

Understanding Parenting



Participant Handbook

Name: _____



Citizen Security
and Justice Programme
B A H A M A S
TRANSFORMING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

UNDERSTANDING PARENTING

Table of Contents



Introduction.....	i
Acknowledgements	ii

SECTIONS

1. What is a Family?	2
2. Parenting and Parenting Styles	6
3. Communication in Families.....	14
4. Discipline vs. Punishment in Families.....	25
5. Conflict Management in Families	30
6. Self-Esteem.....	35
7. Understanding the Role of Fathers	40
8. Stress Management for Parents	48
9. Parenting and Child Spiritual Development	52



Introduction



Welcome to the Module on **Understanding Parenting**. While we educate ourselves to be proficient in our day-to-day jobs or to perform specific tasks to the best of our ability, very rarely do we prepare ourselves for parenting. Somehow we have been taught that this will come naturally once the children arrive. However, every parent knows parenting is hard work.

In your hands, via this training, are tools that will empower you to improve your parenting skills. We must be clear that your participation in this training does not mean the skills you gain will prevent your children from misbehaving. Parenting is a journey. What we hope you will gain from this training is an understanding of parenting, how to effectively communicate within the family, effectively distinguish between what is deemed as discipline and what punishment is. Within families conflicts are bound to rise, we hope this course will provide with conflict management skills as well as tools to build your child's self-esteem including nurturing the spiritual development of your child. This was highly recommended during the research phase as a session to be included including the role fathers play in a child's life. This module will not be complete without addressing a key characteristic of parenthood, stress. There is a session on stress management for parents which we hope will help you during those frustrating stressful moments during your parenting journey.

While we hope this Module will give you the opportunity to learn about parenting, we hope you will have fun. Your instructor will create a safe confidential space for you to interact with your peers, exchange ideas and learn from each other.

Enjoy the training and have a fantastic time learning.

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Project Manager Citizen Security and Justice Programme Ministry of National Security	Dr. Marie Teresa Cox
Component I Coordinator Citizen Security and Justice Programme Ministry of National Security	Dr. Rochelle Lightbourn
Curriculum Development Team Team Leader	Ms. L. Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne
Key Author for Gender Based Violence and Crime Prevention Module	Mr. Gregory Sloane-Seale
Key Author for Sexual Violence Prevention Module	Dr. Darlene Rolle-Cargill
Key Author for Understanding Parenting Module	Mr. Andy L. Laing
Monitoring and Evaluation tools for All Three (3) Modules	Dr. Lennise Baptiste
All Information Technology, Video Production and Curriculum Design	Mr. Adrian Niles

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UNDERSTANDING PARENTING

OVERVIEW

This module, “**Understanding Parenting**”, is comprised of nine sections that will provide participants with an overview of family structures and parenting in a Bahamian context. Participants will be able to identify and discuss the different typologies of families along with the styles of parenting that are most frequently employed by parents. By the end of this module, participants will also be able to define and recognize patterns of communication that are used in families; learn to differentiate between punishment and discipline; be able to assist families with managing conflict; provide parents with strategies for elevating their child/ren’s level of self-esteem; be able to explicate the specific roles of fathers in families; be able to assist parents with managing their stress levels and explain the importance of parent/child spiritual development.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this module are:

- (i) To define and explore the different typologies of family in a Bahamian context.
- (ii) To explore formal and informal constructions of parenting and the different parenting styles in a Bahamian context.
- (iii) To explore different styles of communication, the potential impact these can have on the family and what it means to be a contemporary teenager in a Bahamian context.
- (iv) To explore and demonstrate an understanding of the differences between punishment and discipline, and how these constructs are used in the Bahamian context.
- (v) To explore and demonstrate an understanding of the best practices that may be used for resolving conflict in families.
- (vi) To explore ways for enhancing children’s self-esteem.
- (vii) To explore and explain the traditional roles of fathers and how these roles may have changed over time.
- (viii) To explore and demonstrate an understanding of stress management strategies that may be used by parents to manage stress.
- (ix) To explore and explain the importance of child spiritual development.

SECTION ONE:

What is a Family?



Overview

The family is one of society's oldest institution, and from the onset of human civilization, people have united to form families from which they derived emotional, physical, and communal support (Sharma, 2016). Many entities have projected the demise of the family, but the family has not only endured but continues to change and evolve. Around the world, family structure typologies may vary but the essential functions and value of the family persist. Families form the basic, foundational social units of human cultures globally; hence, it is vital that all individuals play a part in helping to construct a positive environment for families to thrive. It is particularly important that a multi-institutional approach be taken in attempting to achieve this aim. In this regard, human and family service entities, religious institutions, health organizations, and schools all play key roles in helping to preserve and maintain healthy families.

Objectives:

- I. To define and explore the different typologies of family in a Bahamian context.

Introduction

A family is a group of two or more people who are related to each other or are bound by legal ties.

A healthy family may be defined as a family in which the members show genuine concern for each other. The parents share an amicable relationship and enjoy a healthy association with their children. They enjoy each other's company and are supportive of each other during times of distress. Each person is important to the other person in the family and they attempt to understand and be understood by other members of the family. They share healthy communications and appreciated the unique attributes that each member brings to the family.

Types of Family Structures: Overview

There are seven basic types of family structures.

1. The **Proton family** is comprised of a single individual.
2. The **Electron family** is composed of a group of unmarried relatives living together.
3. The **Nuclear family** includes a married couple with or without their unmarried children. The **Atom family** is made up of a Nuclear family with any other family member(s) but no other married couples.
4. The **Molecular family** is comprised of two married couples of any different generations with or without unmarried individuals of any other generation.
5. The **Joint family** is made up of two or more married couples of a single generation or three or more couples of multiple generations (Shamar, 2013).
6. The **Blended family**. This family structure is made up of a married couple and children from a previous relationship.

There are four common family typologies found in The Bahamas. These include:

1. The **Single family**, which comprises a parent and child combination.
2. The **Nuclear family**, which comprises a married couple and one or more unmarried children.
3. The **Blended family**, which is made up of a married couple and children from a previous relationship; and
4. The **Extended family**, which is comprised of multiple generations of relatives residing in the same household.

In The Bahamas there is also a **Common-Law family** type. This family type comprises an unmarried couple where one or both partners may still be legally married to someone else, who have been in a committed relationship or cohabiting for eight or more years and have one or more children.



Group Exercise 1.1

Activity: Think-Pair-Share

1. Pair off into groups of twos.
2. Discuss with your partner ways that the Bahamian family has changed over the last twenty years, and what may have accounted for these changes.
3. Each pair share their thoughts with the group.

Functions of the Family

The family is where the socialization process begins, and where children are taught the ways of their culture and how to survive in the world around them (Defrain & Brand, 2008).

The Functions of the Family are:

- Socialization of its members
- Child identity formation
- Teaching positive social behaviors and values.
- Providing resources
- Providing nurturance and support
- Life skills development
- Maintenance and management of the family system
- Procreation



Group Exercise 1.2

Discussion:

It is frequently said in the Bahamian culture that, “it takes a village to raise a child.”

1. What exactly does this mean?
2. How was this carried out in times past?
3. How is this being carried out today? If this has changed, what contributed to this change?
4. How can we replicate this concept in our society?

SECTION TWO:

Parenting and Parenting Styles



Overview

According to Baumrind (1971), parents mold and shape their children over the course of their lives from birth to adulthood using their world of influence. This complex interaction involves a combination of specific attitudes and behaviors that sometimes work alone, as well as collectively, to direct child outcomes and create an attachment context which encompasses the expressed behaviors of the parent(s) (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Darling, 1999). It is difficult to understand parenting apart from its two basic components: responsiveness and demandingness (Fletcher, Walls, Cook, Madison, & Bridges, 2008).

Parental demandingness refers to the extent that parents establish a set of guidelines and how their use of discipline encourages compliance or disobedience to these rules.

Parental responsiveness refers to the emotional component of parenting and includes the extent to which parents are supportive of their children or attend to their basic needs.

Healthy levels of parental responsiveness and demandingness are both indicative of healthy parent-child attachment (Karavasilis, Doyle & Markiewicz, 2003).

Objectives

1. To gain an understanding of what constitutes a parent
2. To explore the different styles of parenting

THEORIES OF PARENTING

1. Rohner's Theory of Parental Acceptance and Rejection, also known as a Theory of Socialization, comprises four key areas that are essential for healthy child development. These are behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and adult personality functioning.
2. The second theory of parenting is the two-dimensional model of parenting. This theory proposes that parenting occurs along a spectrum ranging from warmth-hostility on one end, and restrictiveness- permissiveness on the other. Here it is proposed that parents who parent from a position of high warmth and restrictiveness rear children who are compliant and well-mannered.



Exercise 2.1

Reflection on the Theories of Parenting

1. What are your thoughts on these two parenting theories?
2. How do these theories help to explain the reality of Bahamian families today?
3. How do these theories apply to your unique family situation?

PARENTING STYLES

There are four main styles of parenting. These are **authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting.**

1. **Authoritative Parenting** - Parents make logical demands, set limits and insist on children's compliance to rules and regulation. They are warm, accept their children's perspectives on issues, and encourage the children's participation in decision-making processes (Berg, 2011; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996; Zupancic, Podlesek, & Kavcic, 2004). Children raised by authoritative parents tend to be happy and successful as adults. They also make choices that are likely to produce good outcomes (Morin, 2019)
2. **Authoritarian Parenting** – Parents are demanding and unresponsive. Exhibit little interaction with their children and insist demands and rules are accepted without question. Children who grow up in authoritarian homes tend to struggle with low self-esteem and learn to lie at an early age to avoid punishment for breaking rules. They may engage in hostile and aggressive behaviors, and often harbor a lot of anger and resentment towards their parents (Morin, 2019).
3. **Permissive Parenting** – Parents set little rules for children to follow, and rules set are usually ambiguous. Consequences for misbehavior are taken back if the child pleads or promises not to misbehave again. Parent tend to assume the role of “friend” rather than “parent”. Children of permissive parents tend to have low self-esteem and academic issues. They display frequent behavioral issues and have a general lack of regard for authority or rules. Children present with an above-average risk for health issues, including obesity, dental cavities, diabetes, and so on (Morin, 2019).
4. **Uninvolved Parenting** – Parents establish few rules, rarely give guidance, nurturing, or attention, and allow their children to rear themselves. These parents may be unintentionally neglectful and lack the maturity for meeting their child's emotional or physical needs. Commonly, uninvolved parents have mental health or substance abuse issues, or may simply be overwhelmed with meeting household needs (e.g. working, paying bills, and so on) (Morin, 2019). Children raised by uninvolved parents tend to present with self-esteem issues and are likely to suffer academically. They also frequently display behavioral problems and measure low on happiness (Morin, 2019).

NOTE: Parents often use a combination of parenting styles in rearing their children. One style, however, is usually more prominent, and is used more frequently.



Exercise 2.2

Activity: Role Play – Styles of Parenting

In groups, role-play each of the parenting styles described above (see instructor for further guidelines).

CHILDREN'S STYLES

Children's style of expression or temperament to a very large extent impacts the style of parenting that their parents use.

Easy children are calm, happy, regular in sleeping and eating habits, adaptable, not easily upset.

Difficult children are often fussy, irregular in feeding and sleeping habits, fearful of new people and situations, easily upset, high strung, and intense in their reactions.

Slow to warm up children are relatively inactive and fussy, tend to withdraw or to react negatively to novelty, but their reactions gradually become more positive with experience. (Goodman & Gurian, n.d.)

Here are some general principles of parenting that can be used to parent different children temperaments:

- **Be aware of your child's temperament and respect** their uniqueness without comparing him/her to others. Encourage him/her to accomplish tasks at their own pace. Praising your child for their ideas and achievements, however small, will enhance their self-image and make him them capable of being independent.
- **Make communication a priority.** Take time to explain your decisions and motives and listen to your child's point of view. Encourage children to work with you on generating solutions to problems.
- **Make your expectations clear.** Setting limits will help your child develop self-control. Make her aware that her opinion is respected, but remain firm in your decisions.
- **Be a good role model.** Children take their cues from the adults around them. They learn by imitation and identification as well as discussion.

- **Be aware** of your own needs and the ways in which your style of parenting is shaped by your relationship with your own parents (Goodman & Gurian, n.d.).



Group Exercise 2.3

Discussion:

It was common in The Bahamas to hear parents say, “**Children are to be seen and not heard.**”

1. Is this still being practiced today, why or why not?
2. What style of parenting did this indicate?
3. Why did you select this style of parenting?
4. What do you think is/are the impacts of this practice?



Exercise 2.4 (Optional)

Reflection:

Think about the style(s) of parenting used by your parents when you were growing up. Then think about the style of parenting you use to rear your children. Share your thoughts.

How are the two styles similar?

How are they different?

How do you think your parent's style of parenting has/is affecting you?

How do you think your style of parenting is affecting your children?

Parenting Styles Worksheet

Fill in the chart below and answer the question that follows based on information you learned from the presentations and your class notes.

Parenting Style	Brief Description of this Parenting Style	What are the Pros of this Parenting Style?	What are the Cons of this Parenting Style?	What effect(s) does this Parenting Style have on the child?
Authoritative				
Authoritarian				
Permissive				
Uninvolved Parent				

1. Describe 5 ways that parents can be more Authoritative?

Parenting Styles Handout

	Features	Control	Warmth	Side-effects/ Consequences
Authoritative	Nurturing, Affectionate, Set boundaries, Disciplines through guidance, open communication	High	High	<i>Cooperative relationship, self-reliant, socially competent, responsible</i>
Authoritarian Parent	Strict, Inflexible, High expectations, Punishes rather than disciplines, “Tiger Moms”	High	Low	<i>Rebellious, aggressive, dependent</i>
Permissive Parent	Nurturing, Affectionate, Few or inconsistent boundaries, Takes the role of ‘friend’ rather than ‘parent’	Low	High	Egocentric, lack of self- control
Uninvolved Parent	Emotionally detached, Self-absorbed, Inconsistent or no boundaries, Little interaction	Low	Low	Lack of self-control, Low self-esteem, Less competency, egocentric

Source: <https://fmhca.wildapricot.org/resources/Pictures/Banners/==Parenting Styles Handout.pdf>

SECTION THREE:

Communication in Families



Overview:

Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). The word comes from the Latin word, *communis*, which means common, and denotes the exchange of information that results in a common understanding.

Communication is an important component of all areas of family functioning. For instance, the use of discipline, conflict management, and self-esteem development would be virtually impossible without good communication. In light of this, understanding what communication is and what it entails, and what can be done to improve the way in which we communicate, are important aims of this section.

Objectives:

1. To explore styles of communication and the potential impact on the family, through the lens of Bahamian culture.
2. To explore ways of improving communication in families.

The Process of Communication

As previously indicated, communication is an essential component of family development, and family communication refers to messages that are sent with intent, that are perceived as intentional, and that have consensually shared meaning among family members.

Two common elements in every communication exchange are the sender and the receiver. The sender initiates the communication, and the receiver is the individual to whom the message is sent. The sender of a message begins by putting together words, and other symbolic representations to compose a message. The message is the outcome of this process and may take the form of verbal, nonverbal, or written language. The message is sent through a medium or carrier. The medium can be a face-to-face conversation, telephone call, e-mail, or written report. The receiver interprets the received message into information that can be used in a meaningful way.

Communication is sometimes distorted because of noise. Noise is anything that distorts the message. Different interpretations of the message, language barriers, interruptions, emotions, and loud sounds are all examples of noise (Keyton, 2011).

Finally, feedback occurs when the receiver of the message responds to the sender and returns the message to the sender. Feedback allows the sender to determine whether the message has been received and understood or whether there has been a miscommunication. The sender is then able to provide additional feedback, which clarifies any misunderstandings, or communicate that the message was received with the correct intention.

Barriers to Communication

Physical barriers to communication result from physical components of the environment that hinder communication.

Psychosocial barriers include barriers psychological and social factors that hinder the communication process.

Semantic barriers pertain to breakdown in communication that result from the words used by the sender, and the manner in which they are interpreted by the receiver.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

Clear and Direct - An example of this style of communication is when a father, disappointed about his son failing to complete his chore, states, *“Son, I’m disappointed that you forgot to take out the trash today without my having to remind you.”*

Clear and Indirect - The message is clear, but it is not directed to the person for whom it is intended. Using the previous example, the father might say, *“It’s disappointing when people*

forget to complete their chores.” In this message the son may not know that his father is referring to him.

Masked and Direct - Occurs when the content of the message is unclear, but directed to the appropriate family member. The father in our example may say something like, *“Son, people just don’t work as hard as they used to.”*

Masked and Indirect - Occurs when both the message and intended recipient are unclear. In unhealthy family relationships, communication tends to be very masked and indirect. An example of this type of communication might be the father stating, *“The youth of today are very lazy.”*

COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS

Assertive - Involves standing up for personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in direct, honest, and appropriate ways, which do not violate another person’s rights. Assertive communication is the preferred style.

- “I’m okay and you’re okay.”
- Use of “I” statements, objective words, direct and honest statements.

Aggressive - Involves directly standing up for personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a way, which is emotionally honest, but usually inappropriate and in violation of the rights of others.

- Use of “you” statements, accusations, subjective, domineering, superior words.

Passive - Involves violating your own rights by failing to express honest feelings, thoughts, and beliefs and consequently allowing others to also violate your rights; or expressing your thoughts and feelings in such an apologetic, timid manner that others can easily disregard them.

- “I’m not okay, everyone else is.”
- Use of apologetic words or at a loss for words.

Passive - Aggressive - Involves expressing your needs and feelings in an unclear and confusing manner.

- “You’re not okay, but I’ll let you think that I think you are.”

- Use of sarcasm, teasing, ridiculing, false praise, and insinuations.

See: https://self-sufficiency.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/communication_styles.pdf

Communicating with Children

The way parents communicate with their children is important, and it is crucial that they communicate positively. Some parents talk to their children in negative ways because they are tired, stressed, have their own problems or do not know what to do. In The Bahamas, a single parent may become stressed with working, sometimes multiple jobs, to meet the needs of his/her children. This may contribute to the quality and quantity of time spent with children as well as the quality of communication being compromised.

Here are some positive ways for communicating with children:

1. **Be Respectful** - avoid shouting and always be respectful when talking to your children.
2. **Provide Alternatives** - for your child to choose from. As children mature or get older help them to make their own decisions.
3. **Give Wise Advice** - A fundamental responsibility of parents is to give advice to their children to help them learn correct behavior and make wise decisions. Also, as children mature, they can be involved in setting the rules for acceptable behavior and the consequences for violating them.
4. **Encourage Your Children to Express Their Feelings in a Safe Way.** Recognize that you cannot dictate what they think or feel.
5. **Discuss With Your Children What You Expect from Them.** Explain how you feel.
6. **Be Consistent** - Do not make different rules every day, and expect your child to retain them right away. Introduce new rules only when they become necessary.
7. **Communicate With Your Children without Screaming at Them.** This may increase their level of anxiety making listening more difficult, and distorting the message you are trying to send.
8. **Do Not Address Issues When You Are Angry.** Wait until you have calmed down then address the issue.
9. **Hold Periodic Family Meetings** and encourage members to talk and listen.



Exercise 3.1

Activity: Role Play – Communicating with Children

For this exercise, select a few of the characteristics listed above and perform a brief role-play to demonstrate your understanding.



Video: Parental Communication Choices

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkHZ4b-h8_8



Exercise 3.2

Reflection:

Your instructor will provide guidelines on this exercise.

1. What is your overall reaction to the video clips?
2. How did the parent demonstrate poor communication in the first portion of the clip?
3. How did the parent demonstrate good communication in the second portion of the clip?
4. How have you demonstrated poor or good communication in your interaction with your child/ren?
5. What can you do differently?

Learn to Recognize Helpful and Unhelpful Messages

Sometimes parents communicate helpful and unhelpful messages to their children. Talking is the best way of teaching and parents can encourage good behavior by simply explaining things to children. Helpful messages can make children feel loved, wanted, worthwhile and safe while unhelpful messages can make them feel angry, confused and worthless.

Examples:

Helpful Message:

Parent: Peter, when you're done with your homework, go to Supervalu for a pack of rice please.

Child: Yes ma'am.

Unhelpful Message:

Parent: Peter hurry up go and get a pack of rice for me before I don't feed y'all tonight!

Child: Yes ma'am.

Practice Active Listening

Sometimes parents confuse hearing with listening, although hearing often occurs without listening. Hearing involves the ability to physically hear, while listening involves hearing, paying attention and being mentally and physically present with the communicator. Sometimes listening is difficult. Parents sometimes have their own problems and do not give children their full attention. Sometimes parents interrupt and decide what to say before children finish talking. At other times parents only hear what they want to hear.

Tips to listening better:

1. Try to find out more about the issue the child is talking about. Ask questions.
2. Listen with all your attention. Try not to do other things when your children are telling you something.
3. Be patient as children may not know how to say what they think or feel, and may take longer than adults.
4. Watch the child's face. Watch their bodies. The behavior and expression of children can sometimes tell you how they feel better than words.

5. Repeat back to a child what you think they have told you. This will help you to check if you heard them correctly.
6. Practice active listening strategies such as making eye contact, leaning towards your child as he or she speaks, nod your head to show your understanding, and avoid interrupting.

Acknowledge and accept your child's different feelings and encourage children to express their feelings in a safe way

Set Clear Rules and Stick to Them - Children need to know what acceptable and unacceptable and the likely outcome/consequences of breaking rules. As children get older, begin to engage them in setting rules, and determining appropriate consequences.

Praise Children for Good Behavior - Children feel good when they are praised, and will repeat the good behavior. This helps them to feel valuable and boosts their self-esteem.

Criticize the Behavior, Not the Child - Remember that frequent criticizing, shouting, and name-calling can inflict tremendous psychological damage on the child. In cases where criticism is appropriate, criticize the behavior rather than the child.

Many Bahamian teens have expressed

- Their parents do not take the time to listen to them. They stated that this breakdown in communication leaves them feeling ignored and undervalued.
- The lack of quality time. As a result of this, as might be probably be expected, many children are raising themselves, or are being reared by the television or their peers.



Group Exercise 3.3

Activity: Think-Pair-Share

1. Pair off into twos
2. Discuss how the lack of quality time parents spend with their children might impact them as adults, and how can parents be encouraged to begin spending quality time with their children.
3. Take turns sharing your reflections.

The Four Basic Styles of Communication

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION is a style in which individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs. As a result, passive individuals do not respond overtly to hurtful or anger-inducing situations. Instead, they allow grievances and annoyances to mount, usually unaware of the buildup. But once they have reached their high tolerance threshold for unacceptable behavior, they are prone to explosive outbursts, which are usually out of proportion to the triggering incident. After the outburst, however, they may feel shame, guilt, and confusion, so they return to being passive.

Passive communicators will often:

- fail to assert for themselves
- allow others to deliberately or inadvertently infringe on their rights
- fail to express their feelings, needs, or opinions
- tend to speak softly or apologetically
- exhibit poor eye contact and slumped body posture

The impact of a pattern of passive communication is that these individuals:

- often feel anxious because life seems out of their control
- often feel depressed because they feel stuck and hopeless
- often feel resentful (but are unaware of it) because their needs are not being met
- often feel confused because they ignore their own feelings
- are unable to mature because real issues are never addressed

A passive communicator will say, believe, or behave like:

- “I’m unable to stand up for my rights.”
- “I don’t know what my rights are.”
- “I get stepped on by everyone.”
- “I’m weak and unable to take care of myself.”
- “People never consider my feelings.”

AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION is a style in which individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others. Thus, aggressive communicators are verbally and/or physically abusive.

Aggressive communicators will often:

- try to dominate others
- use humiliation to control others
- criticize, blame, or attack others
- be very impulsive
- have low frustration tolerance
- speak in a loud, demanding, and overbearing voice
- act threateningly and rudely
- not listen well
- interrupt frequently
- use “you” statements
- have an overbearing or intimidating posture

The impact of a pattern of aggressive communication is that these individuals:

- alienate others
- become alienated from others
- generate fear and hatred in others
- always blame others instead of owning their issues, and thus are unable to mature

The aggressive communicator will say, believe, or behave like:

- “I’m superior and right and you’re inferior and wrong.”
- “I’m loud, bossy and pushy.”
- “I can dominate and intimidate you.”
- “I can violate your rights.”
- “I’ll get my way no matter what.”
- “You’re not worth anything.”
- “It’s all your fault.”
- “I react instantly.”
- “I’m entitled.”
- “You owe me.”
- “I own you.”

PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION is a style in which individuals appear passive on the surface but are really acting out anger in a subtle, indirect, or behind-the-scenes way. People who develop a pattern of passive-aggressive communication usually feel powerless, stuck, and resentful – in other words, they feel incapable of dealing directly with the object of their resentments. Instead, they express their anger by subtly undermining the object (real or imagined) of their resentments.

Passive-Aggressive communicators will often:

- mutter to themselves rather than confront the person or issue
- have difficulty acknowledging their anger
- use facial expressions that don't match how they feel - i.e., smiling when angry
- use sarcasm
- deny there is a problem
- appear cooperative while purposely doing things to annoy and disrupt
- use subtle sabotage to get even

The impact of a pattern of passive-aggressive communication is that these individuals:

- become alienated from those around them
- remain stuck in a position of powerlessness (like POWs)
- discharge resentment while real issues are never addressed so they can't mature

The passive-aggressive communicator will say, believe, or behave like:

- “I’m weak and resentful, so I sabotage, frustrate, and disrupt.”
- “I’m powerless to deal with you head on so I must use guerilla warfare.”
- “I will appear cooperative but I’m not.”

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION is a style in which individuals clearly state their opinions and feelings, and firmly advocate for their rights and needs without violating the rights of others. These individuals value themselves, their time, and their emotional, spiritual, and physical needs and are strong advocates for themselves while being very respectful of the rights of others.

Assertive communicators will:

- state needs and wants clearly, appropriately, and respectfully
- express feelings clearly, appropriately, and respectfully
- use “I” statements
- communicate respect for others

- listen well without interrupting
- feel in control of self
- have good eye contact
- speak in a calm and clear tone of voice
- have a relaxed body posture
- feel connected to others
- feel competent and in control
- not allow others to abuse or manipulate them
- stand up for their rights

The impact of a pattern of assertive communication is that these individuals:

- feel connected to others
- feel in control of their lives
- are able to mature because they address issues and problems as they arise
- create a respectful environment for others to grow and mature

The assertive communicator will say, believe, or behave in a way that says:

- “We are equally entitled to express ourselves respectfully to one another.”
- “I am confident about who I am.”
- “I realize I have choices in my life and I consider my options.”
- “I speak clearly, honestly, and to the point.”
- “I can’t control others but I can control myself.”
- “I place a high priority on having my rights respected.”
- “I am responsible for getting my needs met in a respectful manner.”
- “I respect the rights of others.”
- “Nobody owes me anything unless they’ve agreed to give it to me.”
- “I’m 100% responsible for my own happiness.”

Assertiveness allows us to take care of ourselves and is fundamental for good mental health and healthy relationships.

This article may be accessed at:

https://www.uky.edu/hr/sites/www.uky.edu.hr/files/wellness/images/Conf14_FourCommStyles.pdf

SECTION FOUR:

Discipline vs. Punishment in Families



Overview

Discipline and punishment are two closely related, yet distinctly different concepts. Whereas discipline is intended to teach, punishment is intended to inflict pain. In The Bahamas, traditional methods of attempting to correct misbehavior included getting “switched”, or just getting “the look.” Today, while corporal punishment is still used in The Bahamas, Bahamian parents tend to use more passive forms of discipline such as suspending privileges (e.g. cell phone or computer) or grounding.

Whether punishment or discipline is used, it is useful to note that a different behavioral outcome can be expected. Discipline is commonly associated with positive behavioral outcomes, while punishment, though appearing to be effective, is associated with more negative outcomes.

Objectives:

1. To explore key differences between discipline and punishment, and how both constructs are used in the Bahamian context.
2. To explore positive discipline methods that may be used in parenting.

What is Discipline?

When used effectively, discipline instructs or teaches children how to be empathic, respectful, and cooperative with adults in authority. The long-term impact of discipline includes healthy self-esteem development, and an increased ability to take responsibility for one's actions.

The Characteristics of Discipline

1. Discipline focuses on the future needs of the child
2. Discipline focuses on the misbehavior committed by the child, rather than on the child (in other words, discipline teaches that what the child did was bad, rather than the child is bad),
3. Discipline helps children to develop self-control and to learn responsible conduct
4. Discipline helps the child to recognize and accept the natural or logical consequences of their behaviors.
5. Discipline considers the behavioral, emotional and relational aspects of the child's behavior
6. Sees children's needs as important
7. Sees parents needs as important
8. Trusts children's capacity for reasonable cooperation that can develop over time
9. Promotes the emotional health of every family member
10. Promotes integrity of parent/child relationship
11. Helps child develop self-control, self- discipline, self-confidence, respect for self and others and develop responsible behavior.

Positive Discipline Strategies:

- **Practice Using "Time out"**- If a child has behaved badly and they need to be disciplined take of one of their treats or privileges away, for example, riding their bike or watching a favorite TV program, or using a cellphone or computer time.
- **Grounding** - Suspend outings and other social privileges for a specified period of time.

What is Punishment?

Punishment refers to the infliction of pain or discomfort on children in order to *force* compliance to rules, and make them feel badly for their behavior. The rationale behind this is that by feeling bad about misbehavior, children will be more motivated to change their actions.

The Characteristics of Punishment

Here are some characteristics of punishment:

1. Punishment focuses on what the child did wrong instead of what he/she needs to do right.
2. Punishment enforces restrictions that are often unrelated to the misconduct.
3. Punishment discourages personal responsibility by placing the responsibility of enforcement on the parent.
4. Punishment is concerned with making children *pay* for their misbehavior instead of learning what to do right.
5. Punishment is less effective in stopping children from misbehaving.
6. Children who are frequently punished are less emotionally healthy, self-confident, self-caring and do not do as well in life as children who are not subjected to punishment.



Video: “Consequences vs. Punishment”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvq-6djOPI>



Exercise 4.1

Case Study:

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

Johnny is fifteen and lives with his mother, Susan, in Nassau Village. One night while Susan is asleep, Johnny sneaks her 2018 Nissan Sentra out of the yard and goes “joy riding” with his friends. As they are having a “good” time, Johnny noticed a police vehicle approaching them from behind with flashing sirens. He attempted to speed off, but crashed into the wall of a home on Carmichael Road, causing extensive damage, and writing off the car. Johnny and his friends are apprehended and taken to Carmichael Road Police Station to await the arrival of their parents.

1. How should Susan address this issue with Johnny?
2. What punishment or disciplinary techniques should she use?

3. What are some emotions Susan might likely experience?

4. Role-play scene between Johnny and Susan demonstrating how she might address this issue.



Exercise 4.2 (Optional)

Discussion:

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

Many decades ago, “switching” was a common occurrence in The Bahamas, and many children were sent to “break their own switch” to be punished for misbehavior. Today it is more common for parents to use a belt to administer corporal punishment.

1. How appropriate was this practice?

2. Is it appropriate today, why or why not?

3. What impact do you think “switching” has had on its recipients? How effective do you think corporal punishment is and why?

Child Abuse

Based on data collected from the field research, it seems as if many times parents cross the line from punishment to abuse. This issue is common in Bahamas, often warranting the intervention of multi-disciplinary agencies including the Department of Social Services, the police department, and the judicial system.

Emotional Abuse refers to the deliberate emotional maltreatment or rejection of a child (Sneddon, 2003). Emotionally abusive acts include sustained repetitive inappropriate emotional responses and reactions to the child's emotions and behavior. More specifically, acts such as name calling; yelling at the child for age appropriate accidents; belittling; humiliation; threatening; abandoning; isolation; and rejection, are all acts of emotional abuse.

Physical Abuse occurs when the caregiver intentionally causes physical harm or injury to a child; or fail to protect the child from acts of physical harm by another individual (Sneddon, 2003). Physical abuse may include injuries from excessive punishment which can be a single or recurrent event.

Neglect Sneddon (2003) defined child neglect as the failure to protect the child from danger, or a failure to properly care for the child. Acts of child neglect typically include insufficient attention to the child's needs; a lack of stimulation; emotional unavailability; a failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, or proper supervision for the child; allowing the child to be exposed to medical care or education that could result in harm; allowing the child to be exposed to danger, or permitting the child to be supervised by an incompetent or inappropriate caregiver (Sneddon, 2003).



Exercise 4.3

Discussion on Child Abuse:

Based on the description of the different forms of abuse explored above:

1. What is your understanding of the differences between punishment and abuse?
2. How can parents not cross the line of punishment or discipline to abuse?
3. What should a parent do if he/she finds out that he/she was unknowingly abusing his/her children?

SECTION FIVE:

Conflict Management in Families



Overview:

Conflict is natural. Everyone experiences it in their relationships and daily lives. Families are not perfect and do not always agree on everything or get along with each other all the time. What is important is that families learn ways to manage these conflicts and negative feelings so that these situations don't get worse.

Remember that when members of a family fight, they are usually not the only ones who are affected by the conflict. A healthy relationship between parents can have a positive impact on their children's wellbeing, behavior, and future relationships. On the other hand, when parents are stressed out, their children can suffer. Children also learn by watching their parents, so it's important that they see their parents dealing with conflict in healthy ways.

Conflict doesn't just happen in romantic relationships or families. Learning how to manage conflicts, large or small, will improve relationships with employers, co-workers, friends, and extended family members.

Objectives:

1. To review some best practices for resolving conflict.
2. To review some traditional methods of conflict management used in The Bahamas.

How to Effectively Manage Conflict in Families

1. Don't Send Destructive Messages - In the heat of the moment, destructive conflict can arise in conflict. These types of messages are counterproductive and generally result in people "catching feelings" and resentment. Here are some examples of destructive messages:

- **Criticism** involves attacking your child to portray yourself as being right and the child as being wrong, often using statements such as, "You always" or "You never." Statements with these phrases are rarely accurate and should be avoided.
- **Defensiveness** happens when you see yourself as the victim who's being attacked. Defensiveness may include making excuses, denying responsibility, and sarcasm. Although these reactions might be normal, defensiveness will keep you from being able to deal with the issue at hand because you are not open to suggestions or trying to understand your child's position.
- **Contempt** involves attacking and intentionally putting your child down through name calling (e.g. telling a child he is like his "no good ma or pa") or body language (such as snickering, eye rolling, "teeth kissing", or profane gestures).
- **Stonewalling** is the "whatever" moment in an interaction when one partner stops caring and refuses to communicate.

2. Use a Soft Approach

If you have something important that you want to talk about, don't start the conversation by immediately attacking your child. Use a soft startup to help the other person feel less defensive and more willing to talk. If you feel too angry to discuss something calmly, wait until you have cooled down before having the discussion.

3. Avoid Blaming

Avoid blaming your child even when you know they are wrong. Instead, firmly and respectfully point out their wrongdoing and discuss how such misunderstandings can be avoided in the future.

4. Use “I” instead of “You” Statements

Using “I” statements you take responsibility for what you are feeling. “You” statements on the other hand causes your child to become defensive. For example, “I don’t like it when you don’t clean your room when I ask you to” rather than “you never clean your room when I ask you to.”

5. **Compromise** - Recognize that you do not always have to have things your way. Accept when your child may be right and resist the urge to be defensive.

6. **Accept and Forgive** - Part of building a healthy family relationship is learning to appreciate each other’s differences and forgive when appropriate and necessary. It is important to understand that wherever differences exist so will conflicts. So choosing to be forgiving can model these attributes for children and strengthen your family and relationship.



Exercise 5.1

Activity: Role Play

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

Peter (father) and John (son) are having an argument about John staying out one hour past their agreed upon curfew of 11pm. John feels that because he is older now (16 years old), he should be allowed a later curfew. Peter feels that John is still too young to have a later curfew and is maintaining his position on the 11pm curfew. During the exchange things started to heat up then Peter remembered the points he had learned on conflict management in the Ministry of National Security Parenting Module. He decided to put them to use to resolve this conflict with his son.

In a brief role-play, demonstrate the key components of conflict management presented in this section. That is, show how Peter can use non-critical language, compromise, “I” messages, acceptance and forgiveness, and a non-blaming approach to successfully resolve this conflict.



Video: Conflict Management

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaErYQwH7dk>

Five Communication Tips for Dealing with Parent-Teen Conflict

Facing and Resolving Conflicts with Teenagers

Communication can be a challenge for parents and kids at any age - but for parents of teenagers, things can really fall apart. During this age where it's the job of parents and teens to pull apart and renegotiate their relationship to each other, conflict can become the norm instead of the exception when it comes to trying to communicate and interact with each other. Experts advice trying to keep those lines of communication open, while still continuing to respect the "growing up" transitions that you are both going through.

Avoid unnecessary conflict This is another way of reminding parents of the old advice to "pick your battles." Speaking from experience, it is easy to get locked into a mode of conflict over things that in the big picture, really don't matter at all. This doesn't mean that a parent should avoid confrontation about big issues (like drugs and alcohol, school attendance, and other potentially harmful and dangerous choices) to avoid conflict, but it does mean letting go on what your child wears or how they style their hair.

Choose your words carefully One therapist who specializes in working with "acting out" teens and their families told me that a good rule of thumb is to speak to your teenagers as you would to another adult. This is far easier said than done because they will certainly not always be acting or speaking like an adult to you. However, she pointed out that it models respectful behavior and puts you in a positive position of acting "as if." There are many times when it is just better to keep quiet until things have cooled off and you can put things back into perspective.

Negotiate, Accommodate and Compromise You don't have to do all of these at once, but they are grouped together in a family of conflict resolution techniques. While negotiating with a 2-year-old may have seemed impossible, it is possible to negotiate and compromise with a teenager. Of course, this first means that both parties need to be open to having such an interaction. This probably won't work in the heat of an argument. Step away and come back to resolve the situation. There is no shame in a parent giving in when a teenager may be right or have a reasonable point of view or request. Being able to admit a mistake and make a sincere apology are important skills for any parent. It can help to build trust and model accommodating adult behavior.

Let Go of the Past Once a problem has been solved, or an event or instance has passed, let it stay in the past. Bringing up a string of misdeeds in the heat of an argument will only serve to make things worse. Teenagers make mistakes and errors in judgment - it is developmentally appropriate behavior. By letting go of their past behaviors and actions, you will be letting them know you are not only making room for their evolution, but also expecting that they will change and evolve. Parents can

get stuck in the “I can’t trust you because you did XYZ” and this doesn’t allow for the teen to learn and move on. Of course, it might take a few starts and stops - it’s no different from when she was learning to walk or ride a bicycle.

Assert Authority Save this one for the real biggies - emergencies and dangerous situations where you need to act quickly and be “the parent.” Some kids will truly push those boundaries and test your ability to stay in control as a parent (I have one of those!). This doesn’t mean to use force (which seldom is even remotely reasonable with teenagers), it means to draw the line and assert that you are, in fact, still the parent and are the final say in the situation. The abuse of this technique is one of the main reasons parents and teens get stuck in conflict and “willful disobedience,” so again, save it for emergencies!

Avoid Power Struggles

Challenging authority is a normal part of teen behavior. It's one way teens assert their independence and establish their own identities. This can be particularly true when it comes to interacting with their parents. Teens may try to test you. And they can be very good at pushing your buttons.

Although it may be difficult, do your best to avoid power struggles with your teen. Active listening, setting the right tone and being clear and consistent can help keep the conversation focused and productive. If your teen insists on being argumentative, you might try this: simply refuse to argue. Your teen may find this disarming. And cutting down on the fireworks can open the door to more productive conversations about smart driving.

This article may be accessed at: http://www.comservice.bc.ca/sites/default/files/files/YFCI_SR_Communication_and_Power_Struggles.pdf

SECTION SIX:

Self-Esteem



Overview:

Self-esteem refers to how an individual views himself or herself and how valuable they believe they are in their world. It comes from an inner knowing that one is worthy and deserving of good things and that one has a positive contribution to make to humanity. Self-esteem is not feeling like one is better than other people or constantly bragging about one's accomplishments. Such a person most likely is suffering from low self-esteem and seeks validation by making others look and feel inferior.

Helping children to develop healthy self-esteem is an important endeavor that is often linked to positive life outcomes. Parents' validation of their children and demonstration of healthy self-esteem typically teach children how to self-validate and develop healthy self-esteem of themselves. Fortunately, although many parents have probably been poor examples of positive self-esteem for their children because they themselves suffer from low self-esteem, it is not too late to begin developing your own, or helping your child to develop his/her self-esteem.

Objective:

- I. To explore ways of enhancing child/ children's self-esteem.



Exercise 6.1

Case Study:

Refer to the instructor's notes for instructions on facilitating this discussion.

Tammy is a fifteen year-old female being raised by a single mother. Her mother, Cathy, is thirty years old and works as a security officer with one of the firms in Nassau. Cathy typically works twelve to sixteen hour shifts six days weekly, with two days off every other week. Cathy and Tammy spend very little time together, and when they do, the majority of the time is spent telling Tammy how “ugly and stupid” she is, and how she has “bad ways like her father’s people.”

Two months ago, Tammy met a boy at school who immediately begins telling her how beautiful she is. They went out to fish fry about six weeks ago, had a few drinks, and ended up having sex. Tammy is a few weeks pregnant. She has told her mother who now repeatedly tells her that she is “bad just like her daddy sisters.” Tammy is depressed and is thinking about killing herself because “my life is over and I have nothing to live for.”

Reflection:

1. What are your thoughts on this scenario?
2. How is Tammy’s self-esteem likely to be impacted as a result of her home/family dynamics?
3. How would you attempt to help this family become more nurturing and loving?
4. How can Cathy begin to help Tammy develop healthy self-esteem?

A child with **High Self-esteem** will often:

- Be capable of acting in his or her best interest and judgment.
- Genuinely enjoys themselves and participates in a wide variety of activities.
- Be proud of accomplishments.
- Act independently.
- Act in a responsible manner.
- Handle frustrations well.
- Try new challenges, usually enthusiastically.
- Feel able to influence others.
- Express a broad range of emotions and feelings.

A child with **Low Self-esteem** will often

- Avoid situations that cause anxiety; may always ask for help or refuse to do tasks alone.
- Frequently make negative self-statements (“I can’t”; “I’m not good at anything”).
- Feel that others don’t value him or her.
- Blame others for his or her weaknesses; excessively criticize others.
- Be easily influenced by others.
- Be defensive or easily frustrated; overreact to praise, time constraints, competition, or feedback.
- Feel powerless.
- Express a narrow range of emotions and feelings.
- Be jealous.

Helping a Child to Build Healthy Self-Esteem

Following are ways to help a child build healthy self-esteem:

1. Encourage activity. Praise a child for trying and help them to use their imagination, intelligence and playfulness.
2. Encourage children to talk. Children need to talk about their feelings and ideas, even if they are different from yours.
3. Make children feel special. One way you can do this by spending time doing things they like to do.
4. Tell them that they are special; this will help them to feel wanted.
5. Avoid being overly critical of your child. Offer constructive criticism when needed, but generally recognize that children are not perfect and will make mistakes.
6. Avoid comparisons. Each individual is unique, so avoid comparing one child to another sibling or to other children.
7. Avoid abusive language. Telling a child that he “is like his no good pa”, for instance, will only chip away at his already fragile self-esteem.
8. Be trustworthy. Everyone wants to be with someone they can count on.
9. Shower your children with acts of affection (both girls and boys) in your life.
10. Make children feel important. This can be done when you share your feelings and ideas or discuss family and community events with them.
11. Make children feel like they are an important part of the family. Give them chores and other tasks to do in the home and let them assist with planning household activities.
12. Give children a chance to make choices and help them understand the consequences of their choices. Teach them how to brainstorm alternatives and select what they think is the best course of action.
13. Encourage children to talk about what they believe in and help them to understand and articulate their beliefs. Discuss your experiences with them as well.
14. Do not be judgmental. When your children open up to you and talk about their issues, do not judge them or try to change their minds. Listen to them. Have a healthy discussion about their goals and ambitions.
15. Be consistent. Do not change a rule without discussing it with your child.
16. Praise children when they do things you approve of. Recognize what they are good at and encourage them to pursue these activities.



Exercise 6.2

Group Discussion:

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

Paul has struggled with low self-esteem all his life. He has twin teen-aged sons: Tom who appears to also be struggling with low self-esteem, and Jerry who does not appear to share this issue. Both boys live with their father who constantly belittles and calls them names.

1. Can a parent with low self-esteem help his/her child raise his/her self-esteem? Why or why not?
2. What practices in Bahamian families contribute to low self-esteem?
3. In addition to the above suggestions, what other strategies can parents use to help their children develop healthy self-esteem?
4. Is it appropriate today, why or why not?
5. What impact do you think “switching” has had on its recipients?
6. How effective do you think corporal punishment is and why?

SECTION SEVEN:

Understanding the Role of Fathers



Objectives:

In this section, participants:

- I. Explore the traditional roles of fathers and compare how these roles may have changed over time.

Overview:

Based on field research, it became evident that many families in The Bahamas are headed by single mothers, sometimes with or without contributions from fathers. One result of this has perhaps been a diminishment of the important role that fathers should play in child rearing. Moreover, the popular saying that “it takes two to tango” alludes to the fact that child rearing should be a joint venture by parents. Despite this general understanding, however, the daunting reality is that too often fathers are absent in the lives of their children, leaving mothers to shoulder the full responsibility of raising their children. Hence, this section emphasizes and focuses on understanding the role of fathers in helping to rear healthy and well-adjusted children.

The role played by a father in child rearing cannot be underscored. Fathers play a vital role in their child’s social, emotional, cognitive, language and motor development (Lamb, 2010). Research has suggested that the role played by fathers in child development begins before the child is born and continues across the lifespan (Lamb, 2010).

Four Types of Fathers

A study conducted by Lewis and Lamb (2007) identified four types of fathers. These are explored below.

1. **Motivated Biofathers** are fathers who are committed to their child's biological and social development. These fathers are also interactive and responsive to their children's needs.
2. **Unmotivated Biofathers** are referred to as the deadbeat or "no good" fathers. These fathers tend to be uninvolved in their child rearing process or tend to take a "hands off" approach.
3. **Motivated Non-Biofathers** include stepfathers and adoptive fathers. Though unrelated to their child biologically, these fathers tend to play an active role in their children's lives.
4. **Unmotivated Non-Biofathers** include men who are intimately involved with mothers, and unrelated to the children of these women. They also tend to have little interaction with the children in these relationships.



Exercise 7.1

Group Discussion:

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

The Bahamian father is often uninvolved in or excluded from their child's rearing process. Sometimes this is due to disinterest and other times it may be due to the mothers being vindictive.

1. What were some roles that were traditionally performed by Bahamian fathers?
2. How have these roles changed over time?

3. How can uninvolved fathers be encouraged become more engaged in their children's lives?

4. Under what circumstances should a mother deprive a father from contributing to his child's development process?

Role of Fathers in Child Rearing

The roles played by fathers in child development are critical include social-emotional, intellectual, language, and motor development.

- **Social-Emotional Development** By their early involvement in their children's lives, fathers become a primary source of emotional security (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006). Additionally, displays of affection from fathers increase bonding and contribute to the formation of secure attachments (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006). Response to children's emotional needs helps them to develop their problem-solving capacity, and research has suggested that these children perform better on tests of emotional intelligence than their counterpart whose fathers are uninvolved or absent. Children also score rate higher on self-esteem, self-confidence, and social competence, and lower on depression when their fathers are actively engaged in their lives (Amato, 1994). Last, children of engaged fathers display better psychological outcomes, particularly when their father's involvement began before the age of seven years (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002).

- **Intellectual Development** Fathers' involvement also aids with a child's intellectual development, and studies have implied that fathers' engagement was linked to higher scores on intelligence testing. Fathers' involvement was also linked to significant progress in the areas of linguistic and cognitive development (Pruett, 2000, as cited in Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006). Other studies have shown that children who frequently

participated stimulating activities with their fathers showed lower levels of cognitive delay (Bronte-Tinkew, Carrano, Horowitz, & Kinukawa, 2008).

- **Language Development** Fathers presence also aid with child language development. Lamb (2010) reported that while both parents helped their children to learn the language of their culture, father's role seemed more critical as fathers appeared to be more likely to engage children in language exchanges that encouraged a greater degree of social communication. These exchanges also challenged the developing language abilities of the child leading to a more extensive grasp of their language context (Rowe, Cocker, & Pan, 2004).
- **Motor Development** Six-month-olds whose fathers are involved in their care score higher on tests of motor development (Gestwicki, 2010). Fathers tend to play more one-on-one, rough and tumble games with their children, which encourages large motor development, lets children explore what their bodies can do, and helps them learn to regulate their emotions when engaging in impulsive physical contact (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006).



Exercise 7.2 (Optional)

Group Discussion:

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

Mary has three children with John but refuses to allow him to interact with the children because he is unemployed, and unable to contribute to their financial maintenance. According to Mary, she is a single mother and “don't have time for no ‘no-good’ man who don't want to take care of his children.”

John is unemployed and his attempts at job hunting so far have been unsuccessful. He loves his three children with Mary and wants to spend time with them until he can support them financially. Mary, however, refuses to allow him access to the children stating, “come by when you get some money.”

1. Is Mary right for taking the stance that she has?

2. How might this situation be approached so that John plays a more active role in his children's lives?
3. Roleplay this scenario to show how this situation can be played out in a manner that reflects the best interest of the children.



Exercise 7.3 (Optional)

Case Study:

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

Sally and Joe, an unmarried Bahamian couple share a one-bedroom apartment in the Yellow Elder community. They have four children, three girls and one boy, ranging from three years to seven years. Sally works twelve-hour shifts at a Burger King restaurant where she earns \$295 weekly. Joe is unemployed and seems uninterested in working. He seems fine with “hanging out” with his “boys” seven days a week and “sponging” of Sally for his basic necessities. Additionally, Joe has little involvement with their children outside of scolding or spanking them for misconduct. His mindset is “raising children is a woman’s job.”

1. How should Sally respond in this situation?
2. Would Sally be right to deprive the children of their father's presence, why or why not?

3. How can Joe be encouraged to change his mindset and become more engaged in the children's lives?



Exercise 7.4 (Optional)

Reflection:

Based on your experience as a parent or your observation of parents, reflect on the current roles of fathers and answer the questions below:

1. What practices do they currently practice that may be unhelpful to their child's development?
2. What can they do differently?
3. How can mothers who have Unmotivated Non-Biofathers or Unmotivated Biofathers encourage a greater supportive male presence in their children's lives?

Ten Ways to be a Better Father

1. **Respect Your Children's Mother**

One of the best things a father can do for his children is to respect their mother. If you are married, keep your marriage strong and vital. If you're not married, it is still important to respect and support the mother of your children. A father and mother who respect each other, and let their children know it, provide a secure environment for them. When children see their parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected.

2. **Spend Time with Your Children**

How a father spends his time tells his children what's important to him. If you always seem too busy for your children, they will feel neglected no matter what you say. Treasuring children often means sacrificing other things, but it is essential to spend time with your children. Kids grow up so quickly. Missed opportunities are forever lost.

3. **Earn the Right to Be Heard**

All too often the only time a father speaks to his children is when they have done something wrong. That's why so many children cringe when their mother says, "Your father wants to talk with you." Begin talking with your kids when they are very young so that difficult subjects will be easier to handle as they get older. Take time and listen to their ideas and problems.

4. **Discipline with Love**

All children need guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits. Remind your children of the consequences of their actions and provide meaningful rewards for desirable behavior. Fathers who discipline in a calm and fair manner show love for their children.

5. **Be a Role Model**

Fathers are role models to their kids whether they realize it or not. A girl who spends time with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect by boys, and what to look for in a husband. Fathers can teach sons what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility and responsibility. "All the world's a stage..." and a father plays one of the most vital roles.

6. **Be a Teacher**

Too many fathers think teaching is something others do. But a father who teaches his children about right and wrong, and encourages them to do their best, will see his children make good choices. Involved fathers use everyday examples to help their children learn the basic lessons of life.

7. **Eat Together as a Family**

Sharing a meal together (breakfast, lunch or dinner) can be an important part of healthy family life. In addition to providing some structure in a busy day, it gives kids the chance

to talk about what they are doing and want to do. It is also a good time for fathers to listen and give advice. Most importantly, it is a time for families to be together each day.

8. Read to Your Children

In a world where television often dominates the lives of children, it is important that fathers make the effort to read to their children. Children learn best by doing and reading, as well as seeing and hearing. Begin reading to your children when they are very young. When they are older encourage them to read on their own. Instilling your children with a love for reading is one of the best ways to ensure they will have a lifetime of personal and career growth.

9. Show Affection

Children need the security that comes from knowing they are wanted, accepted and loved by their family. Parents, especially fathers, need to feel both comfortable and willing to hug their children. Showing affection everyday is the best way to let your children know that you love them.

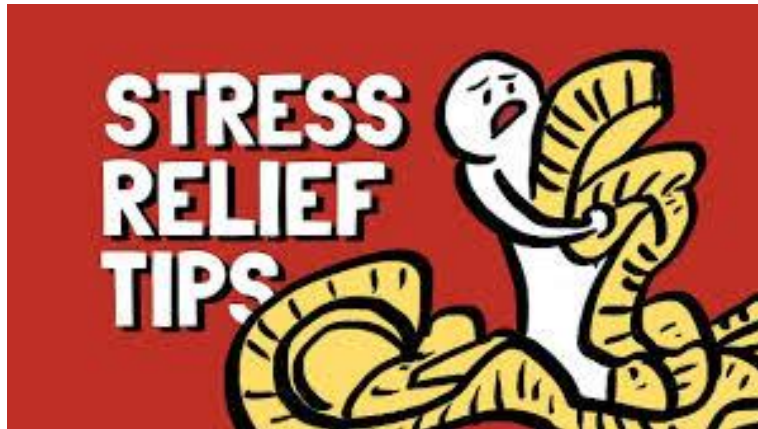
10. Realize that a Father's Job Is Never Done

Even after children are grown and ready to leave home, they will still look to their fathers for wisdom and advice. Whether it's continued schooling, a new job or a wedding, fathers continue to play an essential part in the lives of their children as they grow and, perhaps, marry and build their own families.

Source: National Fatherhood Initiative

SECTION EIGHT:

Stress Management for Parents



Overview:

Every living being will at some time or the other experience stress. In fact, given the demands that surface during everyday living, it is virtually impossible to avoid stress. Mild to moderate stress, though, can be beneficial, while excessive stress may prove harmful. Additionally, stress reactions vary from individual to individual and the strategies used to manage stress may be as unique as the individuals who are using them. Excessive stress can have a negative effect on people's health, making them more vulnerable to illness, and can negatively impact relationships, and may hinder opportunities to develop supportive, nurturing interactions. In learning to manage stress, it is first important to identify the circumstances under which stress is likely to emerge. Once stressors have been identified, the aim is then to devise healthy ways of coping with them.

One context in which stress may likely occur is in parenting. Stress reactions may arise as parents try to balance work and other activities with the demands generated by parenting.

Objective:

- I. Parents explore ways of managing stress.

Signs of Stress Many times our bodies alert us that we are under too much stress. These clues might include sweaty palms, headache, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, uneasiness, indigestion, depression, restlessness, frustration, and changes in sleeping or eating patterns. If high levels of stress continue, it can lead to numerous problems including increased risk of illness, increased risk of accidents, decreased satisfaction with life, and increased risk of alcohol and/or drug intake.

- **Increased Risk of Illness** - Individuals experiencing high stress levels may get ill more easily than their non-stressed counterpart, and take longer periods to recover.
- **Decreased Satisfaction with Life** - A highly stressed individual generally report a lack of enjoyment with life. Consequently, important relationships may be negatively impacted leaving the individual with a limited support network from which to pull.
- **Drug and Alcohol Abuse** - As highly stressed individuals try to cope with stress, they may turn to using alcohol and drugs. Substance abuse may provide temporary stress relief but often compounds the already existing issue. The key is to replace maladaptive and dysfunctional coping mechanisms with more adaptive and functional ways of coping.



Exercise 8.1

Group Discussion:

Life is sometimes filled with demands, obligations, and challenges that can generate stress. Some individuals cope by using maladaptive means such as drinking, smoking, eating, or watching too much television.

1. What are some things that create stress in your life?
2. What current coping strategies do you use?
3. What new strategies can you introduce?

Stress Management Strategies

Promptly Address Issues that are Causing Stress Learn to recognize identify stressors, and recognize signs of stress. Then take proactive steps to manage it. If possible, eliminate toxic people, places, or things that cause you to feel stressed.

Reframe Stressful Situations Learning to see the glass as half full, rather than half empty. It may not always be possible to reframe every stressful situation, and the stress generated by some situations may be a motivation for you to take necessary action.

Think Positively Learning to recognize thoughts that contribute to your stress. If you believe that your children should be well-behaved at all times, you will likely experience frequent stress when they misbehave. It would reduce stress to change this belief to one that allows for normal misbehavior that is common in all children.

Realize that it's Ok to be Less than Perfect It's important to go easy on yourself and develop a more realistic expectation of your capabilities. It also helps to occasionally pat yourself on the back for doing the best that you can, given your current resources (or lack of resources).

Learn Effective Problem Solving It is important, then, to address problems when they arise by defining the problem and brainstorming a list of potential solutions.

Manage Your Time Wisely Learning to prioritize your time will help you to manage stress. This occurs as you learn to assess what is important to you, and pursue these activities.

Don't Procrastinate Making Important Decisions Make decisions as quickly as possible once you have all of the relevant information.

Learn How to "Chill" Learning to relax can help to release tension created by stressful situations.

Get Sufficient Rest and Sleep It is important to get enough rest so that a healthy energy level is maintained and your ability manage stress is enhanced.

Learn To Have Fun Make a list of what is fun for you, and make a commitment to begin seeking out these activities. Fun activities are an excellent way to reduce stress and become more energized.

Eat Healthy Practicing proper nutrition is crucial to managing stress. In this regard, a diet high in fiber, fruits, vegetables and whole grains is recommended.

Begin an Exercise Regimen An exercise regimen is also important for managing stress. A regimen that includes three to four days of sustained aerobic activity (walking, jogging, swimming, or cycling), for thirty minutes or more, is generally recommended.

Learn Proper Money Management Learning to budget and spend money economically can help to lessen much of the money issues that parents commonly experience.

Develop a Strong Support System It is important to have at least one friend, relative, (or spiritual advisor) with whom you can share your stress-related thoughts.

Look for the Humor in Situations (Laugh Often) Try not to take things too seriously, and learn to laugh at yourself. Try to laugh as often and as hard as possible.

Seek Professional Assistance If you feel overwhelmed, seek out professional assistance. Some agencies that can render assistance include: the Department of Social Services, Sandilands Rehabilitation Center, the Department of Rehabilitative/Welfare Services, the Accident and Emergency Department at Princess Margaret Hospital.

Summary:

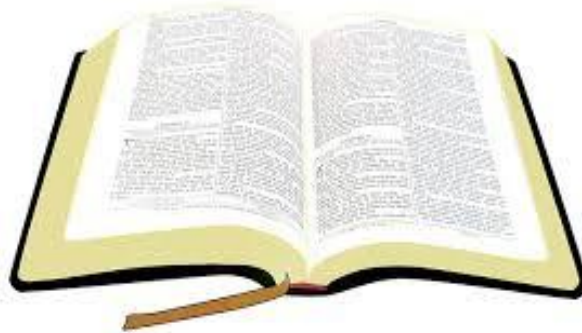


**View Video Clip Here:
Stress Management for Parents**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FluEvib855E>

SECTION NINE:

Parenting and Child Spiritual Development



Overview:

It is a common saying in The Bahamas that “the family that prays together, stays together.” This saying speaks to recognition of the important role that spirituality plays in family development. Further proof of this is the accounts told by many Bahamian adults of how their parents made them get up early in the morning (or “before day clean”) for Bible study and family prayer sessions. One lady recounted how she often got spankings for falling asleep during prayer, but how these early prayer meetings helped to promote her spiritual development, and contributed to the individual that she is today.

Objectives:

1. To explore the importance of child spiritual development.
2. To brainstorm specific strategies for how child spiritual development may be achieved in a Bahamian context.

Stages of Faith Development in Children

Stage 0: Undifferentiated (Primal) Faith (Infancy) - Undifferentiated faith is strengthened by the nurturing, protection, and availability received from parents. From these experiences, the child is introduced to the divine care in its most basic form.

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith (Preschool years)

The child's faith is imaginative, intuitive, illogical, and filled with fantasy relating to the power and omnipotence of God. Many times at this age the understandings constructed by children from religious lessons may be different from those intended by their teachers or parents.

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith (Early school years)

During this stage, the stories that children hear and tell about God expresses their faith.

Stage 3: Synthetic - Conventional Faith (Late school years, early adolescence)

Faith is contained in an unspoken acceptance of the conventional religious values taught by others, and focuses more on feelings of what is right and wrong.

Stage 4: Individuative - Reflective Faith (Late adolescence, early adult years)

In this stage faith emerges from personal reflection and experiences that causes the individual to reassess and replace assumptions and beliefs about divinity (e.g. God loves me, but if I steal and get caught, I have to face the painful consequences). Religious commitments during this stage tend to be more personally meaningful, individualized, and depend less on the guidance of parents and other adults.

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith (Adulthood)

During this stage the individual (who is now an adult) becomes aware and more willing to accept the inconsistencies that are sometimes prevalent in religious life (e.g. an "anointed" pastor getting caught for "sweet-hearting") with a less judgmental attitude. Individuals are also more likely to recognize the rational reflections and expressions of their beliefs and values (e.g. if I prevail in prayer and fasting, I will eventually get my "breakthrough").

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith (Adulthood)

In this stage, faith is grounded in universal pursuits that some individuals espouse as lifelong causes. These may include helping the poor (e.g. Mother Teresa), or other global pursuits. This is very rarely achieved.



Exercise 9.1

Group Discussion:

Your instructor will give you instructions for this discussion.

1. How can parents promote their child's spiritual development?
2. How does parents' lack of involvement in religious practices likely to affect their child?
3. How does parents' involvement in religious practices likely to affect their child rearing?
4. Do you believe in "generational curses?" To what extent do you believe that certain "bad habits" pass down from generation to generation because of a generation curse?

Fostering Spiritual Growth in Children and Adolescents

1. Respect the ways that spiritual reflection changes with age and growth in thinking, judgment, and personality. This means that the ways that children interpret religious matters are accepted as suitable for their age.
2. Encourage opportunities to participate in religious activities that are age-appropriate and suited to a child's capacity for understanding.
3. Encourage opportunities for extended family involvement in religious activities that are oriented to the interests and needs of children alone.
4. Parents praying with their children.
5. Parents reading the Bible to their children and encouraging them to follow a Bible reading plan.
6. Parents following a Bible reading plan/regimen.
7. Encouraging children to get baptized or to receive their first communion at an early age.
8. Ensuring that children attend weekly church services for children.
9. Encouraging children to watch religious stations (e.g. TBN, BCN, 3ABN).
10. Encouraging children to recognize and appreciate individual differences.
11. Model the spiritual practices you wish to see your children following. For example, let your children see you praying, reading the Bible, attending worship services, practicing honesty, and so on.

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