloroso explains that, in a crisis situation, when you perceive the conflict as turning into a dangerous personal attack, it's always acceptable to:



- Call TIME OUT (e.g., “We are both too angry to talk right now, Billy, let’s take a break and then talk.”)
- Refuse to take abuse. Separate and move to safety.
- Insist on fair treatment. As a parent, your job is to treat your child with respect and, in return, you should receive fair treatment.

### **Extreme Boundary Behaviours and Tips to Stay Safe**

Unfortunately, too many parents are being faced with acting out behaviour that can be extreme. The following section is intended to be a guide and to provide a frame of reference.

*Violence Being Directed At You* – No matter how skilled you are, there may be a time when a child will not disengage and appears to be interested in attacking in a violent manner (e.g., aggressive verbally, physically threatening, looking for a weapon). Through my experience of working with adolescents in this frame of mind, the following stay-safe method has proven effective.

1. Use positive self-talk — “This individual is dangerous, I must stay calm and not add fuel to the fire.” Don’t make threats; don’t try to push a position of power; don’t touch.
2. Keep your distance and work to keep lines of communication open. Maintain eye contact when culturally acceptable.
3. Focus on getting assistance, if possible, and try to keep the incident isolated.

4. Listen to the child; be passive, and say, "I understand this is difficult for you." Use strong empathy for the child's position.
5. Suggest to the child that they don't want to harm you; that they are frustrated; that they just need to get a bunch of crap out their system, and that you are there to listen and support.
6. Be co-operative and allow the child to save face; buy time. It's important that you remember that you don't have to win right now. You should focus on not getting yourself or others hurt.
7. As the child calms down, allow for silence, build rapport, and discuss the incident. Praise the child for gaining self-control.

*Important Note:* Supporting an angry child as they go through the process of losing emotional control may be the safest alternative available. As already mentioned, when a child loses control, it's a period of time when they have lost cognitive rational thought. Working with people who can think clearly and make well-thought-out choices is much better.

It's imperative that children be given time to think clearly. If a child continues to demonstrate anger, does not calm down, and appears to be intent on doing harm, remove yourself quickly from the situation if you are not trained to protect yourself.

*Suicidal Threats* – The reason children decide to take their own lives can be hard to understand. Children contemplate suicide when they believe, for whatever reason, that suicide is the only way to stop the pain. Few youths actually want

to die; they want the pain they perceive to stop. Some of the popular reasons youths think about suicide:

- Depression.
- Family problems.
- Social problems.
- Low self-esteem.
- Reaction to an important loss (e.g., parent, boy/girlfriend).
- Pressures of society to be good or acceptable.

When you perceive a child may be thinking about suicide or is making threats about suicide, you should never dismiss this information. Also, if you believe a child is contemplating suicide, you will do no harm by using the suicide intervention model offered below. It's important to disprove the myth that confronting a child with this concern will lead the youth to the awful act.

*Warning signs to watch for:*

- Verbal threats.
- A previous attempt.
- Depression.
- Increased problems in school that are inconsistent with the child's previous behaviour.
- Substance abuse.
- Sudden change of behaviour.
- Sudden happiness.
- Giving away possessions.
- Unusual purchases.

Suicide is a reality. You need to be aware that many youth can become frustrated and angry. You need the knowledge, skills, and attitude to work with the possible threats from a child who wants to take their own life. In addition to being prepared, you also must understand that, ultimately, the individual is responsible. Despite the best intentions and interventions by professionals, some youths have still killed themselves.

If a child is showing signs and symptoms of suicidal behaviour, you may not have the luxury of referring them to a professional. You may need to engage the suicidal child with a suicide intervention, because there is no one else. You may be the only thing between this child living and choosing to die. A user-friendly intervention is the five-step suicide intervention model described by Wubbolding.

*What to do if your child is talking about suicide*

- Step 1. "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" You ask this question when it is suspected that the child is thinking about suicide or has actually expressed it. Don't be concerned that this question will plant a seed for suicide.
- Step 2. "Have you tried before?" You ask this question to explore if the child has attempted suicide before. Wubbolding states that past attempts are the best predictor of suicide. A previous attempt puts the child at a much higher risk of attempting it again. Continue collecting information by exploring: "When? What happened? What gave you hope then?"

- Step 3. “Do you have a plan?” Gabbard states that suicidal children should be asked outright if they have a plan. You should find out as much detail as possible about the plan so you can share it with the appropriate authorities, such as mental health. All threats must be taken seriously.
- Step 4. “Do you have the means?” Explore if the child has, or has access to, the necessary equipment to carry out the plan (e.g., gun, rope); if so, it greatly increases the risk. NOTE: Even without a specific plan, the child may still be at great risk and may act on impulse to complete the suicide.
- Step 5. “Will you promise yourself that you won’t kill yourself on purpose or accidentally? For how long?” If a child is seriously thinking about suicide, get them to make a commitment not to hurt themselves until the appropriate authorities can help (e.g., mental health). The contract (Figure 5-3) may be for any amount of time; it’s to build a commitment and keep the child safe.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Non-Self Hurt Contract</b></p> <p>I promise myself that I will not hurt myself on purpose or accidentally for the next _____ (period of time), until my parent is able to assist me to get help with my situation.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>
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Figure 5-3 – Non-Self Hurt Contract

## CHAPTER SIX

# Stress in Families

*A house is where you are, not where you ought to be.*

— Jill Robinson

**W**E need to be prepared to address the various types of stress that can face a family and how it will have an impact on our effectiveness as parents. Families can be exposed to a variety of factors that cause a great deal of stress. This chapter explores some situations that families may need to address and then work together to resolve, so that the family system can become as stable as possible.

### **Major Factors That Cause Stress in Families**

Following are some major factors that create disruption in the family system. It's by no means a complete list; however, it is a starting point. I have not included ADD/ADHD, as there are many resources available on this topic.

**Abuse** – This includes emotional, physical, sexual, and/or neglect of a family member. At any time, if you perceive that a child (under 16 years old) is suffering from any of the various forms of abuse, you are legally liable to report your concern to the appropriate authorities (e.g., Family and Children's Services, police). The worst thing is to do nothing and expect that it will go away on its own. All kinds of

support systems are available to help. All you need to do is call your local family services department and they will give you the needed coaching.

Reports of abuse are kept confidential, unless the matter goes to court and the person making the report has to give evidence. But failure to report abuse can result in a substantial fine or time in jail. Similar penalties can be imposed for false accusations of abuse.

Bayless and Cutter provide the following behavior characteristics of children who may have been abused: regressive behaviours; delinquent or aggressive behaviours; sexual promiscuity; poor peer relationships; unwillingness to participate in physical recreational activities; increased use of drugs; and confession of abuse to a trusted adult.

Neglect is when a parent or other individual responsible for a child fails to take proper care of the child; this is considered a form of abuse. A parent is considered to have abandoned a child as soon as the child is in a situation of danger and neglect. It's an offence to leave a child under 16 years of age without making adequate arrangements for supervision "that are reasonable in the circumstances." The maximum penalty for abandoning a child under 10 years of age and endangering a child's health is two years in jail.

*What to do:* When a child discloses to you that they have been abused in some manner, the steps to follow are:

1. Define the problem in your own mind from the information given by the child. Talk to the child in a safe environment and allow them to communicate at their own pace.

2. Always believe the child. Never contradict or argue with the child, and listen carefully to what he has to say — what he is telling you is real and scary.
3. Keep your cool. Don't allow the child to see angry emotions. Let them know that they are not at fault in any way for what has happened. This is the beginning of the recovery process.
4. Keep the child in a safe environment and assure them that you will and can help, and that you will keep them safe.
5. Inform your family service agency as soon as possible to ensure that the process is in action.
6. You must document everything the child has told you, and everything they do. It's important to have accurate records.

If the family member who is being abused is over the age of 16, the concern moves from a legal issue to a moral one. The intervention is set for you by the law of the land: you must report the case to family services and/or police. There is never an exception to the rule. Can you live in a family system where one member is being emotionally, physically, or sexually abused? I hope the answer is NO. When you're lost, ask for guidance, and know that there are people available to help. Stop the cycle. I suggest all parents need to have a simple belief: no tolerance for any type of abuse.

**Adoption** – Having been adopted, I was fortunate to grow up without facing the crisis of questioning my own existence, such as who my biological family is; because for me, my adoptive family is my family. I was able to accept at an



early age that being adopted by a loving family meant that I was chosen – I was wanted. Others can experience feelings of not belonging; withdrawing from the adoptive family; questioning their cultural identity; spending a lot of time alone; depression; feeling rejected; or turning to substance abuse. These all are signs that the adopted child is having problems and questioning their existence.

*What to do:* Help the child understand the wonderful thing about being adopted: “You were chosen and wanted.” Don’t think it’s a personal attack on you if the child wants to find their biological parents. Keep the lines of communication open and deal with the concern as a family. If the child is having a difficult time, have them see a counsellor who knows about the implications and the crisis that a child can go through. The concern is real and is no reflection on whether you raised the child effectively or not. It’s an individual who is struggling with their own existence and needs guidance. If the issue is not addressed, it can lead to a serious set of problems for the entire family, such as the child running away or using drugs.

**Anger Control Problem** – People who have difficulty controlling anger may have aggressive outbursts, frequently over-react in situations, have negative body language, and make swift judgments, often resulting in verbal abuse. Depending on where in the cycle of anger the family member is (see Chapter 5), you need to confront the inappropriate behaviour in a firm, fair, and consistent manner by setting boundaries. Although, if safety is a concern, don’t intervene without support (e.g., police official). Individuals in an explosive anger stage should be left alone until they are able to calm

down, as long as they are not causing immediate danger to themselves or others. People become angry because they can't meet a desired need, and they use anger to get what they want. Anger needs to be addressed so that it does not become habitual, and before someone gets physically or emotionally injured.

*What to do:* Chapter 5 provides step-by-step methods to assist in developing intervention techniques to work with children who are angry and explosive. It's important that you remember that anger is a complex phenomenon, and until the child learns the knowledge, skills, and attitude of coping strategies for dealing with anger, hostile behaviour will continue. Interventions include helping children discover the triggers for their anger, how they respond to anger, and teaching them how to redirect their anger.

**Grief Over a Loss or Death** – All families at some time experience some type of loss. It is important to note that grief

Community Resources	
As a parent, you are never really alone. Some sources of help are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Alcohol and drug agencies</li> <li>• Adult Children of Alcoholics</li> <li>• Al-Anon</li> <li>• Alateen</li> <li>• Alatot</li> <li>• Alcoholics Anonymous</li> <li>• Canadian Mental Health Association</li> <li>• Church groups</li> <li>• Community Leagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community service clubs (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs; Big Brothers/Big Sisters)</li> <li>• Continuing education</li> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Doctors</li> <li>• Narcotics Anonymous</li> <li>• Parent groups</li> <li>• Private counselling services</li> <li>• Social service agencies</li> </ul>

Table 6-1 – Community Resources

is subjective, and no one else can determine what is or is not a loss except the individual experiencing it. Keep in mind that death is only one type of loss that may cause grieving.

Cunningham provides the following list to indicate whether a child may be having a difficult time dealing with a loss issue:

- Shock and disbelief – Having a difficult time putting the event into a real context.
- Guilt – A sense of personal guilt over the loss or death.
- Unusual happenings – In a case of death, it's not uncommon for youths to believe they are hearing voices or seeing a certain person in a crowd.
- Thoughts of suicide.
- Increase in sexual activity because of the need to be close.
- Increase in drug and alcohol use to numb the pain.
- Increase in anger.
- Increase in emotions and tears.

Be aware that many young people don't have the knowledge, skills, or life experiences to draw upon to believe they can get through the grieving period.

*What to do:* The *Crisis Intervention Guide* suggests:

- Let the person know that you are aware of their personal loss.
- If grieving the death of a friend, you may attend the funeral in support of the grieving person.

- Explain that you are aware of the loss and that you are there for support.
- When talking, never say clichés such as, “You’ll get over it.” Be supportive and non-judgmental. Allow the grieving person to talk about the loss, and suggest a support group or assistance, if appropriate.

In a family system, all members will grieve differently. We now know that people go through a cycle and that family members can be helped by people specializing in grief, going to grief groups, and being allowed to grieve on their own

### The Kübler-Ross Model

#### Stage 1 – Denial and isolation

“No, it can’t be true, there must be some mistake!”

- Initial response to painful news.

#### Stage 2 – Anger

“Why me?”

- Denial is abandoned for feelings of rage, jealousy, bitterness, and hostility.
- Anger is normal, but a difficult stage.
- Anger is an attempt to gain attention, respect, understanding, and control.

#### Stage 3 – Bargaining

“Just give me another chance, and I promise . . .”

- Negotiate with God or physician for time.
- Delusion of reward for promises and/or good deeds.

#### Stage 4 – Depression

“What was it all for?”

- Confronted with the many losses in addition to death: career, money, loved ones, possessions, etc.

#### Stage 5 – Acceptance

“There’s nothing left to say or do.”

- Quiet acceptance.

Table 6-2 – Kübler-Ross Model for understanding the grieving process.

timetable. If you're concerned about excessive grieving to the point of potential suicidal behaviour, call in the local support system immediately (e.g., mental health counselors). See the Kübler-Ross model (Table 6-2) for understanding the grieving process.

**Moving Crisis** – A moving crisis occurs when the family relocates from one residence to another, leaving familiar community and friends behind. As Cornille explains, some signs indicating that someone in the family may be having a difficult time might be: sadness, irritability, worrying, apprehension, changes in appetite, anxiety, stress, withdrawal, frustration, and nightmares.

*What to do:* Help family members adjust to a new environment by educating them about the new community – *before* the move. Some family members who have relocated can be intimidated and feel threatened by all that's happening. Someone may feel labeled as 'the stranger,' etc. All members need to feel welcomed and safe. You can help by educating them about local resources, support groups, or activities in the new community; ask a peer to help familiarize a member with the new community. Be supportive, patient, non-judgmental, and allow members to grieve their perceived loss.

**Separation and Divorce** – When parents separate or divorce, it can be a very traumatic experience for the entire family. Baxter reports the following signs evident in children: isolation, depression, emotional distress when talking about parents, difficulty sleeping, difficulty attaining academic goals, problems with weight or appetite, denial, anger, guilt, shock, and disbelief. The effects of separation/

divorce include low self-esteem that may lead to overt behaviours, including increased sexual activity, delinquent activity, feelings of guilt, and perceptions that they were responsible for the breakup.

*What to do:*

- Recognize that this is a painful experience for children and monitor their behaviour.
- Offer support and guidance and assure children that they can talk to you about what they are experiencing.
- Help children address the grief and loss (e.g., using peer support groups).
- Use journal entries or other activities that allow children to express their feelings. Assure them that feeling angry and upset is normal and OK; however, avoid remarks such as, "You'll get over it." Allow children the privilege of going through the process at their own speed.

**Step Family** – There are challenges when a parent is no longer a part of the family, either through death or divorce/separation, and is replaced by a new member. Step families are complex units that revolve around great balancing and adjustment phases, especially when the new family unit consists of children from two different original family units. In this situation, the children not only have to adjust to a new parent (authority figure), but also new siblings. The question that also arises is, has the child fully grieved and accepted the loss of the original family unit? Step families can have noticeable symptoms that can be monitored. Keeler offers the following:

- The child can grieve the loss of a parent; this can lead to feelings of rejection.
- The child can feel a loss of identity, leading to competition for attention of the adults, or feel torn between two homes (in the case of separation/divorce).
- The child can have feelings of uncertainty regarding what is right and wrong, because the new step family may have new rules.

With the new family situation, children may perceive massive change, leaving them in a state of flux and adjustment; this state can present difficulties when they develop compensating behaviours in an attempt to balance their scales. Use compassion and empathy to help during this stressful period.

*What to do:*

- Offer reading and bibliotherapy about step families and how people can overcome the difficulties of change. The Internet is an excellent resource for you and your child; there's a tremendous amount of material available.
- Offer and assist the child in developing a journal program to express emotions.
- Assist the child to work through conflict using negotiation skills outlined in this text, and help the child learn how to present their concerns to the new family unit.
- Help the child develop assertiveness skills (e.g., 'I' messages) to express feelings and concerns effectively.
- Find a teacher, volunteer parent, or other person with whom the child has some rapport, to support and explore

the step family experience together. Peer support also may offer strategies and coping skills for the child.

- Build a family life plan (see Chapter 3).

**Single Parent** – Being a single parent can be a great stressor for the family system. The parent needs to take on the difficult task of role modeling for both genders. If the family system is stressed, it's usually because the parent's feelings of being alone and over-worked become overwhelming.

*What to do:* The key is for the parent to first find balance. As a single parent, understand the importance of your health and wellness. As Peck teaches, to be a good parent, you need to be a healthy parent. Don't think you're alone. There are lots of support groups, counsellors, clubs, and perhaps other family members who can help.

**Substance Dependence** – Alcohol and drugs have no conscience and think nothing of ruining your family, so be wary of their growing influence on a family member. Chemical dependence includes drug and alcohol dependency and/or abuse. You can recognize family members who are increasing their usage by observing their overt behaviours. For example: experiencing a loss of friends; loss of interest in previously fond activities; lower levels of energy; skipping obligations; change in achievement; severe mood swings; truancy; poor self-concept; increasingly negative outlook; trouble with authority and/or the law (Jongsma, Peterson, & McInnis). Many young children are offered drugs before they reach their teens, so it's important to teach children the effects of drugs before they actually come in contact with them. As a parent, you're in the best position to listen, pro-



vide advice, discipline, and support. Tables 6-3, 6-4, and 6-5 have information about drug classifications, why children do drugs, and warning signs of drug use.

*What to do:* The best strategy is prevention; there are a number of things a parent can do, including:

- *Lead by example* – Show self-respect and take care of yourself.
- *Communicate* – Talk with your children; encourage them to express their views; actively listen.
- *Get the facts* – Get accurate and current facts on drugs and help your children objectively review them; learn from the experience of other parents by talking to them and reading.
- *Express values* – Discuss the meaningful, realistic, and important values that you share; help your children make sense of lifestyles that they see on television, on the news, and in the community.

Legally Available Drugs	Illegal Street Drugs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol</li> <li>• Tobacco</li> <li>• Caffeine</li> <li>• Gravol</li> <li>• Solvents, household cleaners, glues, nail polish remover, paint thinner, cleaning fluids, glues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marijuana/Hashish</li> <li>• Cocaine</li> <li>• Heroin</li> <li>• Hallucinogens (LSD, acid, MDMA, Ecstasy, etc.)</li> <li>• Crack</li> </ul>
Prescription Medications That Can Be Abused	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antibiotics</li> <li>• Sleeping pills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain medication</li> <li>• Steroids</li> </ul>

Table 6-3 – Drug Classifications

- *Make choices* – Give children the opportunity to make choices suitable to their age level and let them know it's normal to have problems; make choices to solve their problems; ensure that they consider the consequences of their choices.
- *Focus on learning* – Help your children to develop learning skills to deal with problems; be an active learner; avoid acting like you know it all; where you can, work to find answers together.
- *Make rules* – Establish clear, reasonable and safe rules in consultation with your children
- Follow up on the rules.
- Be ready to change the rules as your children grow up.
- Be clear and enforce the consequences of both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

### Why Children Do Drugs

- Drugs provide a quick and powerful way to make life seem more pleasant or detach from negative feelings or experiences.
- To feel like they are grown-up.
- Drugs provide an easy substitute for taking control of one's life in a stressful world.
- Curiosity.
- To go against parents.
- To help them relax and have fun.
- Adults do it all the time.
- To fit in.
- To escape from boredom.
- They like feeling drunk and high.
- They feel more confident.
- Parents drive them crazy with demands and expectations.

Table 6-4 – Why Children Do Drugs

- *Be there* – Encourage and participate in a variety of activities with your children and help them reflect on their learning experiences, difficulties, achievements, and benefits; positive reinforcement is always good practice.
- *Be reasonable* – Put yourself in their shoes and remember how you felt when you were in their position.
- Be a good example to your children.

Warning Signs (Indicators of possible drug use)	
<b>Changes in School Performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower grades</li> <li>• Frequently late</li> <li>• Absent</li> <li>• Falling asleep in class</li> <li>• Discipline problems</li> </ul>	<b>Changes in Eating or Sleeping Habits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insomnia</li> <li>• Napping at inappropriate times</li> <li>• Weight loss</li> <li>• Sudden increase or decrease in appetite</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in Physical Appearance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red eyes</li> <li>• Lack of cleanliness</li> <li>• General deterioration</li> </ul>	<b>Changes in Friends</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or different friends who are very different in appearance, behaviour, and goals</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in Behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moodiness</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Hostility</li> <li>• Hypersensitivity</li> <li>• Loss of interest in previous hobbies or activities</li> <li>• Familiarity with drug culture and hangouts</li> <li>• Lying</li> <li>• Poor self image</li> <li>• High anxiety</li> </ul>	<b>Physical Evidence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding drug paraphernalia (e.g., hash pipes, burnt knives, syringes, rolling papers)</li> </ul>

Table 6-5 – Warning Signs of Drug Use (Royal, 1992)

- If you drink, your children will learn how by watching.
- You can choose not to drink.
- Keep children away from alcohol in your home.
- Don't ask children to get you a beer or to mix drinks.
- Don't offer your children tastes of your drink.
- The younger children are when they take their first drink, the more likely they are to have alcohol problems later on.
- Be sure your children know that you don't want them to drink.
- Make sure you know all the facts on drugs and alcohol.
- Be honest with children; if you can't answer a question, say so, and look for the answer together.
- Try to find out what's bothering your children.
- Let your children know that you love them.

When you suspect that a family member may be using drugs or alcohol excessively, you must address them in an assertive, non-judgmental manner. This allows you to disclose your concerns and communicate that you are ready and willing to help and find resources to address this concern.

Family members who choose to use/abuse chemicals frequently do so in an attempt to tranquilize themselves, because they believe they are unable to meet their needs or deal with chronic stress. Once the family member chooses to

accept help, available interventions include the local drug dependency clinic and the local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, whose members are conversant with current issues. Those organizations often have children among their members who can offer peer support. Table 6-6 contains suggestions of how you might intervene.

Frequently, the family member needs to know that what they are doing is normal behaviour that occurs when people are frustrated and scared; they need to learn new skills to help them deal with life issues, or face grave consequences.

### How to Address Your Child's Drug Use

1. Prepare your approach
  - Plan your discussion with your spouse or main support system.
  - Wait until you are calm and composed.
  - It is important to note that if the adolescent is under the influence, it's best to wait until the effects wear off. If necessary, get medical assistance.
2. Address the problem, and stick with the facts
  - Begin by calmly but firmly expressing your awareness of the drug use, and your concern.
  - Ask how your teen feels about using drugs, and getting help.
  - Reject the behaviour, not the child.
  - Deal with the real point of the conflict in the present.
3. Maintain and promote the family's boundaries
  - Follow prearranged consequences if rules have been broken (e.g., family mission statement breach).
  - If discipline is necessary, ensure that it is logically linked to the drug use.
  - Children should be held accountable for their actions.
  - Use the Problem Solving Model.

Table 6-6 – How to Address Your Child's Drug Use

Substance dependence and abuse is a major problem in today's society. If it affects the family's income, emotional happiness, and safety, it needs to be addressed. I recommend calling addictions experts to help coach and provide a list of interventions and alternatives. Chemicals don't love or help families, so it's difficult for a family to be healthy when drugs are present. This problem needs to be addressed first, before a parent can focus on anything else, such as goals.

**Bullying** – *Psychology Today* describes bullying as a pattern of repeated aggressive behaviour with negative intent directed from one child to another, where there is a difference in power (e.g., size, age, or numbers). Most bullies have low self-esteem and choose bullying behaviour to obtain a sense of control in an effort to build self-efficacy. Children who go to school in fear are at great risk for creating dangerous, overt behaviours that, on first observation, appear to be extreme (such as carrying a gun). The child perceives this as the only option. This may result in a violent act in an effort to stop the bullying behaviour (physically or emotionally); the other extreme is attempting suicide so that the horror stops. Children who have been bullied are living a nightmare every day that they go to school. This is a complex pattern of behaviour to address.

*What to do:* Don't tolerate bullying of your child. If your child appears scared and in danger, involve the bully's parents and police. Children need to be protected from danger; they have the same rights as adults.

**School Refusal** – A child, for whatever the particular reason, may refuse to attend school. Many of these children refuse school because they experience extreme anxiety in leaving their parents. They usually have extremely low self-esteem and lack confidence. They will create or have real somatic complaints (e.g., headaches) and tend to be emotional and fearful of going to school.

*What to do:* This is a good example of how the Parents Counselling Model in Chapter 4 will be helpful.

**Low Achievement in Schools** – Success in school can be a good predictor of future success. This section is based on the work of Michael Bernard, and shows how we can help our children to achieve in school and learn the skills needed for life. I believe his *You Can Do It!* series is a must. The following six points are from his series.

- *Educational underachievement is an international epidemic* – 30-40 percent of all students are underachieving; 70 percent of underachieving students are boys; 30 percent are girls.
- *Children love to achieve* — In a recent survey, almost 50 percent of children chose “being smart” (school success, achievement) over athletic ability, having money, or beauty.
- *Parents make the difference* – No matter what the age of the child, parents are the most important influences over a child’s achievement in school – even more important than peer group or teachers. Parent involvement in education and encouragement of children directly influences the extent to which their

children excel at school. Parents also play a vital role in helping an underachieving child get back on the academic playing field.

*Factors that reversed underachievement:*

- ◇ Child is allowed to pursue out-of-school interest (computers, community theater).
- ◇ Parent attitude (never gives up on the child, still loves and supports child, did not kick child out of home).
- ◇ Child takes a challenging class.
- ◇ Child knows what long-term goals they want to achieve (does what is required in the short term to reach goals).
- ◇ A special teacher (past or present, whom child keeps visiting).

#### **Dr. Bernard's Parental Motivational Strategies**

1. Encouraging your child to be persistent in schoolwork.
2. Encouraging your child to enjoy schoolwork.
3. Encouraging your child to do schoolwork independently, without too much support from others.
4. Providing learning activities at home that supplement schoolwork.
5. Communicating to your child that you expect him to put in more effort when he finds work difficult.
6. Providing new learning activities when your child is bored.
7. Spending time with her, trying to work things out, when your child experiences difficulty in understanding schoolwork.
8. Allowing your child to answer questions on his own without supplying answers.

Table 6-7 — Dr. Bernard's Parental Motivational Strategies.



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- ◇ Self-confidence (success in outside school activity leads child to think, “If I can do this, I can achieve that”).
  - *Research study finds home-school partnerships work* – Research has demonstrated that when teachers and educational administrators are strongly committed to drawing parents into their children’s education, academic outcomes for the children can be positive.
  - Bernard is one of the leading world experts in school achievement. In a summary format, he suggests:
    - ◇ Make sure children understand that schoolwork and, in particular, homework, is their responsibility, not yours.
    - ◇ Communicate clear expectations and, if necessary, rules that spell out your child’s responsibilities for doing homework.
    - ◇ It’s important that your child knows that it’s unacceptable for homework to be done at an unsatisfactory level. Don’t bail out your child.
    - ◇ Persistently and consistently follow through on rules you have set for your child in the area of schoolwork.
    - ◇ Show enthusiasm for what your child is learning at school and maintain a high degree of involvement in their education.
    - ◇ Encourage your child’s curiosity, persistence, independence, and enjoyment of learning rather than focusing solely on results.

- ◇ Teach children the Habit of the Mind – that the harder they try, the better their achievement will be.
- ◇ Direct your child toward a peer group that values achievement.

<b>Dr. Bernard's Tips for Getting Homework Done</b>	
<b>Where to Do It</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a quiet, well-lighted area for study. Be mindful of noise distractions.</li> <li>• Don't set up work area near a window where outside activity looks more interesting.</li> <li>• Consider the kitchen table – where you are nearby for help.</li> <li>• Make sure seat is comfortable and supportive. Lying down may be too relaxing.</li> </ul>	
<b>When to Do It</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately after school, or with a break in between for a snack, or wait until evening.</li> <li>• Decide on the time, and stick to it – when is the best time?</li> <li>• Adjust time to the amount of homework the child has.</li> <li>• Study breaks may be necessary.</li> <li>• Use a timer for study time, and breaks to avoid wasting time watching the clock.</li> <li>• Make sure that there's free time for you and your child.</li> </ul>	
<b>Helping With It</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask your child if they want or need help.</li> <li>• Decide, with teacher's input, upon help.</li> <li>• If the decision is to be entirely the child's, inform teacher that the homework will be your child's problem.</li> <li>• Check work and proofread if they ask you to.</li> <li>• Learn to ask them questions to get them "unstuck" before you rescue.</li> <li>• Read aloud with your child.</li> <li>• Help with a simple notebook for assignments.</li> <li>• Don't get angry over homework; there may be other influences at work.</li> </ul>	

Table 6-8 — Dr. Bernard's Tips for Getting Homework Done

- 
- ◇ From an early age, teach your child to set short- and long-term goals. Have them see how their present schoolwork leads to the achievement of goals and rewards.
  - ◇ Communicate high expectations for success.
  - ◇ Teach children to be optimistic thinkers and to use positive thinking when they are faced with frustrating and difficult schoolwork.
  - ◇ Teach children how to reward themselves after they have successfully completed their schoolwork.
  - ◇ While your child is doing homework, monitor – and where necessary, restrict – outside distractions (TV, friends).
  - ◇ If they want to, and don't find it distracting, permit children to listen to music – especially when doing work they find boring or difficult.
  - ◇ Teach your child to take little breaks in doing schoolwork (for an older child, 10 minutes' break in every hour).
  - ◇ Be sure to schedule fun activities during your child's peak periods of work, in order to help them manage stress.

It's important that you become active in your child's education. To do this, you will need to work closely with the teachers. Lansky provides the following 10 points to help you develop a relationship with your children's teachers.

- Don't wait for the official interview. Call the teacher and discuss concerns as they arise.
- Talk about the upcoming conference with your child and see if there are any concerns they want addressed.
- Prepare a list of your questions and concerns: achievement, behaviour, peers, self-esteem, etc.
- Be on time; there are plenty of other parents.
- Say something positive to the teacher as soon as possible.
- Take a "What can *we* do" approach.
- Tell the teacher of any unusual situations at home that may affect your child.
- Afterward, go home and report to the other parent (if not in attendance).
- Talk to your child about the conference, dwelling as much as possible on the positive.
- Ask your child about anything that you don't understand and that the teacher could not explain.

**Video Game Junkies** – These are children who are obsessed with video games. Video games are a breeding ground for future gamblers. Children who get used to getting entertainment from the games may become bored with the stakes. These games also can be the cause for disrupting normal social development in adolescents. Children who don't get to play suffer withdrawal and become agitated, grumpy, an-

gry, and depressed. Many youths today are becoming addicted to these games.

*What to do:* Limit the hours that children spend playing video games. Children need to get control of the hours spent playing. If they can't, they must stop playing or face future consequences.

**Low Self-Esteem** – Children need to like themselves and believe in themselves in order to be successful and to stay away from less effective behaviours, such as using drugs and alcohol.

The debate about the importance of a child's self-esteem continues to grow. I believe there's only one position parents need to be concerned about, and that's the need to be a contributor to the healthy self-esteem of their children.

Low self-esteem is evident in children who: see themselves as unattractive, 'no good,' stupid, losers; blame themselves for everything; feel rejected; believe they have no friends; and experience difficulty in being assertive. These

Typical Statements of High and Low Self-Esteem	
The language our children use acts as an instrument to measure how they are doing in regard to their feeling of self-esteem.	
High Self-Esteem	Low Self-Esteem
<b>Kids who say:</b> "I think I can do that." "I will . . ." "I'm as smart as anybody." "If I ask, they might let me." "I have lots of friends." "I'll do better next time." "Can I help you?" "I don't understand this." "I look OK today."	<b>Kids who say:</b> "I can't do that." "I won't." "I'm not very smart." "There's no use in even asking." "Nobody likes me." "I'll never do that again." "Do I have to help you?" "This is stupid." "I am ugly."

Table 6-9 – Typical Statements of High and Low Self-Esteem.

children have a difficult time accepting positive strokes or simply don't receive them. Self-esteem can be developed only when children are able to learn Internal Locus of Control. They need to learn that they have control over their environment by how they *choose* to act. Many children with low self-esteem believe that External Locus of Control is rul-

Characteristics of High Self-Esteem
<p>Children with high self-esteem believe they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capable and confident</li> <li>• Loved, accepted, and that we belong</li> <li>• Safe</li> <li>• Valued and important</li> </ul>
Behaviours of Low Self-Esteem
<p>Children with low self-esteem demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctance to try new things</li> <li>• Quick frustration from lack of immediate success or understanding</li> <li>• Bullying behaviour</li> <li>• Hypercritical, negative, and sarcastic attitudes</li> <li>• Withdrawn, depressed, not communicative behaviours</li> <li>• Blaming behaviour</li> <li>• External validation</li> <li>• Lying and/or stealing</li> <li>• Disobedience and noncompliance with authority despite repeated punishment or application of consequences</li> <li>• Adoption of dangerous and/or self-destructive behaviour</li> </ul>
Benefits of High Self-Esteem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to resist negative peer pressure</li> <li>• Development of personal power</li> <li>• Selection of worthy friends</li> <li>• Development of positive attitudes toward work and achievement</li> <li>• Development of potential for creativity, emotional equilibrium, and happiness</li> <li>• Development of positive character traits</li> </ul>

Table 6-10 — Characteristics, Behaviours and Benefits of Self-Esteem.

ing them. But once they learn they have choice and that all behaviour is purposeful, they are able to re-appropriate some of their self-worth, thus increasing their self-esteem.

*What to do:*

- Create an environment where self-esteem is enriched by allowing children to have input and an opportunity to create fair, equal, and consistent boundaries.
- Give your child an opportunity to be exposed to a self-esteem building group.
- Work with the child to develop self-affirmation and positive “I” statements, so that they can take responsibility and become more assertive.
- Use the Parents Counselling Model (Page 48) to develop a few individual strategies.

### **Tips for Building Self-Esteem**

- Explore and define self-efficacy (accepting self).
- Explore and define self-competency (skills needed to be happy).
- Explore and define personal accountability.
- Explore and define personal interests and passion.
- Explore and define personal goals and direction year by year.
- Explore and define a health role model and follow it.

The key to improving self-esteem is learning Choice Theory and new behaviours; they help to reduce guilt and shame. Since many of us do not live up to the standards we set for

ourselves, we become frustrated, angry, and guilty. For some, being angry or guilty becomes a comfortable position and that's where they feel safest. Without new skills and self awareness, it's difficult for anyone to develop a healthy self-esteem.

**In Summary**

One can parent only as well as one can deal with personal and family stress. It's hard to parent when there's a major stressor that's distracting you from your role and focus. Too often, families ignore a problem and hope it will go away on its own. The sad truth is, it will not. Parents need to protect their children and create a healthy environment in which they can grow.



# Summary

*The joys of parents are secret: and so are their  
griefs and fears.* – Francis Bacon, *Essays*

*If you have never been hated by your child, you have never  
been a parent.* – Bette Davis, *The Lonely Life*

*Parenthood remains the greatest single preserve  
of the amateur* – Alvis Toffler, *Future Shock*

*I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find  
out what they want, and then advise them to do it*  
– Harry S Truman

*My belief is that I do not have the time to not spend time with my  
children.* – William Howatt

AS YOU REVIEW the above quotes, you will see that the essence of good parenting is the desire *to be with your children*. Good parents want to learn and grow, and to develop their skills to help their children and family system be whole and healthy.

As a parent, the key for me will always be the understanding that my children are a miracle and a gift from God, and it's our job to help our miracles to be prepared to create more miracles. As Mufsa in *The Lion King* said, "We are all a part of the circle of life."

# Appendix A

ONE of the main precepts of this text is that for parents to be successful in raising their children, they need to spend with time. And if a parent truly wants to do this, they will need to have a variety of activities that they can do with their children. Often, I find that parents are at a loss for what they can do when they are alone with their children. Spending time watching mindless television is not with time, nor is spending time sitting at a dinner table eating and not interacting.

To help you overcome this, I have started to create what I call a parent's *with list*. Following, you will find a variety of activities that you can do with a child of most any age. The trick is that you will need to adapt the activity and provide your child with the appropriate amount of responsibility. For example, the six-year-old can help a mother with the cookie mix but would not put it into a hot oven. As the parent, you are responsible for your children's safety at all times, so it's important that you take into consideration the child's age and ability in relation to the activity you choose.

So, the next time you're with your child and feel that you're not really sure what you can do, I suggest that you read through the following list to get a few good ideas. I think it would also be helpful for you to add to the list, so that you have options that are more specific to your needs and interests.

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## **75 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO**

### ***WITH THEIR CHILDREN***

1. Have a conversation about their world.
2. Have a conversation about your world.
3. Discuss current affairs with your children.
4. Read to them.
5. Have them read to you.
6. Make supper with them.
7. Do house cleaning with them.
8. Plan a vacation with them.
9. Take a vacation with them.
10. Go camping with them.
11. Go fishing with them.
12. Go for a trail hike with them.
13. Play catch with them.
14. Take them to watch you play a sport.
15. Go watch them play a sport.
16. Get involved with their homework.
17. Have at least one 20-minute family meeting per week.
18. Make a date to spend special time with each of them weekly.
19. Go for a bike ride with them.
20. Go for a drive in the country.
21. Exercise with them.
22. Walk with them.
23. Invent games with them.
24. Play music with them.
25. Listen to music with them.
26. Dance with them.
27. Do leisure activities with them.

28. Do recreational activities with them.
29. Play games with them.
30. Invent a new game with them.
31. Make telephone calls to family together.
32. Go shopping with them.
33. Do yard work with them.
34. Join a club with them.
35. Do community volunteer work with them.
36. Go to church with them.
37. Go to the beach with them.
38. Take a picnic with them.
39. Fly a kite with them.
40. Plant a garden with them.
41. Think positive and dream with them.
42. Build a fort with them.
43. Save money with them.
44. Promote health and wellness with them.
45. Meditate with them.
46. Practice health and wellness with them.
47. Develop a family mission statement with them.
48. Set goals with them.
49. Use a computer with them.
50. Create a small business, like a lemonade stand, with them.
51. Write with them.
52. Have a yard sale with them.
53. Learn a new word with them.
54. Play board games with them.
55. Paint with them.
56. Color with them.
57. Draw with them.

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58. Do house maintenance projects with them.
  59. Start a new hobby with them.
  60. Read a newspaper with them.
  61. Research your family history with them.
  62. Collect stamps with them.
  63. Collect coins with them.
  64. Do drama with them.
  65. Use role playing to problem solve with them.
  66. Share the responsibility of a pet with them.
  67. Go bird watching with them.
  68. Go canoeing with them.
  69. Charter a small plane with them.
  70. Make home movies with them.
  71. Do photography with them.
  72. Do a simple science experiment with them.
  73. Play cards with them.
  74. Take naps with them.
  75. Take nature walks with them.

# Appendix B

## Parents Time With Measure

I believe one of the most crucial things a parent can do is to spend *time with* their children. There are all kinds of parenting books and parent experts; however, no advice or coaching can replace time.

The purpose of this measure is to help you self-evaluate if you are a:

***With Parent*** – Spend a great deal of time involved in your children’s world, to guide them to do what you believe is of value.

***At Parent*** – Direct criticism, fear, or force to get your children to do what you want.

***For Parent*** – Do many things for your children or buy things for them to keep them in line.

For each section following, respond to five statements, using the following key:

*Very true* – 100% true; you always do this.

*True* – You do this the majority of the time.

*Untrue* – You rarely do this.

*Very untrue* – You never do this.

<b><i>With Parent</i></b>				
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Very Untrue Score 0</b>	<b>Not True Score 1</b>	<b>True Score 3</b>	<b>Very True Score 5</b>
1. I spend more than 20 hours a week with my children, involved in activities they enjoy, not including meals and TV.				
2. I make spending time with my children a priority.				
3. I will reschedule to avoid interrupting my children time.				
4. I watch my children play sports or enjoy other hobbies.				
5. I need to be with my children daily, or it upsets me.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<b><i>At Parent</i></b>				
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Very Untrue Score 0</b>	<b>Not True Score 1</b>	<b>True Score 3</b>	<b>Very True Score 5</b>
1. I find myself yelling a great deal at my children.				
2. I will hit my children to get them to do what I want them to do.				
3. I use a lot of threatening techniques.				
4. I direct negative comments at my children.				
5. I don't have much patience for my children.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<b><i>For Parent</i></b>				
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Very Untrue Score 0</b>	<b>Not True Score 1</b>	<b>True Score 3</b>	<b>Very True Score 5</b>
1. I will buy my children what they want.				
2. I will bribe my children.				
3. I will always clean up after my children.				
4. I don't expect my children to follow through on what they say, and am willing to fill in the slack.				
5. It's easier to do things than to argue.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

### Scoring Key

Before you score this brief measure, let me remind you about the spirit in which it has been written. It's intended to be a self-evaluation and to provide you with a generalization of the main style of parenting you use. I obviously believe the most effective style is *with* parenting.

**Scoring** – Add your scores. The highest score indicates the style of parenting you prefer to use. Keep in mind that no matter what your score, we all can improve and learn to be *with* our children, to help them grow to their fullest potential.



## Parenting Style Scoring

Total your scores for each area, and record them on the chart below. The area you score the highest in is your main parenting style preference.

	Very Untrue	Not True	True	Very True	TOTAL
<i>With Parent</i>					
<i>At Parent</i>					
<i>For Parent</i>					

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