

THE PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION PARENTING POTENTIAL

This study guide program has been developed specifically as a tool for enhancing the Parenting Potential within each of us. Parenting may include actually becoming a biological parent, assuming or carrying out the role of raising a child, occasionally taking care of a child or even resolving and healing our own childhood issues. Potential is our power, what is possible, and our untapped ability. Parenting potential is our possibility of expanding our abilities to make a positive difference in our world by becoming healthy adults and guiding and teaching children to become healthy adults.

Whether or not you are a parent yet, will be in the future or never expect to become a parent, this program can be beneficial to you. In addition to the educational material presented, this program offers an opportunity to reconnect with our own childhood and see how our childhood experiences have effected us. Expanding our understanding, awareness and knowledge of self allows us to open up and tap into our parenting potential.

Occasionally the material presented may present entirely new views or beliefs to you about children, parents, or even yourself. To gain the most from this program, please be selectively open. To be open, it is important to allow the information in and not judge new or different ideas until you have finished reading the material and completed the exercises. To be selective, be willing to try something different and choose what seems reasonable or appropriate for you and your situation. Again, please be open to consider what is presented and then choose for yourself what you find useable. Learning new ways to parent takes time and practice. If you are trying these ideas out with your children, please be patient.

If you are using this material to resolve your own childhood issues, it is important to know that each adult has a child within themselves. Because the world isn't perfect and neither were our parents, most of us have an inner child that was criticized and hurt. In order to heal those hurts, our inner child needs to be nurtured which means cared for. We can take this information and use it to heal ourselves. Part of the process of healing ourselves involves REPARENTING, or using what we have learned to become a nurturing parent to ourselves. If we are dissatisfied with the way we were parented or the way we are parenting our children, we have the opportunity to do something positive about it. However, blaming our parents or ourselves doesn't work to change things. Parents cannot teach or do what they don't know.

The majority of people who find themselves involved in any type of parenting role or helping to raise a child learned how to be a parent from their own parents. As children or teenagers we often swear we would never treat our children like our parents are treating us. However we are often dismayed when we recognize ourselves saying or doing the very thing to our own children that we so resented about our own parents. Unfortunately, education about effective parenting, childhood development, and even how to become a healthy adult has not been available until recently. To complicate the job of being a parent, the roles of individuals, families, and even society have changed drastically over the past 40 years. The world we live in today is vastly different from that of our parents and grandparents when they were our age. The importance here for parenting is that the rules and methods most of our parents and grandparents used will not work today.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

In the past, many societies were ruled by dictators who had total control over the lives of their people. The common people were not considered to be socially equal to their leaders. They had little or no choice about where or how they lived, or even the type of work they did. They lived a life with many limits and few freedoms. Throughout history, these autocratic governments have been threatened by revolution

as people recognized their desire to have more freedom and struggled to gain more control over their own lives.

Our country began as a result of people seeking a place to live and a form of government that allowed them to have their personal freedoms. This form of government is known as democracy. In our democratic society the idea of personal freedom and social equality are highly valued. Social equality means that individuals have the same right to be treated with dignity and respect. As our country has evolved, blacks, women, handicapped, the elderly and many other minorities have battled to have their social equality recognized. Children today understand these concepts and know that they apply to all people, including themselves. Not only is it unrealistic to expect our children to accept being treated as socially unequal, such treatment does not prepare them to live as effective adults in our society. Just as our society of equals needs leaders, our children need parents who are leaders. Effective leaders in a democratic society can only be effective when they treat those they lead with dignity and respect and use democratic techniques. Likewise to be effective parents today, parents need to recognize their children's rights to dignity and respect and treat them accordingly.

PARENTING STYLES

In Active Parenting, written by Dr. Michael H. Popin (1983), the author refers to old and new ways of parenting and three main styles of parenting. The Autocratic method is similar to the autocratic style of government in that the parent is dominating over the children, giving orders as to what, when, where, and how things will be done. There is not room for children to question, comment or have input about these orders. Children raised in this way today are often rebellious in order to find a way to have some freedom and protect their individuality or are crushed into conformity and have difficulty learning to be self reliant and independent. This method involves limits without freedom and can be represented by drawing a closed circle.

The Permissive method is often adopted by parents who in all probability grew up in an autocratic family and are now strongly

reacting against the harsh, inflexible autocratic method. This method moves towards a different extreme of freedom without limits. These households are often filled with confusion, lack of respect for others, "me and only me" thinking.

Parents allow children to do their own thing and children often walk all over their parents in the process. Without limits and boundaries, these children often feel insecure and lack the ability to cooperate with others and do not have a sense of belonging. This method can be represented by a wavy line.

Another parenting style which is more in the middle between the extremes of autocratic and permissive is the Democratic method. In the democratic household, the parents are the leaders of the children who are the students or learners. Children are treated as social equals who are respected and expected to treat others with respect. The rights and responsibilities of each member of the household are important, and cooperation is encouraged. Freedom is an ideal and it exists within limits. This can be represented by a wavy line within a circle. Children raised in this way are capable of learning how to experience their own individual freedoms within limits. They have a better chance of learning to do more than just survive, but actually thrive. They are more capable of becoming independent, and recognizing that they are worthy, valuable, people.

Many children grow up unsure of what is expected of them or of what to expect from their parents. Some parents do not parent their children with a consistent style. One day they may be overly permissive allowing the children to do whatever they please without question. The next they may become dictators, ordering children around, making demands and changing or suddenly enforcing rules. Inconsistency keeps everyone guessing about what is expected, how to behave and how to please others. There can be many explanations and causes for these inconsistencies. Stress, physical exhaustion, emotional upset, mental illness, alcohol consumption and drug use often interfere with parenting. Two of the most wide spread and devastating difficulties experienced by families today are alcoholism and drug use. The effects of alcoholism and drug

use eat at the core of a family. When parents abuse alcohol and drugs their ability to carry out effective parenting is destroyed. Without effective parenting, the survival and future of our children is in danger.

Take an opportunity now and think back to your own childhood, and write out your answer to each of these questions:

1. What parenting style did each of your parents (or whoever raised you), use? Autocratic, Permissive, or Democratic.
2. If both parents, or more than one person raised you, did they use the same style or was it different?
3. Was the parenting style inconsistent? If so why?
4. How did you learn to behave the way you do? Did you consistently know what was expected of you?
5. What feelings did you have as a child towards your parents or whoever raised you? Love, Fear, Resentment, Respect, etc ...
6. What feelings as an adult do you have towards your parents or whoever raised you?
7. When you were growing up, was there a feeling of belonging and cooperation in your household? Why, or why not?
8. Did your parents ever drink too much or use drugs and how did that effect you as a child?

Now take the time to look at your own parenting style and write down the answers to these questions.

1. What has been your own parenting style? Autocratic, Permissive, or Democratic.
2. If you share the parenting job with someone else, what has been their parenting style?
3. Is your parenting style consistent, or does it change. If so, when does it change and why?
4. How are children in the household effected by that?
5. What feelings do your children have towards you? Love, anger, respect, not caring, fear...etc..

6. What feelings do you have towards your children? Love, guilt, disappointment, joy, resentment...etc..
7. Is there a sense of cooperation and belonging in the household or is there rebellion or resentment?
8. If you ever use drugs or drink too much, how does that affect your children?

SURVIVAL

As our society and our world continues to change and the pace of these changes becomes faster and faster, our survival also depends on our abilities to adjust to changes in our life and society. One of the most important roles of families has been helping family members to survive and teaching children how to survive. Today the word survive has a different meaning from that of generations ago. When we refer to the survival of children today in our society, we are generally referring to more than basic life survival. Life survival means having enough food, water and shelter to stay alive. While in many countries, children actually die because their basic needs are not met, it is very rare in our country. Many of our children are in danger of failing to socially survive, although they are in a democratic society. Social survival refers to having the skills to, effectively communicate with others, maintain workable relationships, become productive members of society, and get our own rights and needs met while respecting the rights and needs of others. Most parents truly want more than survival for themselves and their children; they want to do well or thrive.

For many adults this is a great source of conflict and pain since they are themselves barely surviving and failing to thrive. For these adults who are also parents, there is the additional pain of not being able to teach their children how to thrive. Parents cannot teach what they do not know. Our overcrowded drug and alcohol treatment facilities, jails, prisons, and streets filled with the homeless are examples of the many who are barely surviving, let alone thriving.

For anyone discovering that they are not thriving in their life let alone those who find they are barely surviving, an honest look at their life, beliefs, values and behaviors and how they got them is an important step in changing. It is vitally important for our sake and that of our children that we learn new skills. Children learn mostly by watching and imitating others, particularly their parents. The behavior of adults and parents becomes a model for the children to imitate. This is called modeling. Children will imitate both positive or negative

behavior of adults and parents. This is one reason why children need good role models, and especially parents who are good role models. One of the most powerful gifts we can give to our children is to heal our own lives and learn how to survive and thrive. Then as parents we can model behaviors that teach our children how to survive and thrive in their lives.

**STUDY QUESTIONS - STUDY GUIDE ONE
INTRODUCTION TO PARENTING POTENTIAL**

1. This study program is only beneficial to you if you make it so.
a) true b) false

2. Most of us have an inner child that needs to _____.
a) be nurtured and healed b) be blamed
c) be criticized and hurt d) be rewarded

3. Reparenting means to:
a) be a parent to someone else's child
b) be a parent to more than one child
c) learn to become a nurturing parent to ourselves
d) decide not to become a parent

4. Most people learn how to be a parent by:
a) trial and error
b) taking classes in school
c) reading books
d) watching, learning from, and mimicking their own parents

5. The rules and methods most of our parents and grandparents used will not work today.
a) true b) false

6. In an Autocratic government the common people:
a) had a lot of freedom to enjoy
b) lived anyway they wanted
c) enjoyed the limits they had
d) often revolted because they wanted more freedom

7. Social equality means that individuals have the same:
a) rights to be treated with dignity and respect
b) level of education
c) rights as an autocratic government
d) amount of integrity

8. Children today understand that social equality:
a) applies to all people, except themselves
b) applies only to minorities

- c) applies to all people, including themselves
 - d) is for children only
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- 9. To be effective parents today, parents need to recognize their children's rights to?
 - a) have unlimited freedom
 - b) be treated with dignity and respect
 - c) have rigid limits on their activities
 - d) be the leaders of their families

 - 10. Which is not one of the three main styles of parenting discussed in this material?
 - a) social equality
 - b) autocratic
 - c) permissive
 - d) democratic

 - 11. Which parenting style has limits without freedom?
 - a) social equality
 - b) autocratic
 - c) permissive
 - d) democratic

 - 12. Which parenting style has freedom without limits?
 - a) social equality
 - b) autocratic
 - c) permissive
 - d) democratic

 - 13. Children who have no limits and boundaries often feel?
 - a) insecure
 - b) respectful of others boundaries
 - c) rebellious
 - d) dominated by their parents

 - 14. In the democratic household the parents are the?
 - a) social equals
 - b) followers
 - c) only ones with freedoms
 - d) leaders

 - 15. In a democratic household, which is not a value?
 - a) rights and responsibilities
 - b) freedom and limits
 - c) respect
 - d) freedom without limits

 - 16. In a permissive household parents allow children to:

- a) be dominated
 - b) have freedom within limits
 - c) have no freedoms
 - d) do their own thing and walk over the parents
17. Freedom within limits, goes with which parenting style?
- a) permissive
 - b) autocratic
 - c) social equality
 - d) democratic
18. In which parenting style is cooperation encouraged?
- a) social equality
 - b) democratic
 - c) permissive
 - d) autocratic
19. Inconsistency in parenting keeps everyone?
- a) happy
 - b) free to do what ever they want
 - c) guessing about what is expected and how to behave
 - d) working together cooperatively
20. Two of the most devastating difficulties experienced by families today are:
- a) emotional upset and illness
 - b) stress and illness
 - c) mental illness and physical exhaustion
 - d) alcoholism and drug use
21. Alcoholism and drug use by parents:
- a) has very little effect on the children
 - b) destroys their ability to be effective parents
 - c) is not much of a problem in our society
 - d) has nothing to do with consistency in parenting
22. Without effective parenting, the _____ and future of our children is in danger.
- a) survival
 - b) rewards
 - c) social equality
 - d) rights
23. Our survival also depends on our ability to:
- a) rebel against change
 - b) control what things change
 - c) ignore changes

- d) adjust to change
24. One of the most important roles of families has been to help family members survive and teach children how to survive.
a) true b) false
25. Life survival means having enough food, water, and shelter to stay alive.
a) true b) false
26. Which is not a necessary part of social survival?
a) Skills to effectively communicate with others.
b) Giving up our own needs and rights.
c) Maintaining workable relationships.
d) Respecting the rights and needs of others.
27. Children learn mostly by:
a) reading books
b) being told what to do
c) instinct
d) watching and imitating others, especially parents
28. To thrive in your own life means:
a) to ignore what others want from you
b) to barely get by
c) to do well
d) to be unhappy
29. Parents cannot teach what they do not know.
a) true b) false
30. One of the most powerful gifts we can give our children is:
a) to heal our own lives and learn to thrive
b) not to model their behavior after us
c) to teach them what we do not know
d) to blame their problems on others