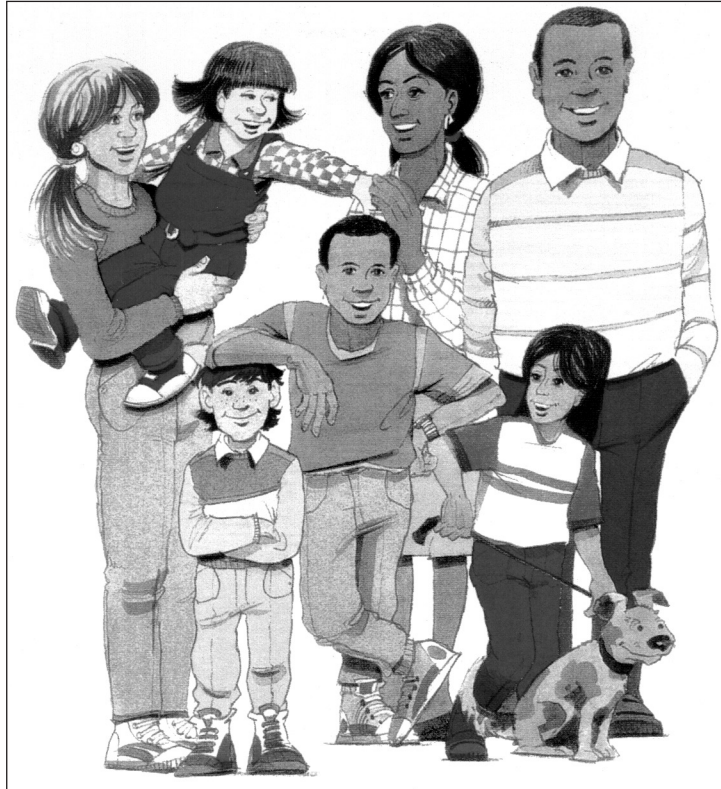


# ***THE INCREDIBLE YEARS®: PARENTS AND CHILDREN SERIES***



## ***ADVANCE Program Group Leader Training***

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[www.incredibleyears.com](http://www.incredibleyears.com)

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**Incredible Years**  
**Advanced Parenting 2-day Consultation Training**  
**(1-15-2018)**

**This training is for group leaders who are certified or have extensive experience with the Basic program. It is small group format (10-16 participants) and each participant is assigned (in advance of the training) one of the sessions to prepare, present and model to the group.**

**Group leaders will select 1-2 vignettes from the session they are assigned to for presentation. Those vignettes with asterix\* are core vignettes but leaders are encouraged to choose vignettes to present that they want help practicing and getting feedback on from other group leaders and the trainer. This workshop utilizes participatory, experiential learning and self-reflective methods.**

**Day One**

**Opening Introductions and Goals**

Participant introductions, experience of using Basic Preschool and School Age Parenting programs and goals.

**Brainstorm Key Principles**

Review principles underlying the Incredible Years Parenting Programs and introduction to the Relationship Pyramid and goals of the Advanced Program.

***Topic 1: Active Listening and Speaking Up.***

Brainstorm – benefits and barriers of listening to what the other person is saying

\*Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 1, page 154, *not listening* discussion with practice  
 Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 4, page 157, *actively listening (contrast to Vig 1)*

Brainstorm – Benefits and barriers to speaking up

\*Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 8, page 163 *speaking up ineffectively- Trilby*, lead brainstorm, practice & summary of 6 points

\*Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 9, page 165, *listener speaks up, Willy*

Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 11, page 167-168, *asking for feedback*

\*Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 14, page 173-174, *validating another’s feelings*

Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 15, page 175, *validating another’s feelings*

\*Show Program 5, part 1: Vignette 16, page 176, *validating positive feelings*

Show Program 5, part 1 – Vignette 17, page 177, *mother sharing feelings, Hester*

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 2: Communicating More Positively to Oneself and to Others**

Brainstorm – strategies for staying calm (use thermometers)

- \*Show Program 5, part 2 - Vignettes 21, 22, page 198, 199 *griping* and brainstorm
- \*Show Program 5, part 2 - Vignette 23, page 202, & *negative thinking*, do a practice with changing and challenging negative self-talk See handout
- \* Show Program 5, part 2: Vignette 24, page 204-205, *increase positive thinking*
- \*Show Program 5, part 2: Vignette 25, page 207-208, *staying calm*, do a practice

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 3: Giving and Getting Support.**

- \*Show Program 5, part 3: Vignette 47, page 256, *asking for help, Hester*
- \*Show Program 5, part 3: Vignette 48, page 257, *asking for help Trilby*
- \*Show Program 5, part 3: Vignettes 51, page 261, *offering help, night feeding*
- \*Show Program 5, part 3: Vignette 54, page 264, *offering teacher support*

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day Two**

**Topic 4: Problem solving about Children's Problems**

- \*Show Program 6, part 1: Vignettes 3A-3F, pages 291-301, *Trilby & Willy*
- \*Show Program 6, part 1: Vignette 5A-5F, pages 317-327, *finding a supportive friend to help problem solve*
- \*Show Program 6, part 2: Vignettes 8A-E, pages 355-364, *girlfriends*, Practice experience
- Show Program 6, part 2: Vignettes 9A-E, pages 365-372 *partner support*

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 5: Problem solving about Interpersonal Problems**

- \*Show Program 6, part 2 – Vignettes 9A-G, pages 365- 375, *Trilby and Willy*

*Session 5 cont'd: Problem solving for Parents with Teachers*

- \*Show Program 6, part 3 – Vignettes 12A-E, pages 399-408, *teacher calls in parent*

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 6: Problem solving with Children**

*(OPTIONAL FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN ALSO CAN REVIEW BASIC PROGRAM 4*

*Part 5: Introduction, Vignettes 12, 13*

\*Practice/role play problem solving with Wally books

Show Program 7, Part 1 Vignette 1 page 429, *Charlie cooking*

Show Program 7, Part 1 Vignette 12 page 455-456 *Jay & sister*

Practice/role play problem solving

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic 7: Family Meetings (Older Children 8-12)**

\*Show Program 7, Part 2 Vignettes 4A-4B, pages 489-491, *Peter re household chores*

Show Program 7, Part 2 Vignettes 5A-5I, pages 492-507, *Lisa morning routine*

\*Show Program 7, Part 3 Vignette 6, page 508, *computer time*

Practice/role play problem solving one of the problems on the list

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to Group Leader:**

It is recommended you use the Advance Program following the Basic Program for high risk families (due to depression, or anger management problems, or lack of a social support system) as well as for those who have children with behavior problems. If the children are ages 4-8 years, you will include programs 5 & 6 and selected vignettes from program 7 part 1. If you are working with parents of children ages 8-12 you can also include program 7 part 2 on family meetings.

Select vignettes according to the nature of the population you are working with. For example, for groups of single parent families include all vignettes that show a single parent talking with a partner/friend. For more culturally diverse families be sure to choose a variety of families from different cultural backgrounds as well as talk about cultural differences to approaching different problem situations. Finally, select vignettes according to the developmental age of the children the parents are talking about.

It can take 9-12 sessions to complete this program. Most groups will need at least 2 sessions for the Teaching Children to Problem Solve material and 2 sessions for the family meetings material. It is important to have a final session to review the prior home activities and to summarize and review the goals met. Be sure to adjust the number of sessions offered according to the goals and needs of the families.

If you are combining the advance with the basic school age program you will need 18-21 sessions. Another option for a non-high risk group is to provide a “booster” follow-up series of 4-6 sessions 3-6 months after the basic prevention program is completed.

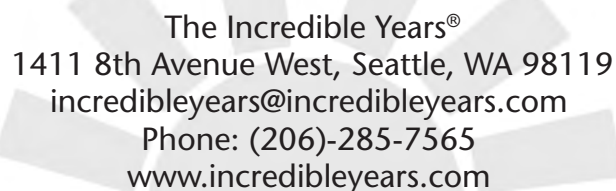
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### **Some General Guidelines:**

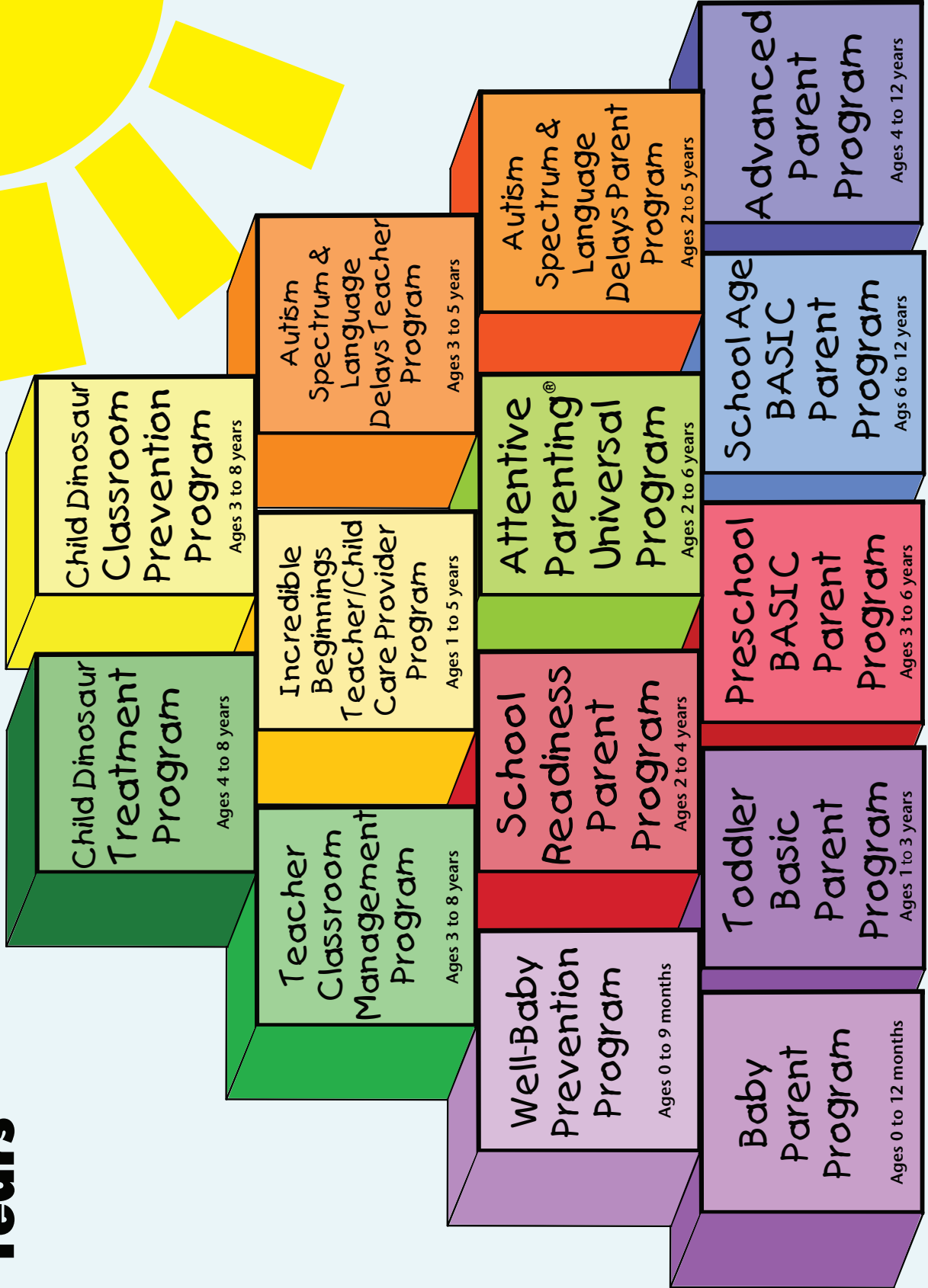
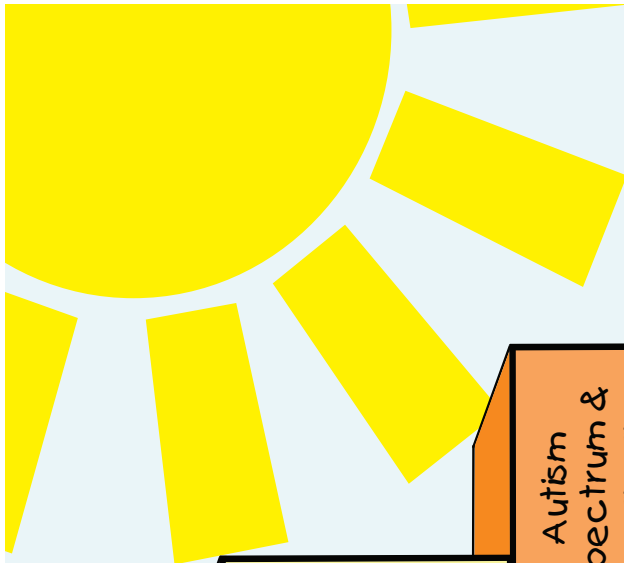
- If your agency plans to implement an Incredible Years® Program, they must purchase the program set from The Incredible Years® office. A program set includes all the main components to run your groups. A leader’s manual, DVD set with vignettes to show, and other “extra” items are included.
- In the leader’s manual, you MAY photocopy the handouts and different evaluation forms for parents to use and fill out. You may keep the master copies in your leader’s manual so that you can reuse them for each group.
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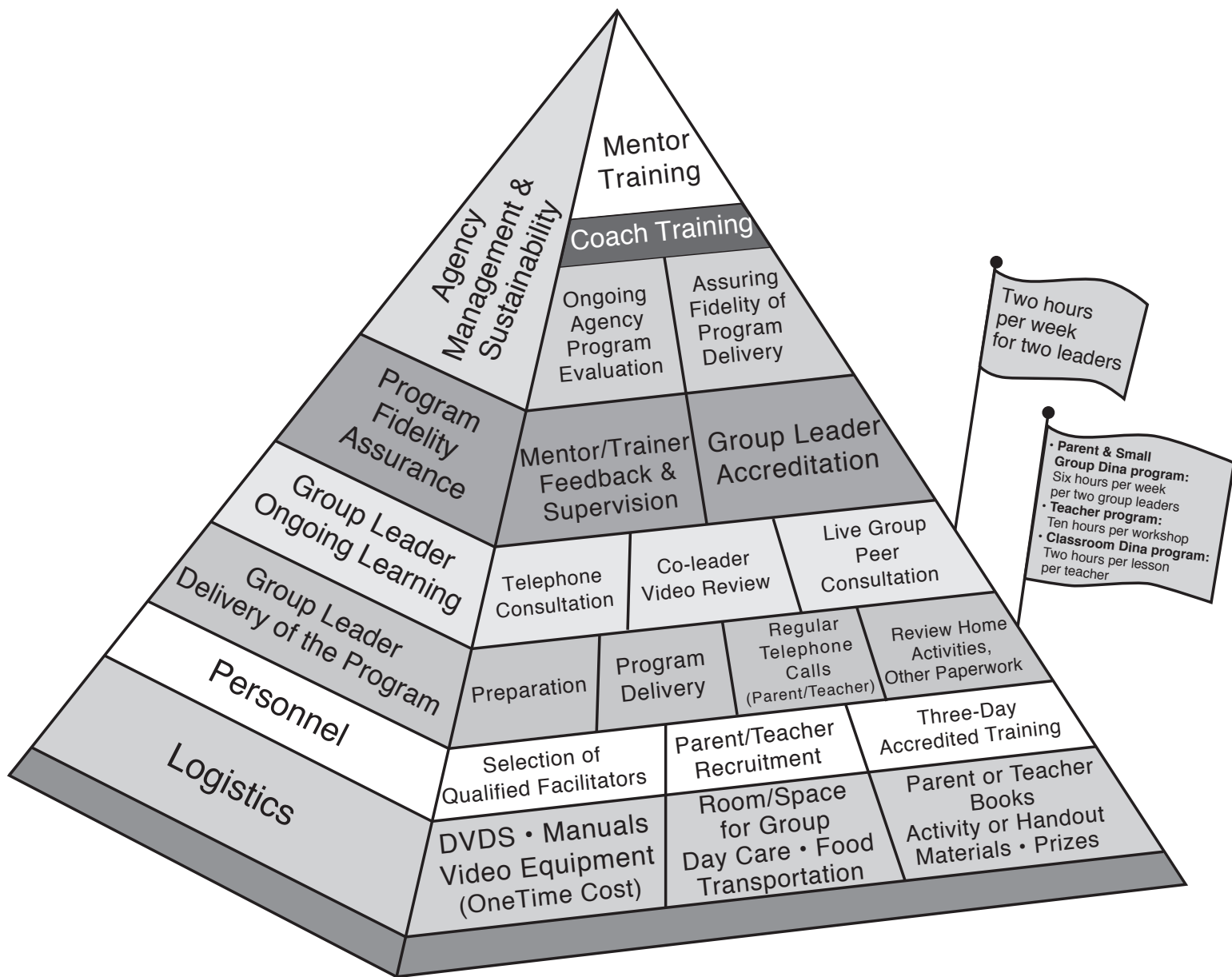


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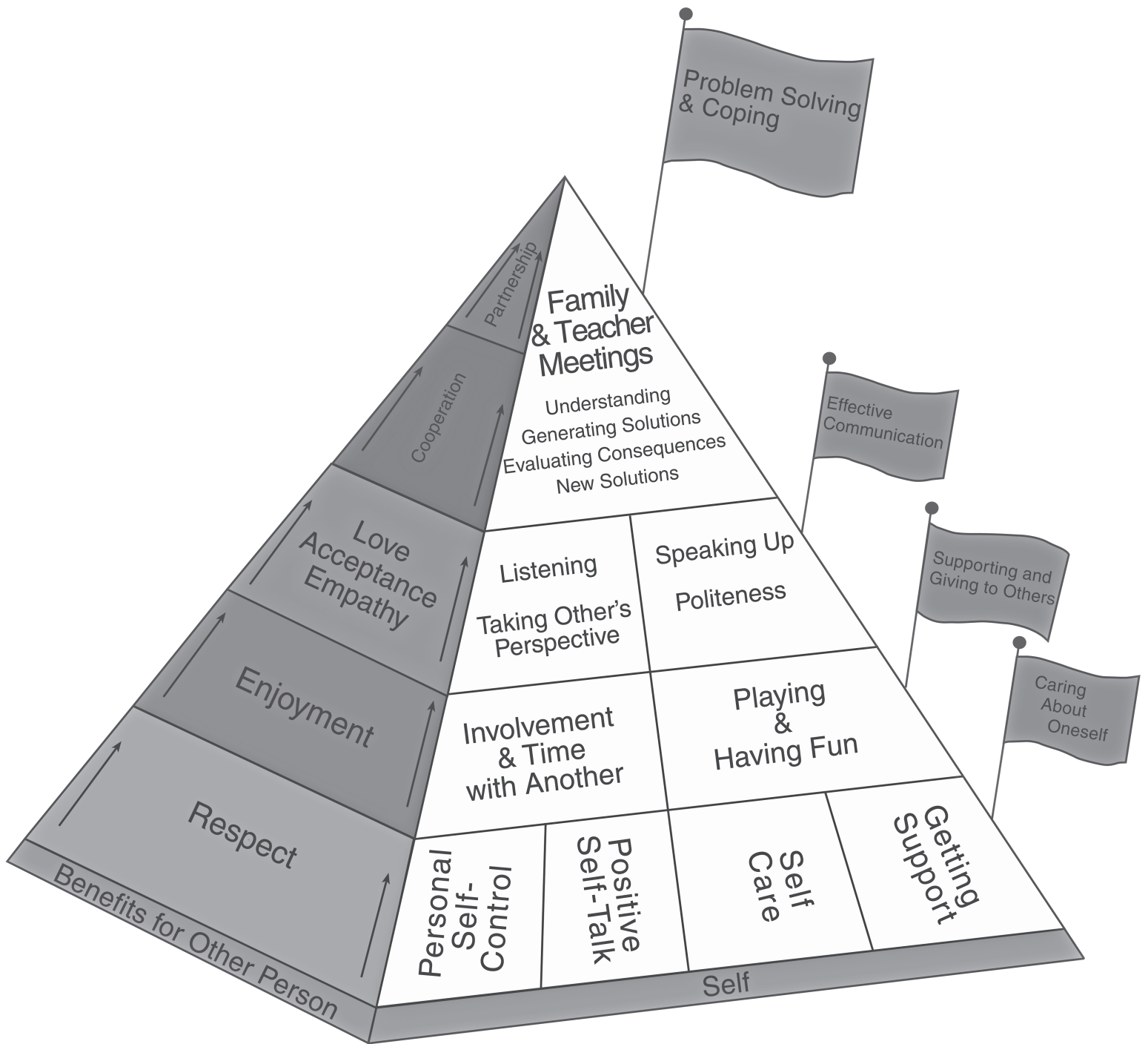








## IY Implementation Pyramid: Assuring Fidelity of Program Delivery



# Pyramid for Building Relationships<sup>®</sup>



## IY Summary of Content of Incredible Years® Parent Programs

<b>Content Components For IY Parent Programs</b>	<b>Basic Toddler Sessions</b>	<b>Basic Preschool Sessions</b>	<b>Basic School Age Sessions</b>	<b>Advance Sessions (post-Preschool &amp; School Age)</b>
Building Parent Support Networks	All	All	All	All
Child-directed Play, Positive Attention, Special Time – Building Positive Relationships	1, 2	1, 2	1, 2	
Promoting Language Development	2, 3	3, 4		
Pre-academic Coaching	3	3, 4		
Social and Emotional Coaching	4, 5	5, 6	3, 4	
Promoting Reading Skills and Parent School Involvement	3	3, 4	13, 16	
Academic and Persistence Coaching		3, 4	3, 4	
Art of Praise and Encouragement	6	7, 8	5	
Spontaneous and Planned Incentives	7	8, 9	6	
Managing Separations and Reunions	8	10		
Consistent Rules and Predictable Routines		10, 11	7	
Responsibilities and Household Chores		10, 11	7	
Clear Limit Setting	8	12, 13		
Positive Discipline: Distractions, Redirection, Ignoring	9, 10, 11, 12	12, 13	9	
Time Out to Calm Down, Logical Consequences		14, 15, 16	10, 11, 12	
Teaching Children and Parents Self-Regulation and Calm Down Skills		14, 15	9	
Talking about drugs, alcohol, and screen Time			7	
Teaching Children and Parents Problem Solving		17, 18	12	
Parents Partnering with Teachers			16	
Coaching Children's Homework			14, 16	
Active Listening and Speaking Up				1, 2

Effective Communication to Self and Others				3
Giving and Getting Support				4
Adult Problem Solving Meetings (4-12 year olds)				5
Problem Solving with Teachers (4-12 year olds)				6
Teaching Children to Problem Solve (6-12 year olds)				7
Family Meetings (8-12 year olds)				8, 9

**NOTE:** Numbers reflect session number protocols in different manuals. However, these session protocols may take more than one session to complete. The pacing of the amount of content covered depends on the educational background and risk level of the parents as well as the children's developmental difficulties and diagnoses.

**Table 2: Content and Objectives of the Incredible years ADVANCE Parent Training Programs (Ages 4–12)**

Content	Objectives	Content	Objectives
<b>Program Five: How to Communicate Effectively With Adults and Children</b>			
Part 1: Active Listening and Speaking Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the importance of active listening skills</li> <li>Learning how to speak up effectively about problems</li> <li>Recognizing how to validate another's feelings</li> <li>Knowing how and when to express one's own feelings</li> <li>Avoiding communication blocks such as not listening, storing up grievances and angry explosions</li> </ul>	Part 2: Communicating More Positively to Oneself and to Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the importance of recognizing self-talk</li> <li>Understanding how angry and depressive emotions and thought can affect behavior with others</li> <li>Learning coping strategies to stop negative self-talk</li> <li>Learning coping strategies to increase positive self-talk</li> <li>Increasing positive and polite communication with others</li> <li>Avoiding communication blocks such as put-downs, blaming, and denials</li> <li>Understanding the importance of seeing a problem from the other person's point of view</li> </ul>
Part 3: Giving and Getting Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the importance of support for a family or an individual</li> <li>Recognizing communication styles or beliefs that block support</li> <li>Fostering self-care and positive self-reinforcement strategies in adults and children</li> <li>Avoiding communication blocks such as defensiveness, denials, cross complaints and inconsistent or mixed messages</li> <li>Knowing how to get feedback from others</li> <li>Understanding how to turn a complaint into a positive recommendation</li> <li>Promoting consistent verbal and nonverbal messages</li> <li>knowing how to make positive requests of adults and children</li> <li>Understanding why compliance to another's requests is essential in any relationship</li> <li>Learning how to be more supportive to others</li> </ul>		

**Table 2 Continued**

Content	Objectives	Content	Objectives
<b>Program Six: Problem Solving for Parents</b>			
Part 1: Problem Solving About Children's Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizing when to use spontaneous problem-solving skills</li> <li>Understanding the important steps to problem solving</li> </ul>	Part 2: Problem Solving About Interpersonal Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoiding blocks to effective problem solving such as blaming, attacks, anger, side-tracking, lengthy problem definition, missed steps, and criticizing solutions</li> <li>Recognizing how to use problem-solving strategies to get more support</li> <li>Learning how to express feelings about a problem without blaming</li> </ul>
Part 3: Problem Solving With Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding how to collaborate with teachers</li> <li>Implementing behavior plans at home and at school</li> <li>Learning how to have a successful parent/teacher conference</li> </ul>		
<b>Program Seven: Problem Solving With Children</b>			
Part 1: Teaching Children to Problem Solve in the Midst of Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the importance of not imposing solutions upon children but of fostering a thinking process about conflict</li> <li>Recognizing how and when to use guided solutions for very young children or for children who have no positive solutions in their repertoire</li> <li>Discovering the value of obtaining the child's feelings and view of the problem before attempting to problem solve</li> <li>Learning how to foster children's skills to empathize and perceive another's point of view</li> <li>Recognizing when children may be ready to problem solve on their own</li> <li>Avoiding blocks to effective problem solving with children, such as lectures, quick judgments, exclusive focus on the right "answer," and failure to validate a child's feelings</li> </ul>	Part 2: Family Problem-Solving Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding how to use the problem-solving steps with school-age children</li> <li>Recognizing the importance of evaluating plans during each problem-solving session</li> <li>Understanding the importance of rotating the leader for each family meeting</li> <li>Learning how to help children express their feelings about an issue</li> <li>Reinforcing the problem-solving process</li> </ul>



**Part 5**  
**Programs 5, 6 and 7**  
**Program Outlines,**  
**Agendas & Checklists,**  
**and Appendix**

- 1. Summary of sessions One Through Nine**
- 2. Sample Checklist for Advance Session One**
- 3. Sample Vignettes - Narration**
- 4. Appendix - Sample Parent Handouts**



## ***Programs 5, 6 & 7 Agendas and Checklists for Each Session***

The content covered in each session needs to be paced according to each parent groups' particular needs for discussion and content, level of participation, and prior familiarity with the parenting concepts. Pace yourself according to questions and needs of the group. The subsequent session is used to troubleshoot any questions or problems and show the remaining vignettes on that topic.

The following outline is a suggested guideline for completing the entire program in 9, two-hour weekly sessions. Do not omit any of the vignettes listed below. If you do not complete all the required vignettes in a session, you can continue showing them in the next session. For large or very talkative groups you might find it takes longer to complete the program.

If you are combining the Program 5, 6 & 7 with Basic Series, show it after Program 9 and 10 (or Basic Program 1 through 4).

### ***Program Five:***

## ***How to Communicate Effectively With Adults and Children***

### ***Session One: Welcome & Introduction to Program Parents' Goals***

"Listening Attentively"

Part 1: Vignettes 1–6

### ***Session Two: Active Listening & Speaking Up***

"Speaking up"

Part 1: Vignettes 7–20

### ***Session Three: Communicating More Positively to Oneself and Others***

"Self Talk"

Part 2: Vignettes 21–39

### ***Session Four: Giving and Getting Support***

Part 3: Vignettes 40–52

## ***Program Six: Problem-Solving for Parents***

### ***Session Five: Adult Problem-Solving Meetings***

Part 1: Vignettes 1–5F

Part 2: Vignettes 6A–9G

### ***Session Six: Problem Solving With Teachers***

Part 3: Vignettes 10A–12F

## ***Program Seven: Problem-Solving With Young Children***

### ***Session Seven: Teaching Children to Problem-Solve***

Part 1: Vignettes 1–12

### ***Session Eight: Family Meetings***

Part 2: Vignettes 1A–7G

### ***Session Nine: Review and Celebration***

Catch up and complete Vignettes

## ***Leader Agenda Protocols and Checklists***

### ***18-20 Session 2-hour Group Format***

The following outline is a suggested guideline for completing the entire program in 18-20, 2-hour weekly sessions. You may select vignettes according to whether your group consists of primarily 6-8 year olds or 9-12 year olds. Session protocols indicate with an asterisk vignettes that pertain to children ages 9-12 and are not relevant for 6-8 year olds. However, many of the scenes of 6-8 year olds will also be appropriate for 9-12 year olds because of the principles being covered. If you do not complete all the required vignettes in a session, you can continue showing them in the next session.

### ***Basic School Age Programs***

***Session One: Welcome & Introduction to Program Parents' Goals***

Importance of Parental Attention and Special Time  
Program 9: Part 1: Vignettes 1-9

***Session Two: Importance of Parental Attention and Special Time***

(continued)  
Program 9, Part 1: Vignettes 10-19

***Session Three: Social, Emotion and Persistence Coaching***

Program 9, Part 2: Vignettes 20-41

***Session Four: Effective Praise and Encouragement***

Program 9, Part 3: Vignettes 42-58

***Session Five: Using Tangible Reward Programs to Motivate Your Child***

Program 9, Part 4: Vignettes 59-67

***Session Six: Rules, Responsibilities and Routines***

Program 10, Part 1: Vignette 1-12

***Session Seven: Predictable Learning Routines and Clear Limit Setting***

Program 10, Part 2: Vignettes 13-33

***Session Eight: Ignoring Misbehavior***

Program 10, Part 3: Vignettes 34-43

***Session Nine: Time Out To Calm Down***

Program 10, Part 4: Vignettes 44-55E

***Session Ten: Other Consequences***

Program 10, Part 5: Vignettes 56-70

## ***Advance Programs***

- Session Eleven:***            ***Communication - Listening and Speaking Up***  
Program 5, Part 1: Vignettes 1-6
- Session Twelve:***        ***Communication - Listening and Speaking Up***  
Program 5, Part 1: Vignettes 7-20
- Session Thirteen:***      ***Communicating More Positively to Oneself and Others***  
Program 5, Part 2: Vignettes 21-39
- Session Fourteen:***      ***Giving and Getting Support***  
Program 5, Part 3: Vignettes 40-52
- Session Fifteen:***        ***Adult Problem Solving Meetings***  
Program 6, Part 1: Vignettes 1-5F (children's problems)
- Session Sixteen:***        ***Solving Interpersonal Problems and Problem Solving With Teachers***  
Program 6, Part 2: 6A-9E (parent interpersonal problems)  
Program 6, Part 3: Vignettes 10A-12D (working with teachers)
- Session Seventeen:***     ***Teaching Children to Problem Solve***  
Program 7, Part 1: Vignettes 1-12
- Session Eighteen:***      ***Family Meetings***  
Program 7, Part 2: Vignettes 1A-7G
- Session Nineteen:***      ***Review and Celebration***

Note: Program 8: Promoting Your Child's Success in School is optional. It should be considered for children with reading and academic difficulties and offered after the Basic Programs.

## ***Supporting Your Child's Success in School***

- Session One:***            ***Promoting Reading Skills***  
Program 8, Part 1: Vignettes 1-9
- Session Two:***            ***Dealing with Children's Discouragement***  
Program 8, Part 2: Vignette 10-15
- Session Three:***        ***Fostering Good Learning Habits and Routines***  
Program 8, Part 3: Vignettes 16-22
- Session Four:***         ***Parents Showing Interest in School***  
Program 8, Part 4: Vignettes 23-33

## ***Program Five: How to Communicate Effectively With Adults and Children Outline—Session One***

### ***Introductions, Parental Goals and “Listening Attentively”***

#### **I. Welcome**

Greet each parent.

Leaders introduce themselves.

#### **II. Introductions (if new members)**

Find out group members’ names, ages of children, and personal goals.

Write parents’ goals on board or poster so you and group can refer back to them.

#### **III. Ground Rules (if new members)**

Ask for parent ideas on group rules and why they think they are important (confidentiality, respect for others, being positive, right to pass, equal time to talk).

Adopt rules for group.

Post rules each week. (A sample poster of rules is in appendix.)

#### **IV. Program Goals and Topics**

Give an overview of the program, its general goals, topics and format.

Refer to the advance pyramid poster or the parent handout.

Give one book (The Incredible Years) and a magnet to each family.

#### **V. Topic of Day: “Listening Attentively”**

A. Brainstorm “What is Effective Communication?”

B. Brainstorm benefits and barriers to being able to listen.

C. Vignettes: Program 5, Part 1: 1–6

#### **Key Concepts**

- Understanding importance of effective listening skills.
- Recognizing ways to show you are listening (e.g., ask questions, paraphrase or summarize, reflect feelings.)
- Avoiding blocks to listening skills.

D. Role Plays

Divide group into sets of 3.

Group role play: Listening to daughter (Vignette 1).

Group role play: Listening to wife (Vignette 2).

Group role play: Listening when someone is angry. (Vignette 3).

E. Summarize Key Points (Refrigerator Notes).

**VI. Review Home Activities**

Pass out home practice forms.

Read aloud and make sure parents understand the home activities. Encourage each parent to practice and do the reading.

Let them know that you will be asking about their experiences at the beginning of the next session.

Ask them to complete their self-monitoring checklist.

**VII. Parent Weekly Evaluation**

Remind parents of the importance of parent feedback for the group leader and the entire program. Collect evaluation forms before parents leave.

**VIII. Closing**

Take this time to formally close the group. You may need to recap the learning.

Thank parents for coming; praise their willingness to explore and try new ways of communicating.

Remind them of any details they need to know for the next session.



# LEADER CHECKLIST

## Session One

**Session One:** *Parent Goals and “Listening Attentively”*

**Vignettes:** *Program 5, Part 1: 1–6*

**SITE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LEADER NAMES:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**VIGNETTES COVERED: Part 1:**

1    2    3    4    5    6

Vignettes in parentheses are optional. Use if you have time.

(Circle vignettes shown.)

### DID I

	YES	NO
1. Write the agenda on the board	_____	_____
2. Welcome and make introductions	_____	_____
3. Review parents’ goals and write in Goals Sheet	_____	_____
4. Brainstorm group ground rules	_____	_____
5. Present program goals (pyramid)	_____	_____
6. Explain format for meetings	_____	_____
7. Brainstorm benefits and barriers to being able to listen	_____	_____
8. Role play not listening and listening	_____	_____
9. Role play alternative responses to Vignettes 1 & 2 & 3	_____	_____
10. Explain importance of home activities and reading assignments	_____	_____
11. Assign this week’s home activities (self-monitoring checklist)	_____	_____
12. Weekly evaluation	_____	_____

### **Handout Pads:**

Home Activities for the Week – Active Listening

Refrigerator Notes about Active Listening

### **Xerox:**

Parents Thinking Like Scientists (two handouts, see handouts section Program 6, Part 1)

### **Self-Evaluation**

“Gems” of Session—Reminder of things to pursue next session

***Program Five: How to Communicate Effectively  
With Adults and Children  
Outline—Session Two***

***Active Listening and Speaking Up***

**I. Welcome**

**II. Review Ground Rules**

**III. Report on Home Activities**

Ask parents about listening actively.

Reinforce parent participation in reading chapters or practicing listening.

**IV. Topic of Day: Active Listening and Speaking Up**

A. Do benefits and barriers exercise regarding speaking up. Brainstorm advantages of speaking up and effective skills needed to speak up.

B. Vignettes: Program 5, Part 1: 7–20

**Key Concepts**

- Understanding the importance of effective listening skills
- Recognizing ways to show you are listening (e.g., ask questions, paraphrase or summarize, reflect speaker's feelings, eye contact)
- Learning how to speak up effectively about problems
- Recognizing how to validate another's feelings
- Knowing how and when to express your own feelings
- Avoiding communication "blocks" such as not listening, storing up grievances and angry explosions

C. Role Play

Leader do a live role play

Divide group into triads to practice speaking up and listening. (See Role Play, Vignette 7)

Group role play Vignette 11 & 12.

**V. Review Home Activities**

Practice listening and speaking up.

**VI. Parent Weekly Evaluation**

**VII. Closing**

## Not Listening

### Narration

The most common block to effective communication is “not listening.” This occurs when the person speaking is not allowed to state his feelings or ideas without interruptions, such as questions, arguments, criticism, or advice. The speaker, trying to discuss a problem, is met by a constant “know it all” attitude as the listener tells her what to do or how to feel. When a person—child or adult—doesn’t feel listened to, they are very likely to continue restating the problem heatedly or to totally withdraw, in a sullen reaction. Notice the way the mother in this next scene fails to listen to her daughter’s problem.



### Vignette 1

**THE SCENE** Mother is sitting at her desk, doing bills. Daughter enters room, upset.

**Girl:** (UPSET) Mom! Mom! Joey won’t let me play in his room with him.

**Mother:** (AVOIDING EYE CONTACT, ANGRY) Well, if you didn’t mess with his toys, maybe he’d like you better!

**Girl:** (UPSET, WALKS AWAY)



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What aspects of “not listening” are demonstrated here?
2. How do you think the girl felt? What might she do next?
3. What might this mother be saying to herself? How could she alter her negative thinking?
4. How could the mother have responded in a way that showed she had listened?

### Considerations

This girl is upset because Joey excluded her from playing with him. Her mother responds to the child’s problem by blaming her for causing the trouble in the first place. Such an approach is bound to increase the daughter’s distress and anger towards both her mother and brother.

Discuss the idea that it is really hard for a child to think clearly about a problem if she is responded to by blaming advice. This fuels anger and resistance rather than effective problem solving.



### Role Play/Practice

Select two parents to replay the scene they have just seen with one playing the part of the mother and the other the part of the daughter. Ask the parent group to suggest listening communication strategies that the person playing the part of “parent” might use in response to this girl’s distress.

## Active Listening

### Narration

In the next vignette notice what the mother does to show that she is actively listening. Think about the effect this contrasting approach has on her daughter.

#### Vignette 4

**THE SCENE** Mother is sitting at her desk, doing bills. Daughter enters room, upset.

**Girl:** (UPSET) Mom! Mom! Joey won't let me play in his room with him.

**Mother:** (LOOKING AT DAUGHTER, SYMPATHETIC) Gee, that must make you feel bad. What do you think you could do to make things better?



#### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What aspects of "listening" are shown by this mother?
2. What effect do you think this approach will have on the girl?



### Considerations

This time the mother stops working on her bills and listens to the distress level of her daughter. She validates the girl's feelings and then prompts her to think about how she might resolve the problem.

Discuss the benefits of listening and helping children learn to solve their own problems rather than giving pat solutions.

## Avoid Blaming when Speaking Up

### Narration

In the scene we just saw the wife waited so long to speak up that, when she finally did express herself, she was angry and accusatory. Because this resulted in an angry, argumentative response from her husband, the problem remained smoldering. Another problem that can happen when speaking up about a problem is that the speaker may seem to be accusing or blaming the other person for the problem. Thus the listener may react by defending their position.

In the next vignette think about how this mother could speak up about her problem without blaming or getting angry.

### Vignette 8

**THE SCENE** Wife and husband are sitting at table talking.

**Wife:** Why can't you come home and do some of it? I get home from work and I have to do the whole meal and everything and why can't you do some of it?

**Husband:** Because I'm at my job, working trying to make money so we can buy the meal.

**Wife:** I work too.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is the problem with the way this woman speaks up about her problem? What makes her approach seem blaming?
2. What is the problem with "why can't you?" questions? How could she restate this goal?



### Considerations

By asking her husband "Why can't you come home and do some of it?" she is implying that he is at fault for her workload. Instead, she could state her request more positively keeping her goal in mind. For example, she might say, "I need more help with meal preparations?" In this way, she is clear about her needs without blaming her partner for her stress.

## ***Summary of Speaking Up Effectively***

### ***Narration***

Speaking up about a problem can be difficult but the sooner it is talked about the more likely a solution can be found. Let us review six steps to speaking up effectively. First, start by giving positive feedback before asking for help. This sets a positive tone for discussion. Second, use “I” messages instead of “you” messages. “You” messages tend to blame, criticize or pass judgement and often generate anger or humiliation whereas “I” messages” communicate what the speaker feels. “

Third, in order to be able to speak up effectively, the speaker the speaker must think about exactly what she wants to accomplish rather than focusing on the negative, or what she doesn’t want. Once this idea is clear to you, state it positively and briefly. A fourth aspect of speaking up is to focus on the present and not to recount episode after episode to prove your point. Remember to avoid too much talking. Speaking up does not mean a person should be insensitive about where, when or how they express feelings.

Fifth, ask for feedback from your listener to see how your request sounds.

- 1. Give positive feedback before asking for help**
- 2. Use “I messages” not “You messages.”**
- 3. Be clear and specific.**
- 4. Be “present” oriented**
- 5. Ask for feedback from listener.**
- 6. Avoid too much talking. Be selective.**

### ***Considerations***

Discuss the important reasons why people need to speak up about how they feel. First, if a person does not express her feelings or desires, other people will make decisions or “mind-read” for her. Since others’ assumptions are often incorrect, they may be acting against her wishes. Second, quiet people sit on problems and then may explode in a fit of anger or hysteria. Talking about a problem when angry undermines effective communication and problem solving. By contrast, talking about small conflicts as they arise reduces the pressure which causes such explosions and is more likely to lead to resolution.

Discuss with the participants the benefits of giving positive feedback first before asking for help. While some may argue that it appears “phony” or “contrived,” in reality it reduces the listener’s defensiveness and sets a positive tone for the discussion. Remind participants that with time they will come up with their own style of giving positive feedback that feels natural for them.

## The Listener's Turn to Speak Up

### Narration

When speaking up it is important to ask for feedback regarding the listener's point of view and feelings. This will assure the listener that his understanding is important. Once the speaker has had the floor and her chance to speak up and be heard, then it is the listener's turn to speak up about his point of view. In the next vignette notice the way the husband speaks up as well as the way his wife listens.

### Vignette 9

- THE SCENE** Wife and husband sitting at table talking.
- Husband:** So are you willing to hear my side of the equation?
- Wife:** Yes I am.
- Husband:** I feel like I'm... my head's more at my job during the week because I've got lots going on and I work full time and you work part time so I feel like it's natural that you are more in charge on the home front. In the afternoons I suppose it would be nice if I came home early but on the other hand I'm trying to get things done and I feel like you're home with the kids and that it always seems like when I come home you've got things pretty well under control.
- Wife:** So it sounds like you're feeling in the family that it is your role to work full time to make more money and you didn't realize that I felt overburdened or like there was a problem with me doing all the household stuff. Is that right?
- Husband:** Yes we've got this new house and it feels even more urgent than usual to bring in the money to pay for it. So yeah and I didn't realize it was a problem for you.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is effective about the husband's speaking up approach?
2. How does the mother show she is listening?



### Considerations

This father presents his point of view clearly. His wife does a good job of thinking about his point of view and listening carefully. She summarizes what she thinks he is feeling and thinking and this helps him to realize that she understands his perspective.

# Asking for Feedback

## Narration

In the scene we just saw the father spoke up clearly and positively about what he wanted his son to do after school. But remember another important aspect of speaking up is to ask your child for feedback regarding how he perceives the problem. In the next scene watch how this mother speaks up about a problem with her son but first asks for his point of view.

## Vignette 11

- Mother:** Rocky your teacher came by—Mrs. Jones—and she was talking about your grades today and she was talking about you not getting to school on time and you’re not really paying attention. And she’s really worried, and I’m worried, too. And I’d like to know what is happening?
- Rocky:** Well, the work is sometimes too hard to do.
- Mother:** Okay, have you been doing your homework?
- Rocky:** No.
- Mother:** Why not?
- Rocky:** Because it’s too hard.



## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is effective about this mother’s approach? (First she tries to understand the problem from her son’s point of view.)
2. What would you say next?
3. How could the mother have been even more effective?



## Role Play

Role-play possible responses to this boy. (positive and negative responses)



## Leader Role Play

Leaders model speaking up and listening using the “floor” (piece of floor tile) to show who is speaking. Take one of the suggestions listed below to model. N.B. The “speaker” keeps the “floor” until they feel they have been fully heard. OR, give the listener a shoe belonging to the other person and when they are holding the shoe they are trying to put themselves in the shoes of the other person. After the speaker finishes, the listener paraphrases the speaker’s ideas.







## ***Group Role Play***

Divide the group into sets of 3. In each set, have a “speaker,” a “listener,” and an “observer.” The speaker starts with the “floor” and talks about a problem. The listener tries to understand the speaker’s point of view by summarizing what the speaker is saying. It is helpful to give all of the participants a copy of “Refrigerator Notes: About Active Listening” and “Refrigerator Notes: About Speaking Up” to refer to as the dyad talk and listen. After 1–2 minutes, stop the role play and ask the observer to give feedback to the speaker and the listener. Rotate positions so that every parent takes all 3 parts.

### ***Some suggested scenarios to practice include:***

Speaking up to a teacher about a concern you have about your child’s experience at school.

Speaking up to partner about changing a holiday plan.

Speaking up to partner about needing more help with laundry, child care, etc.

Speaking up to a parent-in-law about the way you want to handle a particular behavior with your child.

Speaking up to a friend who car pools with you but is frequently late and doesn’t enforce the seat belt rule.

Speaking up to a co-worker about keeping your joint office neater.

## Narration

Validating feelings is really another aspect of active listening, because it involves listening for the other person's feelings as well as the factual content of the message. However, this kind of empathetic process is not natural for most people. Therefore, it will need lots of practice. In the next scene, notice how the mother validates her daughter's feelings.

### Vignette 14

- THE SCENE** Mother is vacuuming when her daughter runs into the room, yelling in a distressed voice.
- Girl:** Joey took my bicycle, he took it without asking me. I hate him! He's mean!
- Mother:** (EMPATHETIC) Boy you sound really angry, tell me what happened?
- Girl:** (ANGRY) He took it without asking me—it's not in the garage and it's mine. I hate him!
- Mother:** Boy you are really angry—I guess he hurt your feelings by doing that, huh?
- Girl:** Yeah!



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What are the validating statements?
2. What makes it difficult to respond to this girl's behavior (or to any child's crying, whining and complaining) with empathy?
3. Are some feelings more difficult to acknowledge and more easily denied (e.g., hating you or a sibling)?



### Buzz

Break up into pairs to brainstorm three ways you can validate someone's distressed feelings. Share in large group.



## **Considerations**

This mother validates her daughter's feelings by putting a name to them, "You sound really angry" and by encouraging her to talk more about her feelings. She doesn't rush the discussion to look for causes or solutions immediately but keeps focusing on her daughter's hurt feelings.

Discuss the difficulties involved in listening to someone else's distressed feelings. For example, ask participants if they have ever found themselves saying "No, you don't really hate him"? Discuss these other examples of accepting statements that validate feelings:

Boy, you sound angry...

That must be so disappointing for you...

You must have been pretty upset to have...

You seem to be unsure about...

Sounds as if you are pretty resentful about...

You must feel sad to have lost...

Oh! That must have been embarrassing to...

That must feel strange to have...

I know it's scary... But...

That hurts doesn't it?

**Help participants remember to resist the temptation to "make things all right" by giving advice.**

## Narration

In the next scene think about why this mother's validation of her daughter's feelings is particularly effective.

### Vignette 15

- THE SCENE** Mother is in bathroom, getting ready to brush teeth. Daughter enters suddenly, upset.
- Girl:** (WHINING AND ANGRY) Mom, I want to go! I want to go! Why won't you let me?
- Mother:** I know you'd like to go but you can't.
- Girl:** (YELLING ANGRILY) I hate you! You never let me do anything. Dad would let me go, I know he would!
- Mother:** (SYMPATHETIC BUT ASSERTIVE) I know you're angry, but this is a school night and I don't think it's a good idea.
- Girl:** (STOMPS OUT OF BATHROOM)



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why is this mother's approach particularly effective?
2. What makes this a particularly effective technique to use when limit-setting with children?
3. How do you react when your children say, "I hate you!"?



## Considerations

Here the mother is able to accept and validate her child's angry feelings even in the face of a personal attack ("I hate you!"). She remains sympathetic to her daughter's feelings but firm in her own decision.

Point out that the mother in this scene did not respond to her daughter's attack, "I hate you," in a personal way. Remind parents that it is quite natural for children (and adults!) to protest when they can't have something they want. However, giving repeated "factual" information about why they can't have what they want usually fuels the flames of protest. However, the protester will more easily accept limits if her feelings are validated and the importance of the issue from her perspective is acknowledged.

## *Validating Positive Feelings*

### *Narration*

In addition to validating angry, sad and frustrating feelings it is equally important to validate positive feelings such as talking about your child's courage, curiosity, happiness, calmness and so forth. In fact, you should try to spend more time validating positive feelings than negative. This can also include your own expression of enjoyment being with your children or partner. In the next vignette watch this mother trying to help her daughter understand the feeling she is having.



### *Vignette 16*

**THE SCENE** Mother sitting with her 3-year-old doing an art project.

**Mother:** (SMILING) Look, what did you do?

**Girl:** I cut it!

**Mother:** You cut it! Are you proud of yourself?

**Girl:** (NODS YES)

**Mother:** You seem to be really proud about your work. You are working really hard.

**Girl:** (CUTTING TAPE)

**Mother:** You cut it again and this time you did it! You seem to be really happy about your work.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. What effect will this mother's validation of feelings have on her child?
2. How can you validate your positive feelings with your children?
3. What positive feelings can you model and share with your children in your communication?

### *Considerations*

Validation is when the listener lets the person know how they are feeling. Here the parent names what she thinks her daughter is feeling and her daughter lets her know this correct. Sometimes children don't have words for their feelings—so when parents name them they are helping their children build emotional language for expressing feelings.

## Adults Sharing Feelings

### Narration

In the previous examples, the emphasis was on listening for, recognizing and validating your child's feelings. However, this skill is just as important to use when you are communicating with adults. In fact, many adults have similar complaints about family members. For example, how often have you heard, "She never tells me how she feels or what's bothering her." But remember, feeling-talk also involves expression of your own feelings about an issue or event. (In the next scene notice how the mother expresses her feelings and how her partner validates them.) In the next scene, notice how the father listens for the mother's feelings behind her words and validates them.

### Vignette 17

**THE SCENE:** Mother is sitting watching her husband feed their newborn baby.

**Wife:** I really have to let go of keeping things clean all the time.

**Husband:** Yeah it is too much to work a full time job, keep the house clean and take care of him – and covering for me while I'm at work for long hours. Still cheaper than day care though.

**Wife:** I used to think I was busy and then I had a baby (laughs). That was nothing.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why is the father's response effective?
2. How does the mother get support?
3. How do we know this father is listening to the message underlying his partner's words?



### Considerations

Even though the mother doesn't directly name her feelings in this discussion, her partner reads between the lines and understands that she is talking about the stress she is feeling of trying to do all the household work and take care of a new baby. He recognizes that his long work hours results in her having much more to do at home on her own. She confirms that she was surprised by the amount of multi-tasking and he is encouraging by reminding her they will figure it all out eventually. This positive support and understanding show he is listening well to the message underlying her words.

## Gripping

### Narration

Gripping occurs when the discussion of one problem dredges up old hurts and complaints. Pretty soon both parties feel angry and tangled in a knot of issues too complex to resolve at one time. Watch how the parent in the next scene begins to gripe with her two young children.



### Vignette 21

**THE SCENE** Mother walks into the playroom which is strewn with toys. She looks at her two children and begins to complain.

**Mother:** (ANGRY) Oh, you guys, this room is so messy. You've got to stop dawdling—you're making me late! (PICKS UP LEGOS; GETS MORE FRUSTRATED) What am I going to do with you guys, it's driving me crazy! Come on, help me clean up! Emily, come on, help me clean up now. (EMILY PUTS LEGOS IN BOX) Julia, you too—come on, you've got to learn how to do this too. Oh!! (REALIZES SHE'S LOST CONTROL)



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is the problem here?
2. Is this an appropriate time to teach Julia to clean up too?
3. What effect does this mother's approach have on the children?
4. What message does this mother give to her children? (they are responsible for her anger)
5. What could this mother do instead of griping?

### Considerations

This mother walks into a messy room and begins complaining about the mess, the fact that the children are dawdling, the fact that she is late, the fact that she doesn't know what she'll do with the children, and the fact that she is being driven crazy!

Point out that the children are being given so many negative messages about themselves and about their mother's frustration that it would be very difficult to know how to respond.



### Role Play

Leader role plays this mother's negative thoughts (you're driving me crazy) and other self-defeating thoughts and asks the group to counter these negative thoughts with positive, coping thoughts. (e.g., "I can cope with this, all kids make messes, this is not that important.")



### Buzz

Pair up parents and give them two minutes to write down their most common negative thoughts. (Give out index cards.)

## Stop Griping

### Narration

When you feel yourself indulging in griping and your anger increasing, call a “stop action” and refocus yourself. To facilitate a truce, family members should determine in advance exactly how they will signal each other that the discussion needs to be stopped. For example, you could say, “I need to stop talking about this right now,” or “I’m getting upset. Could we talk about this when I calm down?” (Note use of “I” messages.) Family members need to agree that even if only one person gives the truce signal the discussion will be ended temporarily. The family will then need to set another time for continuing the discussion. The sooner they can return to the problem the better. Remember everyone gets angry from time to time, but if family members can learn to signal each other before getting overly upset and angry, they can usually resume the conversation in a few minutes and begin to resolve the problem. Watch how the same parent in the next scene stops her griping and gives herself a “cooling off” period.

### Vignette 22

**Mother:** (CARRYING JULIA; VERY ANGRY) Emily, I’ve told you to get this room cleaned up! (PAUSES, TAKES DEEP BREATH) No it’s not that important. Listen, Emily, it makes me upset when you dawdle and leave a messy room and it makes me late but that’s O.K. (Laughs) It doesn’t matter that much—we’ll talk about it tonight when I’ve calmed down a little bit. O.K., come on. Let’s go upstairs.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What makes her approach more effective?
2. Why does laughing at oneself help?
3. What might you do differently?
4. What makes it hard to “stop action” when angry?
5. How might it feel to you if someone else takes a Time Out from an interaction which is angering one or both of you?
6. Why is it important to resume the discussion as soon as possible?
7. What might the mother say to the children later when she talks about the problem?



### Considerations

Here the mother takes a deep breath and reminds herself that a messy playroom is not worth getting so upset about. She gives a clear “I” message about why she is upset and then acknowledges that she will talk about it later, after she has regained control. Thus she is able to stop her escalating criticism.

Discuss with participants the factors that make it difficult to stop griping or escalating anger. What keeps it going? Point out how this mother was able to laugh at her situation rather than blame herself.



Discuss the importance of paying attention to angry thoughts or statements when they first begin. When anger starts to build, first ask yourself: "Is it really worthwhile to start a fight about this?" If not, hold your tongue. If it is, can it be said politely and positively? If thoughts or quarrels seem to be escalating out of control and getting nowhere, it is best to call a STOP ACTION and get away for awhile. A person could say, "I'd like to cool off and talk again in an hour" or, "I need to take a personal phone call." A short walk, relaxation exercises or deep breathing or positive thinking may help to restore calm so that you can approach the problem in a more rational manner. "Cooling off" periods should be no longer than 24 hours or the person may avoid resolving the problem altogether. The person who calls the truce should assume responsibility for initiating the conversation again. Remember, every problem has a solution if it can be considered calmly and with an open mind.



### **Role Play (optional)**

Practice what this mother might do differently next time if she wants the room cleaned up before leaving or the children to be ready faster.

## **Negative Thinking**

### **Narration**

Everyone has feelings and thoughts of anger, depression and guilt. They are a normal reaction to conflict and frustration. Upsetting feelings are not only to be expected but are essential and beneficial. Emotional upset signals the need for adaptive change and problem solving, and motivates their accomplishment. Danger arises, however, when these negative emotions or thoughts so magnify and spiral or overwhelm the person that she is either immobilized by depression or loses control of anger. The issue, then, is not to avoid these feelings or to eliminate all conflict, but rather to learn to cope with emotional responses to conflict in a manner which provides more self-control. Researchers have suggested there is a clear relationship between what we think about a situation, how we feel about the situation and then how we behave.

Here is an example of how this works. Let's say your child has left the living room in a mess: food, toys and papers are everywhere! One parent might view that child in a hostile manner. She might say to herself, "She's impossible, inconsiderate, irresponsible, and lazy." As the parent thinks these negative thoughts then she is more likely to feel anger and with anger there will be increased arousal resulting in behaviors such as criticism or yelling, which then leads to increased child misbehaviors and more anger on the part of the parent.

On the other hand, another parent might view the messy living room situation as hopeless or think that she is to blame. She might say to herself, "He'll never outgrow it" or "It's all my fault for being a poor parent." This parent is more likely to feel depressed and hopeless, which may also lead to increased criticisms of the child and increased child misbehaviors, or to more depression, causing withdrawal and an avoidance of making requests or disciplining the child in the future.

On the other hand, another parent's thoughts might emphasize her ability to cope and to be calm, for example, "I'm going to have to help him learn how to put away his toys," then this would facilitate less depression and anger and more rational and effective responses to the child's misbehaviors.

In this example the same event triggered three different emotional and thinking responses. In fact,

the truth is that we become angry not because of the event itself but because of the view we take of it. You may have already noticed that some days a messy room is not bothersome to you and other days it is very irritating. Therefore, one of the first steps is to begin to identify some of the common negative self-statements you make which increase your distress.

## **PAUSE VIGNETTE**

### ***Brainstorm***

Use this first exercise to help the group identify some common negative thoughts. Ask the group to imagine the following scene:



*You have two children aged four years and six years and it is supper time and you have been home from work five minutes. It had been a hard day at work. Both kids are yelling, whining, and arguing in the living room. You are trying to get dinner and you tell them to be quiet and stop fighting. The fighting continues and you feel yourself getting more and more irritated. Suddenly you hear the crash of a lamp falling on the floor.*

Brainstorm thoughts and write them on the board. Encourage (model) all kinds of thoughts. Then put the thoughts in the following categories if possible:

Labeling child's personality  
Prophesying Gloom  
Shoulds and Musts  
Self-criticism  
Give Up

Mind Reading  
Catastrophizing  
Revenge  
Blame the Spouse

After asking about thoughts, predict your behavior.

Contrast this scene with the following scene:

*You come home from work—you've had a great day. Your boss praised your work and you met the love of your life (or won the lottery!). Both of your children are yelling and fighting. Suddenly you hear the crash of the lamp on the floor. What are your feelings? Thoughts? How would you behave?*

## ***Narration***

Notice the type of thoughts the parent in the next scene has and think about how these thoughts will affect her behavior.

## ***Negative Thinking***



### ***Vignette 23***

**THE SCENE** Mother sits on couch flipping through magazine, getting more and more angry.

**Mother:** (UPSET AND ANGRY) Nothing works with those two kids, they're always fighting! What am I going to do? I've tried six months, nothing does any good. Joey is just like his dad!



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. What kind of negative thoughts do you have?
2. What effect do they have on your behavior?
3. What do you do when you find yourself thinking this way?

## ***Considerations***

This mother has a series of negative thoughts about the futility of trying anything with her son. Finally she blames her husband. Such thoughts are bound to make her feel even more hopeless, passive and critical of her son.

Ask the participants to discuss their own examples of negative self-statements, such as, "Nothing works," "He's just like his dad who is in jail," "He'll never change," "I'll try but it won't do any good." Point out that all these thoughts communicate the hopeless message that all efforts toward change are futile. Such negative thoughts usually are communicated nonverbally to the person involved by behaviors such as heavy sighs and eye-rolling. Hopelessness can be communicated by other subtle cues, such as one- or two-word replies. "I don't know," "I guess," or "Whatever," spoken in a passive, depressed voice, indicate a lack of hope as well as a lack of interest. Consequently, not only does the person with the negative thoughts become more passive or more angry, but the person who is the subject of such thoughts is bound to feel equally discouraged about himself and the possibilities for improving the situation.



## ***Role Play***

The group leader takes on the role of this woman and exaggerates her negative thoughts. Ask group to practice challenging her negative thoughts with positive and coping thoughts.

## ***Step One: Stop Negative Thinking***

### ***Narration***

When you are upset, it is important to identify your negative thoughts and validate your feelings as real. Next it is essential that you decrease these negative thoughts and prevent them from spiraling and overwhelming you. Therefore, as soon as you become aware that your negative thoughts are escalating, stop the thoughts or interrupt them. Some people wear a rubber band on their wrist and snap it every time they have a negative thought, as a reminder to stop worrying and angry thoughts because it doesn't help. You might even decide to postpone or reschedule your worry or angry time to a certain time of day so that they don't interfere with your time with your children or your play or work. Next objectify the situation ask yourself if your thoughts are helping you reach your goal - this will help you to withdraw momentarily to and be more objective about your behavior. Finally remind yourself that feelings of guilt, depression, anger and anxiety are normal for all people and that the feeling will eventually pass.

### ***STEP ONE: Decreasing Negative Thoughts***

1. Use thought Interruption
2. Reschedule Worrying Time or Anger Periods
3. Objectify the Situation ("Turtle Technique")
4. Normalize the Situation

## ***Step Two: Increase Positive Thinking***

### ***Narration***

Once you've learned to stop the negative thoughts you can begin to dispute these thoughts and substitute positive thoughts or coping statements. Remember, it is always your "choice" whether to get angry or depressed or to use a coping strategy. Try thinking ahead to a better time and praising yourself for your efforts. Humor is always helpful to get out of a rut as is coping self-talk statements.

### ***STEP TWO: Increasing Positive Thoughts***

1. Dispute Negative Self-Talk
2. Substitute Calming or Coping Thoughts
3. Time Projection
4. Think and Verbalize Self-Praise Thoughts
5. Humor
6. Model Coping Self-Talk

Notice the way the mother in the next scene stops her negative self-talk and substitutes more positive coping thoughts.

## Increase Positive Thinking



### Vignette 24

**THE SCENE** Mother sits on couch flipping through magazine.

**Mother:** O.K., I've got to stop this negative thinking. Joey is an active child. He's got to get used to our divorce. Maybe I could talk to him about different ways to make him feel better and to change his behavior—maybe that's what I should do.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How does she stop her negative thoughts?
2. What are some other ways to stop such thoughts?
3. What coping thoughts do you use?

## Considerations

This time the mother stops her negative thoughts. She thinks about how her child might be feeling because of her divorce and focuses on a statement which reminds her that she can cope with the situation more productively.

This mother effectively changes her thinking. Discuss the techniques she uses. First, she identifies and normalizes spiraling negative thoughts and stops them. Then she "objectifies" and "normalizes" the situation by thinking about her son from the point of view of his temperament and as a "normal" reaction to a stressful event. Then she seems to think about her goal and comes up with a coping statement.

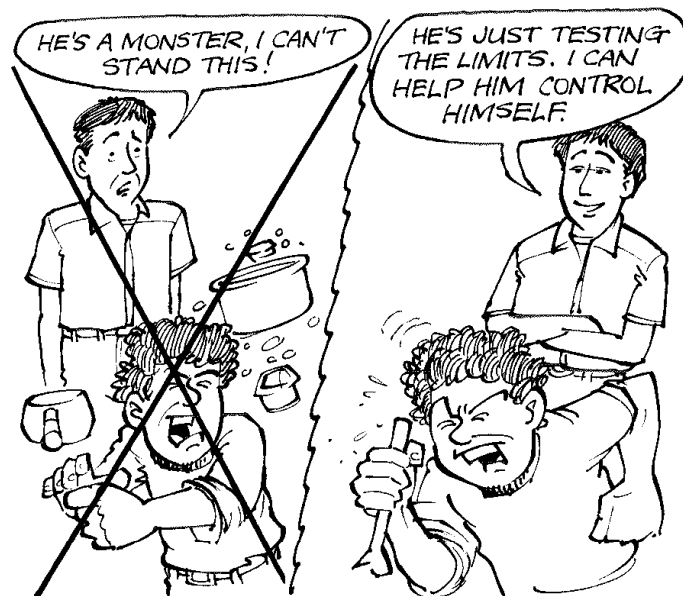
The leader reads the following negative thoughts and asks the participants to come up with some alternative coping statements.



### Buzz

Pair up parents in dyads to rewrite negative thoughts listed in earlier Buzz.

<b>Negative Thoughts</b>	<b>Examples of Coping Thoughts</b>
"My child is a monster. This is ridiculous. He'll never change." (negative labeling)	"My child is testing to see if he can get his own way. My job is to stay calm and help him learn better ways to behave." (normalize and calming thought)
"He just married me to have a maid. Things are going to change or else!" (threats)	"I need to talk to Michael about leaving his clothes around. If we discuss this calmly we should reach a good solution." (cope with fixing problem)
"He's just like his father. I can't handle it when he's angry." (blame spouse)	"I can handle this. I am in control. He has just learned some powerful ways to get control. I need to develop a plan to teach him more appropriate ways to behave." (self-control)
"She does it on purpose." (mind-reading)	"I don't know why she seems upset." (try to find out)
"He'll never outgrow it." (prophesize gloom)	"It won't always be like this." (positive time projection)
"She's driving me crazy, I can't stand it." (catastrophizing)	"I can cope with this." (coping)
"They should respect me." (shoulds and musts)	"All children try this with their parents in a department store." (normalize and dispute negative self-talk)
"He deserves to be spanked." (desire for revenge)	"Long-term goals are more important than short-term revenge." (objectify, normalize)
"I can't, it's my fault." (self-criticism)	"I'm doing the best I can. He's testing the limits." (objectify, normalize, and self praise)
"Forget it!" (give up, walk away)	"I can help." (focus on coping)



## ***Other Calming and Coping Thoughts:***

I don't like it when he acts like that, but I can handle that.

My job is to stay calm and help him learn better ways to ask for what he wants.

He really doesn't do this much any more, and has been quite good lately.

This is a temporary setback.

I shouldn't blame my impatience on him. I'll talk to him about it.

Remember to stick to the issue, don't take it personally!

Look for positives, don't jump to conclusions.

No one can make me mad; it's up to me.

This stress I'm feeling is exactly what the Group Leader said I might feel, it is a reminder to use my coping exercises.

She doesn't really understand what those swear words mean. I'm not going to let it upset me.

Don't be so hard on myself—nobody's perfect. One step at a time.

We're getting through this—each day it gets a little better.

I don't need to take care of everything right now; all I need to do is take care of today.

I can help her learn better ways to behave. I should ignore this behavior.

It's not the end of the world. I'm a caring mother. We will make it over this hump. I can develop a plan to deal with it.

1. Humor
2. Model Coping Self-Talk and Self-Praise



## ***Role Play***

Ask parents to list several stressful situations coming up in which they anticipate their child will misbehave. (e.g., getting ready for school) Then go through covert rehearsal. For example:

I'd like you to imagine a situation. You have told your son to pick up his toys. In fact, you have told him three times and he still hasn't done it (pause). You begin to think, "I'm sick and tired of always having to tell him what to do. How come I never get cooperation from him?" Ask the group what they would think next. "What is my objective? What am I trying to do? What's the first thing I should do? Calm down. Just relax. I'll do some of that breathing."

Ask families what problems they foresee in carrying out the procedures they have learned (e.g., outside home, losing temper). Reassure that there will be times when they will find it difficult to use the self-control techniques and when this happens they should not worry about it. Relapses and difficulties are to be expected. With practice they will become more proficient (like learning to drive a car). Therefore, it's important to learn how to evaluate the approaches taken in a situation. For example, look back over the experience to see what helped, what didn't help, and what has been learned. Think in terms of small gains and don't belittle gradual progress. Praise your efforts. Ask yourself, did you need to get angry in the first place? Here are some examples of what you might say to yourself. "It's getting better each time I use this procedure," or "It didn't work, that's okay. What can I learn from my try?" "Next time I'll do better."

## Staying Calm

### Narration

In the next scene we see a mother talking about a school meeting she had with her son's teacher. She describes the positive self talk and self-control strategies she used to stay calm during the meeting so that she could communicate effectively. See if you can identify which type of thoughts she used.

### Vignette 25



**THE SCENE** Mother is meeting with parent group leader to talk about how her teacher conference went.

**Leader:** So how did the meeting go with your teacher?

**Parent:** Well it went okay, I was a little frustrated. I was having a hard time remaining calm because I'm hearing all these things that you know Cody's doing wrong and how disruptive he is being in class and it's really hard to hear. And I'm just like—it was really hard not to get defensive.

**Leader:** How did you get yourself to not get defensive?

**Parent:** Well I was consciously trying to make an effort to not interrupt her and to not stop her which was a little hard for me to do but I think I did okay on it.

**Leader:** So you just listened to what she had to say?

**Parent:** I tried to listen and I kept telling myself just hear her out and you can come up with a solution and I counted not to 10 because there wasn't enough time but I just took some deep breaths and mentally just kept telling myself "you know it's not personal" we're just going to have to figure out a way to get through it. I tried to use that positive self-talk.

**Leader:** Do you remember what kinds of things you were saying to yourself? "I'm trying to get through it"—was that one of the things you were saying?

**Parent:** "I'm trying to get through it" "I can get through it" and "we'll figure out a way to fix it" and "it will get better."

**Leader:** Oh good so you thought ahead to a better time.

**Parent:** I thought ahead to when he was 18! (laughs)

**Leader:** It sounds like you were really focused on I'm going to try to get some solutions out of this and not get sucked in by all the negativity that she had towards.

**Parent:** It started off pretty negative but I think she actually got a little more positive at the end and was actually very willing to take some suggestions and we came up with some good strategies that we are at least going to try and we are going to meet again in a couple of weeks.



**Leader:** That's great, so it sounds in a way you staying positive really helped her to move around and see that you really wanted to work with her to make this work out.

**Parent:** I hope so, it's really hard though, I'm really glad that we've been learning about positive self-talk because I don't think that that's something that I do enough of and it definitely helped me get through that because that was a tough meeting.

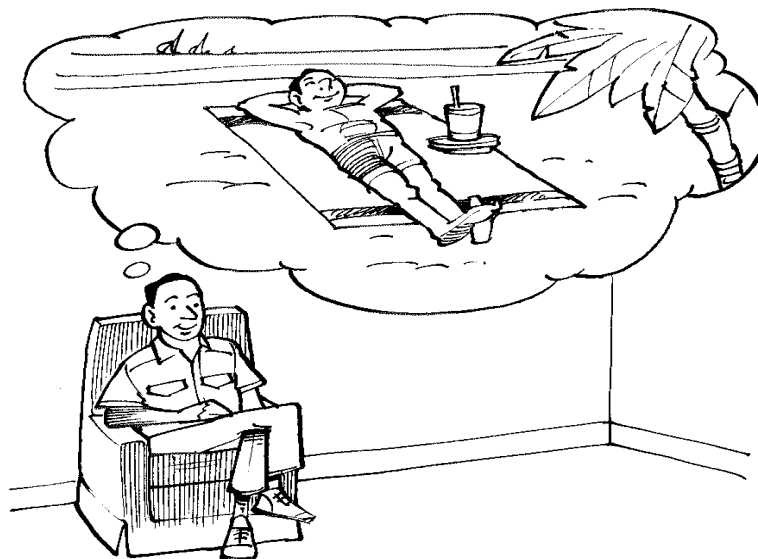


## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How does she stop her negative thoughts?
2. What are some other ways to stop such thoughts?
3. What positive communication techniques does she use?

## Considerations

This mother worked hard to stay calm and to focus on listening to what the teacher had to say without getting angry or defensive. She took deep breaths to calm down and tried to objectify the situation and focus on a better time in the future. She kept her goal in mind that she wanted to get some solutions to the problem achieved so this helped her stay focused. By staying calm and focused she could see how the conversation became less negative and more productive.



## Consistent Messages

### Narration

Mixed messages are especially confusing because they place the listener in a double bind as to how to respond: Which part of the conflicting message should be acted upon? Research indicates that when there is a discrepancy, the listener will tend to weigh the nonverbal, or feeling, messages as more believable. Inconsistent or mixed messages also result in the listener becoming confused and suspicious or hostile. It is very important to strive for clarity in messages. That is, the content should match the feeling, and the verbal messages should be consistent with the nonverbal messages. Using clear, positive “I” messages will lead to greater clarity. In the next scene, notice how the mother’s verbal and nonverbal messages are consistent. Think about how you respond to this message.



### Vignette 47

**THE SCENE** Couple sitting together on the couch in the living room discussing a problem.

**Mother:** I guess I feel resentful. You get to go out of the house and go to work and be with adults and have time to choose when you want your coffee break. Whereas I am just home all day with the kids and feeding them and cooking and cleaning. I never have time to sit down—I never have any time to myself.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is your reaction to this statement?
2. How would you respond to this message?
3. How do you get support or a break from work at home?

### Considerations

In these three sentences, the mother describes her resentment and how trapped she feels at home with her children. The verbal and nonverbal messages, as well as the content and feelings of the message, are congruent.

## Asking for Help

### Narration

One of the most important and difficult communication transactions is that of asking someone to do something for you. We describe such a request as a command. Ineffective commands are those that are vague, disguised, stated as questions or which contain a negative tone. For example, a shout of “take out the garbage” or a whine “would you mind taking out the garbage?” For couples commands can be particularly troublesome. A command or direct request for a specific behavior may be perceived as authoritarian or controlling. In turn, compliance may be seen as accepting of the hierarchy in the relationship rather than as an amicable way of cooperating. Such couples find themselves arguing over the specific request when, as with children, the real issue is the struggle over who is in control. In the next scenes, watch the ways the adults make requests of each other.

### Vignette 48

**Mother:** It is frustrating to me that I have to run everything in the household as well as do my job—that I have to come home and make sure everything is running smoothly in the household. I want more help with it.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What could make this woman’s request even more effective?
2. What type of requests are particularly hard for you to make?
3. Why are requests with spouses/partners more difficult than with children?
4. How are good requests stated?
5. How would you respond if your request was denied by a spouse or another adult?



### Considerations

The wife asks her husband directly for help with household tasks. However, she will need to think about what specific tasks she would like help with. At this point it is unclear exactly what she needs help with.

## Offering Help

### Narration

Once people are more accustomed to asking for help in a clear and respectful manner, it leads to partners understanding of what they can do to help and support each other. Watch in the next vignette as the father offers help and think about what is effective about his approach.

### Vignette 51

**THE SCENE** Couple sitting together.

Father says he has to go to work early in the morning. He says if they get to bed early he can help with the night feeding but if it is too late he would like his wife to do the 2 am or 6 am feeding. She thanks him for letting her sleep in this morning. She talks about how much difference an extra hour and a half can make. He says it is not so bad if he goes to bed at 9 pm then he can get up in the middle of the night to feed and still be okay to work.



### Brainstorm

Discuss with the participants the importance of developing support from a variety of sources, such as friends, church, spouse, physician, relatives, and so forth. Brainstorm and write down ideas for getting support.



## Giving and Getting Support

### Summary Narration

As we have seen parents can ask for help from one another to get support and can think about each other's needs and offer help. Another way to help each other is to tag team each other's efforts, for example, in this case the mother is doing homework with her daughter and her husband supports both his wife and his daughter by taking care of the baby so that the homework can be accomplished. For single parents without a partner in the home this is more difficult and it will be important to seek out support from family members such as a mother or brother or friends

## ***Narration***

Another source of parent support can be your child's teacher. By working together as partners you will feel encouraged and part of a team. Let's watch next as this parent lets her child's teacher know how she feels about the teacher's extra efforts.



### ***Vignette 54***

**THE SCENE** Mother and teacher are having a school meeting.

**Parent:** I think it will be very useful and helpful. You know I want to thank you so much for taking the extra effort with Cody because I know that it's a challenge for you but I want to let you know that you probably don't get enough thanks and praises but I think you are doing a really great job and I do understand how frustrating it can be so thank you so much.

**Teacher:** Thank you it really helps to hear that and I really do like him and I want to see him do really well at school so I'm glad you came in and we could talk about it today.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. How can you get support from your child's teacher?
2. How can you offer support to your child's teacher?



### ***Buzz to Express Gratitude (if not done after Vignette 50)***

Ask the groups to break up into pairs or triads to brainstorm ways they can express gratitude to children, friends or teachers.

## ***Considerations***

This mother gives very nice positive feedback to her child's teacher. She verbally conveys her feelings and, in turn, the teacher reciprocates those warm feelings. When parents do this they are building a partnership with their child's teacher that will be beneficial for their child's learning and will help them feel supported. It is also important that children realize that parents and teachers are working together to help them learn.

## Problem Solving Meeting

### Narration

It can sometimes be hard to wait when you have a problem you want urgently to talk about and your partner postpones the discussion to later. However, your ability to solve the problem will be far more effective if you both have the time to listen to each other and are free of distractions. Ideally children would be in bed and you are not too tired. Let's watch these next parents as they begin their scheduled meeting time and begin Step 2 Defining the Problem.

### Vignette 3A

- THE SCENE** Mother and father are sitting at the kitchen table.
- Husband:** I had a kind of upsetting conversation with Dorian's teacher when I picked her up today. She asked me if I had a few minutes.
- Wife:** You never like to hear that.
- Husband:** And she wasn't smiling and so Dorian went out with a friend to the playground and she told me that she has been hitting again—hitting other kids when she's having some conflict that often Dorian resorts to hitting before Sally can intervene to help them solve the problem so that's the problem and that she is not being real cooperative with following directions and doing what teacher's asking her to do or if it's a parent that's helping in the classroom—she's not following directions from whatever adult is giving them.
- Wife:** Well that definitely happens with us at home so—I mean I always hate to hear that it's happening at school too but
- Husband:** Right, it's nice to think that you sometimes hear people say kids save it all for here or there but she's spreading it around. So I said we'd talk and that we hadn't been real proactive lately and that we'd try and figure out what strategies we'd come up with and meet with her and try and see if we can coordinate our efforts.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How does this father bring up the problem for discussion?
2. How does he indicate his goals for discussing the problem?
3. What listening skills does his wife use?



### Considerations

Here the father brings up the problem with his daughter as a result of a teacher concern. He presents the problem in a calm fashion without overreacting—although it was probably quite distressing to hear from the teacher about his daughter's aggression. He is non-blaming and focused on finding strategies to help her. This couple create a positive and collaborative tone to starting their meeting.

## Steps 2 & 3: Summarizing the Problem and Goals

### Narration

A problem-solving meeting is not quite like any other type of conversation. It is neither spontaneous, natural nor relaxing. Problem solving involves a specific set of methods which enhance one's ability to think effectively about conflict. However, this does not mean that problem solving must be confrontational or unpleasant. On the contrary, many families report it to be an enjoyable time which brings them together by emphasizing flexibility and collaboration.

The couple we just saw have begun the second step which is to define the problem clearly. Problem definition includes a description of what the problem is, who is involved, how frequently it occurs, why you think it is occurring and how you feel when the problem occurs. A well-defined problem is stated briefly in a manner that is specific, positive and focused on producing a solution rather than venting anger or assigning blame.

The third step is to summarize the problem as well as your goals for the meeting. Now let's watch as the mother summarizes the problem. Think about what else you might want to know about the problem before beginning to brainstorm solutions.



### Vignette 3B

**THE SCENE** Parents continue their discussion of the problem.

**Wife:** Okay so it sounds like both she's not listening and she's being aggressive with other kids so we need to kind of brainstorm on solutions. I mean I definitely have noticed her being more aggressive with Robin you know. She kind of goes back and forth – she wants to help him but then if he doesn't want to be helped in the way she wants to help him then she will hit him on the head or something. So it's definitely happening in both places.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How well did they define the problem?
2. What else might they have discussed about the problem? (where it occurs, with whom, when, how often)
3. Why is it important to state the problem in "neutral" terms?

## Considerations

Here the parents clearly define the problem with their daughter without blaming themselves or others. Review the following points to bringing up a problem to be solved in a meeting:

**Determine the agenda.** Focus on one problem at a time for the meeting. Point out that in this scene the father briefly and clearly described the problem with Dorian's behavior. Notice how the father did not get bogged down in angry, defensive reactions but kept focused on the goal to find solutions. One part of the problem they failed to discuss was why they felt it might be occurring.

**Discuss problems as clearly and positively as possible.** It's a good idea for each person to take several minutes prior to a meeting to decide exactly what is troubling him or her and how best to communicate it. The problem should include a description of who is involved, and what is said and done (or is not said or done) that is troublesome. Other elements to consider include how frequently the problem occurs, where and when it usually happens, and how long it continues. Vague problem statements such as: "I'm kind of irritated with the way you've been behaving," "Carl is not learning properly," "Charlene is not a good worker," "Billy is always trying to make me mad," "Sally is very lazy," and "Father is wishy-washy," prevent positive efforts to problem solve because of their lack of clarity. They may also result in the other person feeling attacked or blamed.

**Define the problem briefly.** For the sake of efficiency, avoid giving four or five examples of the same problem. Only one or at most two problems should be discussed at the same meeting. Thirty minutes is ample time to discuss a problem and to come up with some solutions. Point out that if parents don't limit themselves in this manner they are likely to become both exhausted and frustrated. If someone strays to other problems an effective response would be, "I think we're supposed to be discussing when you come home from work and not how I am disciplining at the moment." One person in the discussion might be identified to look for sidetracking and bring the family back on focus. Problem definition should be oriented toward change desired in the future rather than focusing excessively on problems in the past. Don't bring up other problems out of defensiveness or anger.

**Use the principles of positive and effective communication** (discussed in the program, "How to Communicate Effectively With Adults and Children") **when defining a problem.** Avoid put-downs, exaggerations, vague labels or blaming. For example, a problem stated negatively can sound blaming. A statement such as "I feel you are not involved enough at home with disciplining our children," may force the listener into a defensive position. On the other hand, beginning with a statement such as "I know work has been really stressful lately and has involved a lot of your time, but I would really like you to spend more time with me and the children if that is possible," recognizes the listener's positive qualities and can increase his desire to collaborate.

## Considerations

Remind group members that during problem definition the goal is for people to feel understood and not to solve the problem. Thoughts and feelings about a problem need to be adequately expressed first without pressure to reach a discussion.



## Step 4: Brainstorming Solutions



### Brainstorm

Point out that the group has been doing brainstorms frequently through the parenting group. Introduce brainstorming by showing the group a brick. Ask parents to think of all the ways a brick can be used. Write them down on the board.

### Narration

These parents did a good job of defining the problem briefly without blaming. In their eagerness to solve the problem they forgot an aspect of Step 3 which is to determine their goals. This is a key step because it assures everyone is in agreement of your objective before you begin generating solutions. Once the exact problem has been agreed upon, the fourth step is to brainstorm possible solutions. No further discussion of the problem should occur. "Brainstorming" involves generating as many solutions as possible. The focus should be on creativity and productivity. In fact, try to think "the crazier the idea the better." Avoid any criticisms or judgments about the solutions and don't get bogged down in details about the ideas suggested. This brainstorming process will allow you to get out of mental ruts and to come up with new ideas.

Let's watch now as these parents brainstorm.



### Vignette 3C

**THE SCENE** Parents continue their meeting at kitchen table.

**Wife:** So one thing we definitely have to do is set up a meeting with Sally and I think we need to work on the back talk and not following directions stuff a lot more strongly at home. Because I know when we've done that in the past and we've given her stickers and stuff for it she really responds to it. So I think we should start up another one of those charts.

**Husband:** Yeah those seem to work. I think they work and after awhile they don't seem necessary and

**Wife:** then it comes back around again. Yeah

**Husband:** It comes back around – yeah it does seem to help

**Wife:** So let's get back to the chart

**Husband:** So should we do the same thing divide the day up into before school, after school, dinner and then bedtime?

**Wife:** Right and then she can get a check for every time she follows the directions without talking back or arguing and then we can talk to her about a certain number of check marks will earn her a prize. I know she has been really into little barrettes for her hair and I think she'd probably be really motivated by getting lots of those tally marks toward something like that and I think it's hard because the hit sometimes seems a little bit playful with Robin but I think we probably have to make sure we're being really consistent with using Time Out for being aggressive because I'd like to nip that in the bud and not have that keep on happening so

**Husband:** And it doesn't sound playful at school anyway. I think anyway we can do to help her find other ways to express her frustration is good because she is gentle with Robin but it sounds like with the other kids she gets really angry who are more her size that

**Wife:** She's actually really hitting them. Yeah so working more on the tally mark chart, being more consistent with Time Out, talking to Sally –I wonder if the teacher would be willing to give us some kind of report that we could give tally marks for so if she gets through the morning without a hit she gets a tally mark and if she gets from lunch to dismissal without a hit she gets another tally mark—that way it could be coordinated in both places.

**Husband:** (nods head yes)

**Wife:** The other thing is—it is always the hardest solution because when she is so arguing with every single direction I give her I don't want to go out and do special things with her but I know that's really what she needs when she gets like this so I think we need to schedule special time with her—both of us as another part of the solution. So figuring out special time separate without Robin. I mean it can even be a little thing just walking up to the playground for half an hour but not having to have her little brother there so she is getting some good attention.

**Husband:** (nodding head in agreement) Yeah she does seem to do better if she is just with one of us and without him there. I think she's in this stage where she's really frustrated he's not so malleable—she can't pull his strings the way she could when he was 2 and 3 so maybe that's part of upping her frustrations and getting frustrated with him and it carries over at school.

**Wife:** Right, I think so too and I think he pushes back more too. He gets more irritated with her than he ever used to because he used to just hero worship and now he's asserting his own will so I guess it's only logical that she's asserting her own will against all the adults around her since she's kind of missing out on that lovely little sweet pet relationship that they used to have. But she'll ad just, she's a really good big sister, she's really kind to him so much of the time.

### **PAUSE VIGNETTE**

## **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. How can the mother get her partner more involved in coming up with solutions?





### **Vignette Continues**

**Husband:** I think we also need to coach her on finding the words to express whatever it is—because you know it’s just easier for her to bop him but she needs the language so that at school—it maybe won’t help her so much with Robin but start working on it so it helps her with her peers at school.

**Wife:** Right definitely and then I think there are times when she does use words with Robin so I think it would be really important to give her tally marks or you know really encourage that and praise that so—okay who’s going to do what?



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. What makes their brainstorming effective?
2. How do they come to some understanding of their daughter’s point of view and feelings?
3. Why does discussing the details of a solution limit the brainstorming process?

## ***Considerations***

These parents generated quite a few possible solutions to the problem. They are both actively involved in the process and positive in their approach. They tended to be very practical, specific and realistic in the process. Remember at this stage of brainstorming you do not have to be specific about the details of each solution proposed.

Discuss how, during a brainstorming session parents should allow themselves to be creative and even ridiculous. Coming up with at least one humorous solution such as, “Send Dorian to grandma’s for 6 months,” or “Turn in our children to foster care” or “nag more often” helps to relieve tensions and get some difficult feelings expressed. By allowing free expression of ideas there is more likelihood that some new and effective solutions will be generated.

## **Review**

Remember the following principles:

- Don't judge the solutions
- Generate as many solutions as possible
- Quantity leads to quality

### **Helpful Hints:**

Think how your "role model" would solve the problem. Imagine yourself successfully solving the problem.

## **Role Play/Practice**

Break up into triads. (Generally, we split couples for these early role plays.) Ask one person to bring up a problem, the second person to help define it, summarize it and identify goals. Next, they both brainstorm solutions. The third person is the "observer" who helps the couple stick to the problem solving. (Use problem-solving handout steps 1–4 and effective communication.)



## Step 5: Evaluating Solutions and Making a Plan

### Narration

The fifth step is to go through the list generated during brainstorming to eliminate the truly ridiculous ideas and combine any ideas that naturally go together. Then each suggestion can be discussed in detail. Each suggestion should be looked at, keeping in mind the following:



1. Exactly how will it be done?
2. Who is going to take responsibility for doing it?
3. Are the best outcomes short or long term?

This discussion will result in the refinement of an agreement plan which states clearly what each family member is going to do and who is responsible for what. Write the agreement down so it can be referred to if needed. This avoids the necessity of relying on memory, forces everyone to take responsibility for their own behavior and minimizes the possibilities for ambiguity in communication. Let's see how this couple formulates their plan.



### Vignette 3D

**THE SCENE** Parents continue to discuss their proposed solutions.

**Wife:** Do you want to do the teacher meeting or would you rather I handle that?

**Husband:** Set it up do you mean?

**Wife:** Do you think we should both go?

**Husband:** Yeah, I think we should both go. I can set it up but I think it would be good if we are both there.

**Wife:** Okay, you'll set it up and then we'll both go and I can sit down with her tomorrow morning and start a new tally mark chart. She always really likes that and we'll brainstorm the prizes together and then I think we both need to figure out a way to schedule in some special time with her.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What makes their discussion of the plan particularly effective?
2. How are they supporting each other and being a team?
3. Why is this mother's approach especially helpful?
4. Why might it be helpful to write down their solutions and ideas and who is responsible for each solution?
5. Why are follow-up meetings crucial?

## Refining the Plan

### Narration

One of the advantages of going over each proposed solution is you can flesh out how each solution will be implemented. Let's watch next as the father gets more clarity on how the chart system will be implemented.

### Vignette 3E continued



**THE SCENE** Parents continue to discuss their proposed solutions.

**Husband:** Anything else we're forgetting from when we ran that chart before – I am trying to think if there is any ?

**Wife:** Well I liked it to be that she got a prize every couple of days so that's something that I'll do and I'll show you once I write it out so we can assure that happens. They will be small little prizes you know little bobby pins or something. I know she really wants a package of gum–sugar free! So I think that's all on the chart–just being really clear what she's working for.

**Husband:** I'm trying to remember it seemed like we modified it as we went. I'm trying to remember where we left off with it a couple of months ago.

**Wife:** Well I remember wanting it to really show success every couple, few days so that was one thing when I–I'll pull out an old one and I can look and see how many tally marks she was getting in a day so we can figure out so she can earn a prize every couple of days and I'll talk to her about it tomorrow morning so if we start it tomorrow in a week why don't we talk again to see how it's going. I think it's really important that we catch every single opportunity where she is following our directions and give her a point because we really want to encourage that. She so responds to the positive and I think that's something we can talk about with the teacher too. I know the aggression piece is probably harder to handle in the classroom but the not following directions – sounds like she also mentioned that so maybe we can talk to her about how it works if we can be really positive when she is following directions and see if we can encourage the teacher to do something like that with her as well. And then after a week of the chart we can check back in again and see if there are ways we need to tweak it.

**Husband:** And we should be able to meet with Sally by then I would think. It sounded like it was something she wanted to get a handle on.

**Wife:** Okay.

**Wife:** I mean I'm glad the teacher came to us before it gets to be a bigger problem so see if you can get us in with her soon?

**Husband:** Yes do you think we should talk to Dorian that her teacher told us she's hitting kids or not following directions or should we talk with the teacher first?

**Wife:** Let's talk to Sally first – let's start it at home and talk to the teacher first and then ask her how she wants to approach it – whether she wants to talk to her about it or whether all of us do it or whether we do it at home so let's just start on the home front and then after we talk to the teacher decide on that.

**Husband:** Right – I don't know if it's the same kids, if there are particular kids she's having an issue with or if it's kind of random.

**Wife:** That would probably be helpful to find out when we talk to her. So all right – it sounds like we have a plan.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. What makes their discussion of the solutions particularly effective?
2. How can you keep yourself positive in these meetings?

### **Considerations**

These parents carefully sort out who is going to be responsible for carrying out each of the suggested solutions.

Remind parents to plan for STEP 6, which involves evaluating the success of their plan in 2 weeks time. Families should be sure to schedule a follow-up meeting to review how the agreement is working and determine any necessary revisions. At the follow-up meeting the plan should be evaluated in terms of the following criteria: First, was the strategy carried out as planned? For example, did they each spend more time with Dorian? If not, what made it hard for them to do so? A second question is, how was the child's behavior affected? This means watching for the desired behaviors. For example, if the goal was that the child be less aggressive, then some record should be kept to see if this method was successful. If not, a new strategy may need to be developed. Remember, all contracts will probably need further refinements, updating and clarification, so be sure that Step 6 is carefully included as part of the program.

## Ending the Meeting

### Narration

It is important keep your meetings to half an hour or less and to confine yourself to discussing one problem at a time. This will mean you won't get bogged down in too many plans and will gradually start working towards solving a problem. Remember one problem solving meeting is not going to solve all your problems. Watch how these parents end their meeting on a positive note.

### Vignette 3F

**THE SCENE** Mother and Father are sitting at the kitchen table

**Wife:** It sounds like the kids are getting noisy upstairs so we're going to have to wrap it up but I have one more thought and while I'm not happy that the teacher is having these problems I so appreciate how on top of everything she is. And when we meet with her help me to remember to thank her for how tuned in she is to Dorian and she is really positive with her and we're so lucky to have her – I want to remember to talk to her about that.

**Husband:** Yeah, she is a great teacher I told her today that I really appreciated her letting me know. She is obviously doing it for her own sake as well as ours because Dorian is causing her problems but she seems like she wants to work with us versus complain –she wants to be a partner with us.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why is recognizing the teacher's efforts important to the success of their plan?



### Role Play/Practice

Ask the same triads to evaluate their solutions to problems in terms of the following:

1. What are the possible short and long-term consequences of a solution?
2. Is the solution realistic to carry out and likely to work? Keep in mind the obstacles. Then develop a solution plan using the Thinking Like Scientists handout.



**NOTE:** These problem-solving steps can be used either with a friend, partner, an older child or when thinking alone about a problem.





## Finding a Supportive Friend to Help Problem-Solve

### Narration

These parents' meeting illustrates how important it is for parents to meet privately without their children to sort out rules and plans and to discuss personal issues as well as parenting issues. Once you have come to agreement then it will be easier to give your children a clear message and to support each other.

Even older children should not be burdened with the responsibility for solving their parents' problems. For single parents who do not have a partner in the home it will be important to have a supportive friend or family member who can help act as a sounding board as you try to sort through difficult issues. Think about who a good support person would be for you. In the next scene we see a single mother problemsolving with her brother about her son's escalating aggression problem. Let's watch how she defines the problem and how he listens and asks questions to help with defining the problem.

### Vignette 5A

- THE SCENE** Brother and sister are sitting at the kitchen table over coffee.
- Samual:** How are you doing today?
- Sandra:** Things aren't so well. I'm having problems with Warren at school again.
- Samual:** Warren?
- Sandra:** Yes.
- Samual:** Your wonderful Warren.
- Sandra:** Yes, and—the problem is he's been hitting kids at school and you know we've talked about this a couple of times—I've gone to the school and met with the teachers and we've talked about this problem but it seems to be reoccurring again. Just yesterday he hit about three or four kids on the playground and a couple going down the hall—and I don't really know what seems to be causing the problem, but he just keeps doing it. And I just don't know what to do.
- Samual:** Did you talk with him when he came home yesterday?
- Sandra:** I talked to him about the problem, but he really couldn't explain to me why he had been doing it—so I am concerned, because in some ways he doesn't seem to show any concern for why he's doing it—yet he doesn't seem to understand why he's doing it either.
- Samual:** Big kids or little kids?
- Sandra:** Some of both and it doesn't seem to matter whether the kid is big or small—he just has this urge to hit and there he goes. So I was hoping that, as his uncle, you could kind of help me out and give me some solutions about what I could do to help us solve the problem.



- Samual:** I don't know, a couple of weeks ago we were talking about Warren and a matter of fact I think he was doing the same thing...
- Sandra:** Yes.
- Samual:** And I talked to him then and he said, "I promise I won't hit anybody." So what's going on at home?
- Sandra:** Well, I don't know. To me everything seems to be going pretty much the same—you know, a couple of weeks ago when he was having the problem I tried to take a look at what was going on then to see what may be causing the problem—because this didn't seem to be an issue a while ago but in the last couple of months it's been starting to become an issue  
like every once in awhile he would be having a problem but now it's almost an every day occurrence that he's hitting someone or I'm getting a report from the teacher about this problem.
- Samual:** Have you punished him or did anything about it yet?
- Sandra:** Well, you know, I talk to him, and I've been trying to talk to him about what may be some of the causes of the problems so...
- Samual:** What about some of the consequences for hitting other children?
- Sandra:** Well, there really haven't been very many consequences. I've been trying to deal with it—as a single mother trying to work with him and busy trying to work and trying to do some things on my own, and I just haven't had the time to sit down and work out what the consequences should be for him hitting.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

- 1. When can it be helpful to problemsolve with a friend? Why is this important?**
- 2. What makes it difficult to seek help from others?**
- 3. How have you helped your friends in the past? What would be Samual's role here?**
- 4. What would you suggest to this mother?**

## A Girlfriend Helps

### Narration

For single parents finding a close friend or family member who you can problem solve with can be very helpful. Sometimes someone who has been through a similar experience can provide new insights. In the next vignette we will a mother who has set up a meeting with her friend to discuss a problem that has been upsetting her with her ex-husband. Watch how she helps her friend know what to do and how she defines the problem.

### Vignette 8A

- Mother:** Hi Jani, thanks so much for meeting me.
- Girlfriend:** Sure it's nice to see you.
- Mother:** I really appreciate it. Yeah it's been awhile. You know I wanted to talk to you because I know that you're going to understand this, I just really need you to listen to me for a few minutes because I just really need to vent and I know that since you are a single parent too you are going to understand. I am so frustrated right now with Cody's dad. He is just—ah—so unpredictable. Every time he's supposed to come and get Cody I never know if he is going to do it or not.
- Girlfriend:** Oh no.
- Mother:** He was supposed to pick him up Friday at 5 and drop him off Sunday at 5 and I never know if it's going to happen or not. And Cody gets . . .
- Girlfriend:** Didn't this happen last fall too?
- Mother:** This happens constantly I mean it's so frustrating and I don't know what to do any more because I worry that I'm going to lose my temper with him and I don't want to do that in front of Cody. And at the same time I have to somehow deal with Cody's frustration because he's heart broken you know—he's so excited to see his dad because he only sees him twice a month.
- Girlfriend:** I know that makes me sad.
- Mother:** I don't know what to do, sorry to vent.
- Girlfriend:** No I totally know what you are talking about I've had that happen and you just feel like what am I supposed to do here? Plus you don't get your time off. I'm sure you were looking forward to that.
- Mother:** I hate to say it but I do look forward to it because I need my down time as Cody has so much energy—he's the cutest little boy in the world but his energy level it's draining so I look forward to those two days off that I get.
- Girlfriend:** And we don't get breaks—it's not like you get an hour here and an hour there so I feel like we need that weekend.





## **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. How does this mother prepare her friend for what she wants her to do in this meeting?
2. How does her girlfriend provide support?
3. If you are a single parent, who can you talk to for support?

## ***Considerations***

For single parents it is important to find support from friends or close family members. If these individuals are not aware of the problem solving steps you can educate them in the steps and tell them what you expect of them. You could even show them the problem solving checklist and tell them you want to follow the steps on the checklist. Sometimes friends feel they have to come with solutions for you so you can prepare them that all you want them to do is just to listen to you and help you explore some options or ideas regarding the situation. It is not their job to solve the problem but their listening and questions can help you sort things through.

## Defining the Problem

### Narration

Now let's watch as the mother and her friend define the problem further.

### Vignette 8B

- Mother:** So I don't know I guess what I am asking your advice on is how did you deal with it? Do you think you can help me brainstorm and come up with some ideas? Because I don't really know how to deal with my frustrations any more and I don't know how to deal with Cody and what am I supposed to tell him when you know he's all excited and he says "oh my daddy's coming, my daddy's coming" and all of a sudden Daddy's not coming you know?
- Girlfriend:** He doesn't show up and you're supposed to tell him why. What do you do about telling him why? Do you—that's another thing to talk about because I always had trouble with that—what do I say I don't want to lie?
- Mother:** Well I'm to the point now that I don't know whether I should lie or not. I don't want to lie to him because you know he's going to get to the point where he's going to figure it out himself but right now I just need to figure out—well I guess probably the main problem is my frustration and how do I deal with it? Because that is going to carry over into how I handle Cody.
- Girlfriend:** So you want to try and brainstorm those—like what to do? And I think it would be nice to brainstorm what to do about your time? How to take care of yourself?
- Mother:** How to get Ann time?
- Girlfriend:** Yeah how to get Ann time. (they laugh)
- Mother:** Okay



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is the problem with lying to children? Why is she tempted to lie?
2. What two problems does this mother identify?
3. Why is it important to state the problem in "neutral" terms?



### Considerations

Here the mother already is getting some clarity on the two problems she is facing. This is important for her to understand so she can come up with solutions for each problem. Her friend is very good at not coming up with answers for her but instead, helping her to define the problems.

## Finding Solutions

### Narration

This discussion has helped this mother realize she has two problems, one of what to tell her son and the second of how to deal with her own frustration as well as her need for time for herself. Let's watch how they brainstorm some possible solutions.



### Vignette 8C

- Mother:** Well I'm at a loss right now, maybe because it is too close to when it happened because it just happened yesterday.
- Girlfriend:** Oh did it?
- Mother:** So I am still in the anger mode.
- Girlfriend:** Yeah I don't blame you, I would be angry too. I was always angry when that happened to me.
- Mother:** So what did you do?
- Girlfriend:** I don't think I handled it very well. So I feel like maybe we could just try to figure out together some ideas. I think the frustrating part is what do you tell Cody?
- Mother:** I mean do I tell him—do I tell his dad what the problem is and how it affects Cody?
- Girlfriend:** That's a good idea.
- Mother:** I think that would be a no-brainer but at the same time if it keeps happening maybe I do have to come right and say, "you know what this is how it is affecting our son"—I guess that's one thing I can do.
- Girlfriend:** You could just drive over there and surprise him with Cody? We're here!
- Mother:** I could do that. (she laughs) Yeah that's a great idea, I'm sure he'd appreciate that. No but sometimes I feel like plastering an alarm clock to his forehead with duct tape with alarms going off two hours before he's supposed to pick up Cody, then an hour,
- Girlfriend:** Then 35 minutes then 5 minutes...
- Mother:** Then 5 minutes just to say okay you're not going to be late—you're not going to disappoint our son again.
- Girlfriend:** You know sometimes I just wouldn't tell Ally that he was coming.
- Mother:** I've tried that too but then he gets to the point where he's asking "Mommy when do I get to see my daddy?" Then when he does show up he's great. I'll give him credit, he's great when he shows up. But the first things out of Cody's mouth are "Daddy I missed you so much it's been a long time". That's heart breaking—my anger level goes up another notch when he says something like that. I guess what I really need to work on is remaining calm because I tend to have a really difficult time doing that. I need to learn to count to 10... maybe a 100.
- Girlfriend:** I was thinking that breathing—I need to breathe.
- Mother:** Maybe I'll take up yoga or something—get my "me time" that way.

### PAUSE VIGNETTE

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What solution does this mother realize she needs to work on?
2. Why is her sense of humor helpful?



### VIGNETTE CONTINUES

- Girlfriend:** But then it would be cancelled and you couldn't go to yoga.
- Mother:** That's the other problem is I make plans and I have to cancel—I never feel like I can make plans. Just the other night I was supposed to be somewhere at 7 o'clock and Dave was supposed to pick him up at 5 and 5:30 rolls around and I call him—he doesn't even call me—where are you? You need to be here. He says, "Oh I don't think I'm going to be able to make it or I'm going to be really late tonight" and I'm like okay and he says "I'll call you in a couple of hours to let you know where I'm at." 7:30 rolls around and he says "okay I'm just not going to be able to make it." I'm like "Okay I guess I can cancel my plans." I don't really have much choice unless—what did you used to do? Did you just have a back up plan?
- Girlfriend:** I cancelled a lot.
- Mother:** I cancel all the time—I hate that.
- Girlfriend:** But I think that is a really good idea to have a back up plan. That's a really good idea.
- Mother:** Maybe I can make arrangements with Auntie, Cody's auntie, he'd love to spend time with his cousins too.
- Girlfriend:** Does it help at all to call him earlier at 4 to say "Are you coming?"
- Mother:** Not really because that is what I usually do. I'll call him before I'm leaving work and say "Okay I'm leaving work now, I'm going to get Cody, are you still on track to be here at 5? Are you running late? I try to be proactive so that I know.
- Girlfriend:** So this more of a thing where you feel you need to fix it from your end? It's not going to work to talk to him.
- Mother:** I don't think it's going to work to talk to him I think it's definitely something I have to figure out how to deal with on my own. I'm thinking probably a back up plan and I guess I'll just have to not make plans on that Friday if he's running late. So I don't have to cancel because I don't like to cancel on people—that drives me crazy.
- Girlfriend:** It is embarrassing.
- Mother:** It is.
- Girlfriend:** And then you feel really unreliable.
- Parent:** Exactly.
- Girlfriend:** And I don't want to explain to everyone that my ex-husband didn't come again—you know—so then I think people thought I was flaky. I didn't like that.



- Mother:** Do you think I should just try not telling Cody that he's going to go see his dad this weekend?
- Girlfriend:** I don't know, what do you think about that? I don't like... I had a hard time with Ally because then he'd just show up and it was sort of a surprise to her and I felt she needed the transition. So how to work out those transition times was hard for me.
- Mother:** And Cody needs those transitions
- Girlfriend:** I like the idea of not telling him until it is 10 minutes out—call me when you're on your way maybe.
- Mother:** Then it's kind of hard because you're trying to get him ready but not get him ready.
- Girlfriend:** Yeah I know.
- Mother:** You know what I think I'm going to just keep telling him what the plans are—because Cody likes to know what he's doing that day—he asks what am I going to do today Mommy? So I'll just keep telling him and maybe I'll just start having his dad tell him—maybe it will be better coming from his dad than me. Maybe?
- Girlfriend:** That scares me a little bit.
- Mother:** That scares me a little bit too. Actually that scares me a lot.
- Girlfriend:** Because what if he said, "Oh I'm not coming because I can't drive over there."
- Mother:** You're like an echo—that is what I just heard. Well okay.
- Girlfriend:** There must be some other ideas we can come up with though.
- Mother:** I'm really liking the duct tape with the alarm on it.

### PAUSE VIGNETTE



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How is this mother thinking about her son's needs ahead of her own needs? Why is this important to their relationship?

### VIGNETTE CONTINUES

- Girlfriend:** Is it that staying calm is the big one? Or is it that thinking of alternatives?
- Mother:** Staying calm is probably the big one because I have to be able to stay calm and I have to be able to stay calm for Cody and deal with his frustration because...
- Girlfriend:** I'm glad you are thinking of that—I don't think I thought of that enough.
- Mother:** You see his little face—he's all excited and then you tell him daddy's running late or daddy has to work late—he can't get you until tomorrow. His little face just drops. So I have to figure out—I have to be the parent.



- Girlfriend:** You're the parent.
- Mother:** Be the calm parent.
- Girlfriend:** I have to be the competent emotional parent
- Mother:** Unemotional parent!
- Girlfriend:** Unemotional.
- Mother:** Unemotional parent, I can do it. Right I can do it. I can stay calm.
- Girlfriend:** I think you are great at staying calm.
- Mother:** Thank you.
- Girlfriend:** It is the other piece of it—helping Cody though that situation that is hard.
- Mother:** I just thought of what I could do—you know in those times where he's going to end up not going to his dad's I could just do something extra special for Cody after—like maybe he and I could go out for an ice-cream cone because I don't give him ice-cream cones very much—he would love that. Just do something extra special. Maybe go to the park and have our quality playtime.
- Girlfriend:** That's such a good idea! I think that's a really good idea and I think it would help with being frustrated too. He didn't show up, "Let's go for ice cream."
- Mother:** I think I'm going to try that. Jani I thank you so much for listening to me vent—I'm so sorry to dump it all on you.

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why is staying calm so important to her eventual success with her son's response and sense of security in her relationship with him?
2. What is effective about the solution she comes up with?



## Considerations

Here the mother comes to the realization that this is a problem she has to assume responsibility for rather than expect a change in her ex-husband. She recognizes the importance of her son having an ongoing and positive relationship with his father, although she is upset about her ex-husband's unpredictable planning. For her child's sake she realizes she has to be honest and not lie about what has happened but at the same time she can help ease her son's disappointment by staying calm and by offering him an alternative fun activity. In this way she is teaching her son some coping strategies for dealing with disappointment.

She cannot protect her son from this disappointment but she can be supportive and help him move on to finding something else to do. She recognizes that her own reaction is key to helping him feel loved and secure.

## Finding Solutions

### Narration

This mother has brainstormed with humor and flexibility. She has allowed herself to think of a variety of ideas. In the end she thought about her son's needs for predictable transitions and honesty in their relationship and came up with a new idea for how to help him manage his disappointment. However, she still has not addressed that other part of the problem of dealing with her own needs. Watch how her friend reminds her of this problem and they continue to brainstorm ideas for this issue.



### Vignette 8D

- Girlfriend:** I was wondering if we could just back up a little bit and talk about taking care of you.
- Mother:** How do you do that?
- Girlfriend:** I know I feel like that is a really difficult part of this is that you really do need the weekend off and I don't know about you but I feel like I never get enough time and then I'm looking forward to my weekend and then it gets cancelled. I think it's great the ice cream but then what do you do about your plans?
- Mother:** Well you know I guess what I should do is I should talk to my sister—my sister helps me a lot and so does Cody's grandparents, my mom and dad, maybe what I could do is—and I hate to do it but I think if I asked them to do it maybe once a month or once every other month to kind of be on stand by—I hate that word but what else am I going to do? Because ultimately I want him to go with his dad but if I have plans and he's supposed to go with his dad and his dad cancels—if I have a back up plan like maybe he can go to Grandma's or Auntie's and stay the weekend—if they are willing to do that as an alternative—they know how many times things get cancelled.
- Girlfriend:** I always found it really difficult to call at the time and say "Ally's dad cancelled again can you take her for the weekend?" That's really hard to do, it was uncomfortable—I like your idea that well you are on stand by—could you be on stand by this weekend?
- Mother:** I bet you they would do it.
- Girlfriend:** I like the idea especially because I feel like it takes care of you so that you have energy and time to yourself.
- Mother:** I definitely need that down time and I feel bad saying that but I do. I'm with him all the time—not that I don't enjoy him but he really is such an active little boy that I sometimes just want to do something for me.
- Girlfriend:** Or nothing.
- Mother:** Or nothing, exactly. I think I'm really going to explore that and talk to Grandma and Auntie.
- Girlfriend:** I really like that idea. It is nice that they are willing to help.

**Mother:** They are—I don't know what I'd do without them. They are a good support group for me. That and my friend.

**Girlfriend:** Thanks—glad I'm not forgotten.

**Mother:** Believe me that helps, trust me, this is still me time. Okay I think I'm going to do that, thanks for making me think about that a little bit more.

## **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. How might having a back plan help with her staying calm as well?
2. What do you do for self-care or for taking time to refuel your energies—whether or not you are a single parent?
3. Is it difficult to ask for support/help from others at times? What makes this hard to do?



## ***Considerations***

Here the mother comes up with a great back up plan in case her ex-husband changes his plans again at the last minute. Clearly she finds it hard to elicit the support of her sister or parents even though she recognizes they would want to help. Often times parents try to be independent and self-reliant but in their effort to do this underestimate the importance of getting some “refueling” or “me” time in order to be independent. Moreover, often times friends and family members take pleasure in being able to help out.

## ***Finding Continued Support***

### ***Narration***

This meeting has resulted in effective problem solving and some new approaches for this mother. Where she started feeling helpless and discouraged she has ended up with a proactive plan for the next time this happens. Remember the adage “for every problem there is at least one solution.” When you are feeling stuck, remember you can often find support from close friends and family members—it can make all the difference to getting through and coping with a tough situation.



### ***Vignette 8E***

- Mother:** Thank you so much for listening to me vent. I’m so sorry to dump it all on you.
- Girlfriend:** I’m glad you called me. I feel like we need to set up a meeting otherwise it just doesn’t happen.
- Mother:** Well that’s what being a single parent is all about. How about this—maybe I’m going to try this for a couple of weeks with Cody and we’ll meet again in a couple of weeks. Another excuse to get coffee.
- Girlfriend:** Yeah let’s do. I would like that—that would be nice. Okay.
- Mother:** Thank you.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. How can you develop a support network?

### ***Considerations***

Explore with the parents ways they can get support from partners, family members, and friends. Talk about what they can do as buddies for each other in the group.

## Household Chores-Who Does What? Mother Speaks Up

### Narration

Parenting young children is not only enjoyable but is also a lot of work and challenging at times. As we have seen in the prior vignette single parents can build support networks from family and friends. When there are two parents in the home it is also important for them to sort out their roles and expectations of each other. If these are not clear or agreed upon, one or both parents might feel unfairly burdened or unsupported. In the next vignette let's watch a mother who sets up a problem-solving meeting with her partner to talk about her feelings regarding the amount of housework she is doing. Think about how she is defining the problem.

### Vignette 9A

- Mother:** I'm just feeling really mad. I'm so frustrated, I like it that you spend time with the kids on the weekend and it's all fun but it gets to be Sunday afternoon every week and I have to go to the grocery store, I have to plan all the meals, and it's just really frustrating, I'm just tired and we both work and I feel like I have to do all the shopping, all the meal planning—even though we both work. I'm just sick of it.
- Father:** You do more around the home front—I don't think you do all of it but you do more than I do. But I work more than you do so it's . . .
- Mother:** Why can't you come home and do some of it? I get home from work and I have to do the whole meal and everything and why can't you do some of it?
- Father:** Because I'm at my job, working trying to make money so we can buy the meal.
- Mother:** I work too.
- Father:** Right but I work for myself and I need to work full time plus to keep things going and if I know you are already home in the afternoon I feel like you've got the home front covered and I can keep working.  
(failure to define)
- Mother:** It is just frustrating to me that I have to run everything in the household as well as do my job—that I have to come home and make sure everything is running smoothly in the household. I want more help with it.





## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How could she define the problem more effectively?
2. How is the father feeling?

## *Considerations*

Both of these parents are working hard between their jobs, children and household chores. Each of them appears to feel unsupported by the other—in other words, they both have similar feelings of working hard to get everything accomplished without the sense that the other person is recognizing their efforts. It is important that this be talked about so that they can be aware of each other's perspectives and can appreciate each other's efforts.

## Generating Solutions

### Narration

In this meeting we have seen that although the mother speaks up with “I statements” about her feelings about all the household work she does—there is a sense that she is blaming her partner when she says “why can’t you come home and do some of it?” Her partner reacts by recounting how hard he is working and they both end up comparing who is working hardest. However, they have begun to see each other’s point of view.

Let’s watch how they begin to talk about some solutions to the problem.

### Vignette 9B

- Father:** Are there specific things you’d like me to do?
- Mother:** The one thing that really pisses me off is the grocery shopping. Every Sunday afternoon you’ve had fun with the kids all day long and then I’m the one that to go to the grocery store with them—packed full of people. I hate that.
- Father:** That would be an easy one for me to do.
- Mother:** So you would do the shopping?
- Father:** Yes, we can make a list so...
- Mother:** So that I can still cook all the meals.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How could the mother state her request or goal more positively here?
2. What is effective about the father’s response?



### Considerations

When bringing up a problem it is important to think about your goals and to frame solutions in a way that achieve these goals. So instead of complaining how much she hates going to the grocery store, she could ask, “could you do the grocery shopping every Sunday morning?” This is more likely to help her husband know exactly what he can do to help.

## Defining the Problem Further

### Narration

This couple have made the common mistake of jumping to the solution generating phase of the discussion before fully understanding the problem. It is important that the mother know that her partner understands her situation and feelings and that he also has a chance to clarify his point of view before starting the brainstorming process. Let's watch how the mother tries again to define the problem more clearly and how her partner listens.



### Vignette 9C

**Mother:** I'm just feeling really frustrated about everything in the household feeling like it is all my responsibility and my work. I feel like I have too much that I have to do and take care of.

**Father:** (Nods)

**Mother:** I have my work at work and then I have to come home and I have this whole household to run and I am just feeling really tired of it and frustrated.

**Father:** So you feeling like everything pretty much falls on you at home?

**Mother:** Well, yeah. I think I make sure that all of the groceries are bought, that all the meals are cooked, all of the laundry, all of the kind of household chore things are always on my mind and I'm always... and I'd like to come home and just play with the kids for a while but I feel that I can't really because there are so many chores and stuff to do. I'm tired of it.

**Father:** (nods agreement) I can see that you feel like that because you do. I feel that I'm in support of whatever I do around the house is kind helping you but it does seem like you're the one that keeps things going. I usually try to ask myself, "what would Trilby do right now?" in terms of trying to figure out what I should do. So I didn't think it was a problem for you, you seemed like you had things pretty much under control but I can see...

**Mother:** Well it feels like a problem because it feels like it is too much to have to do on my own. And I know you work more than me but I still do also work and it feels like so much to have to do.

**Father:** (nods head in agreement)

**Father:** Maybe we can try and break it down some and figure out some specific parts that I take responsibility for.

**Mother:** I'd like that.



## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is different about the way the mother presents the problem this time?
2. What makes her partner's listening approach effective?
3. How does the father assume a collaborative attitude and support her need to solve this problem?



## Considerations

This time the mother brings up the problem without blaming her partner for the problem. Additionally the father tries to understand her feelings and then validates them by recognizing her contributions to the family. This leads to the mother acknowledging her partner's work load as well.

## *Listening to the Other Person's Viewpoint Narration*

By listening carefully this father has helped his partner feel more understood and has shown her that he is collaborative and willing to help give her more support. Next he has a chance to give his view of the problem. This discussion is an important part of defining a problem clearly and will lead to more productive solutions.



### *Vignette 9D*

- Father:** So are you willing to hear my side of the equation?
- Mother:** Yes I am.
- Father:** I feel like I'm... my head's more at my job during the week because I've got lots going on and I work full time and you work part time so I feel like it's natural that you are more in charge on the home front. In the afternoons I suppose it would be nice if I came home early but on the other hand I'm trying to get things done and I feel like you're home with the kids and that it always seems like when I come home you've got things pretty well under control. It seems like all the other dads are out there. I guess part of it is just a gender thing because all the other guys I know are working until 5:30 or 6 so I guess part of me feels like that is what I'm supposed to do. To do the man's thing. Whether it's a good thing for our family or not, it seems we're sort of following our gender roles.
- Mother:** So it sounds like you're feeling in the family that it is your role to work full time to make more money and you didn't realize that I felt overburdened or like there was a problem with me doing all the household stuff. Is that right?
- Father:** Yes we've got this new house and it feels even more urgent than usual to bring in the money to pay for it. So yeah and I didn't realize it was a problem for you.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. How effective is the father at speaking up about his perspective on the problem?
2. How does the mother indicate she is understanding of his view point?

### *Considerations*

The father expresses his feelings that he felt he was contributing to the family by working hard to make money for the family and their new house. He was unaware that this division of labor was a problem for his partner. It is important for adults who are living together to talk about how they will divide up the household chores and responsibilities. Discuss with the group how they make this decision in their family. What is important to achieving satisfactory relationships is that these roles have been discussed and agreed upon—not that they have been “expected” or thrust upon them without their mutual input.

## Summary of Problem and Goals

### Narration

Now that each person has expressed their point of view and felt heard by the other, the mother moves to the next step of problem solving, that of summarizing the problem and their goals. Let's watch how she does this.

### Vignette 9E

- Mother:** So it seems from my perspective that we both sort of feel like we have a lot of work and mine is split between my job and home. And you feel a lot of urgency to make money and spend a lot of time on your job sites. But I would really like it if we could think of some ways to help—for me to feel more supported with all the household chores. And I hear that you don't want to mean you are coming home earlier because you feel like you really need to get your hours to get the jobs done. But I'm wondering if maybe there are some other ideas. My goal of this conversation is to try and get some support around the household stuff and maybe we can brainstorm some ideas of ways I can feel less overwhelmed with the household chores. That would be really helpful.
- Father:** Okay that would be good for me, good for me to have some concrete things I can do so I feel like I'm—so we have some sort of agreement because it seems part of modern life and especially modern life of working and young children that we're always going to be barely keeping our head above water. So it would be good if I at least sign up for certain tasks so I feel like I'm doing my part even it still feels a little crazy. It might just be how it's going to feel but I think it will help me to have some concrete things.
- Mother:** Well definitely one of the issues for me is the weekend because I feel that I'm not at work, you're not at work and there is this real tension between there's tons of laundry to do, grocery shopping, and we want to do fun activities with the kids and I'm wondering if there are some ways we could think about getting the chores done on the weekend in a more shared way such that I don't end up at the Ballard market at 5:30 every Sunday hungry coming home to hungry people. It seems like that is pretty common. Do you have any ideas?





## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What was effective about this summary of the problem and clarification of the mother's goals?
2. Why was the father's agreement with the problem definition and goals important to their eventual ability to come up with solutions?

## *Considerations*

This mother's summary acknowledges both her own and her partner's view point in a non judgemental way. She is clear about her goals for help and why she thinks this will help her ability to have fun family times with her children. Father agrees with this goal and indicates it is important for him as well.

## Brainstorming

### Narration

Now that the problem has been summarized clearly and their goals agreed upon they are ready to begin brainstorming. Let's watch their process.

### Vignette 9F

- Father:** Obviously I could go to the Ballard market at 5:30 but... I guess we need to—that's one concrete thing that I could go Sunday morning or something.
- Mother:** I'd love that.
- Father:** Before it's crowded and before our day gets going. So I guess we need to come up with a list so it seems you can shop from your mind but I need a list so that I know what to get. So are you willing to help me make a list?
- Mother:** Definitely—so we'll make a list together and you will do the shop?
- Father:** Sure.
- Mother:** That would be helpful.
- Father:** Do I have to take the kids?
- Mother:** No ( they both laugh)
- Father:** Sure I'll do the shopping.
- Mother:** What are other things? I think on the weeknights even if you do work until 6 pm, it would be helpful if you came home, hung out with the kids some so that I wasn't trying to get homework with them done, putting out all of their bickering fires at the same time that I'm trying to prepare the meals. So I would be willing to keep being the meal person if I didn't have them in there with me while I was cooking for that time period right when you get home.
- Father:** (nods yes)
- Mother:** That would help be out a lot too.
- Father:** So draw them out of the kitchen?
- Mother:** Yes they want to see you so they won't have seen you all afternoon so—it's not going to be hard.
- Father:** And if you're doing homework with Dorian at the same time do you want me to just take Robin or take over on the homework?
- Mother:** You could take over on the homework. Usually it is just that packet or she is reading to me so... it would be an easy thing to do.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is effective about their solutions?
2. How else can they be more supportive to one another?



### Considerations

This mother has been clear about what will help her. It is important that the father have an opportunity to talk about whether he can do this and whether there are ways his wife can support him as well.

## Clarifying Plan

### Narration

Now that they have come up with some solutions, they then explore each one in more detail to be sure they understand it clearly and that it is an acceptable solution. Let's watch how they do this.



### Vignette 9G

- Mother:** Are you comfortable helping with the homework?
- Father;** Yeah, you know sometimes you might have to explain to me what it is she is doing or needs to do to finish her homework. But sure.
- Mother:** So when you come home are you willing to take them right away or what do you need? Do you need a little time before you relieve me for my cooking period.
- Father:** Well I guess you know sometimes it's nice to take a shower because I get pretty dirty and sweaty during the day and it helps me feel like I'm switching over to a new part of my day if I take a shower when I get home otherwise I am still kind of in work mode and work clothes.
- Mother:** So you want to come home and shower and then you'll take the kids, finish homework if it's not done, and I have some cooking time? That would help that would definitely help. In terms of the weekend chore stuff you also said if we made a list together you would be willing to do the shopping in the morning? I'd be willing to do a shop in the morning too –it's just that we never make it a priority so if I knew it was scheduled and we were going to make sure we got the shopping done before we did any outings–it isn't really the shopping that I hate doing it is the fact it is always evening time and it's such a zoo there.
- Father:** Yeah, we needed something and I went down there last Sunday morning and it was refreshingly empty.
- Mother:** It's much better if you get there early. Okay well maybe we should just try that for a week of afternoons and Sunday and then check in and see how it went and see if we have to make any changes to the plan. Does that sound good?
- Father:** So as far as getting home and taking the kids if I'm ready to take over at 6:15 is that–what's the timing?
- Mother:** That sounds good, that will work. Great–thanks.

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is effective about this interaction?
2. Why was it important to specify the details of their solutions?



## Considerations

This mother is effective in her speaking up because she also asks her partner about his willingness to help her with the things she has suggested and whether he is comfortable with these tasks. She also reciprocates by asking him what his needs are when he first gets home. In this way they are setting up a predictable routine for themselves after returning from work. Transitions from work to home at the end of the day are frequently difficult for families and in fact, are the times when most families have their highest rates of conflict or fights. Therefore, setting up an agreed upon routine can reduce friction and help for smoother transitions from work to home schedules.

## Listening to the Teacher's View of the Problem Narration

Teachers may have anywhere from 18-26 children in their classrooms—all with varying emotional and academic needs and developmental issues. The job of teaching—like parenting—can be rewarding as well as stressful at times, but when teachers feel the support of their students' parents it can make all the difference. In the next vignette we will see a teacher who has asked a parent to come in to talk about a problem she is having managing her child in the classroom. Let's watch how this parent responds to the teacher's description of her son.

### Vignette 12A

- Teacher:** I really appreciate you coming in today. I'm having a really, really frustrating time with Cody particularly this week but you know it has been going on all year and I need your help because he's doing stuff in my classroom that I'm having trouble controlling. This week for instance he's hasn't met—you know we set up that goal plan for him, he hasn't met the goal all week long and he has been frankly out of control. He's running around the classroom, he's jumping off of desks, there is another boy in the classroom who has a really hard time managing his emotions and I've been working hard to help him stay calm and I've told Cody so many times that he needs to stay away from this other boy when the other boy's upset and every time I say that it's like he didn't even listen to me, he runs across the room, he jumps in front of the kid, he teases him, and then the other kid blows up and it wrecks all of my plans. So I'm at my wits end working with him and I need your help to figure out what we can do about that.
- Parent:** Okay, well I really appreciate you taking the time to meet with me and go over this problem. Sounds like you're really frustrated and I can certainly understand that because you have your hands full.
- Teacher:** There are 26 kids in this classroom right now and he's probably taking 70% of my attention on a day-to-day basis and it's hard to do.
- Parent:** I completely understand.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How do you stay calm when someone is talking about your child's misbehavior? How do you feel?
2. How is the teacher feeling?
3. What is effective about the way this parent responds?





## Determining the Goals

### Narration

This teacher is expressing her own frustration and sense of helplessness managing this boy's behavior in the classroom. The parent listens and is non-defensive. Let's watch how the parent moves the discussion around to some positive goals.



### Vignette 12B

**Parent:** Well I certainly want to work with you and I want to work out some solutions. I do realize he is quite the handful sometimes bouncing off the walls, it's something that we've been working on, so maybe we can work together and come up with some solutions. What I'm hearing is he's doing a lot of different things right now in the class—maybe we could try and focus on one or two behaviors that we can try to work on rather than all of them all at one time, would that seem fair?

**Teacher:** Yeah I mean I think we need to get to all of them at some point but I guess hmm—there are certainly a couple of things that are bothering the classroom more than other things.

**Parent:** Okay, which top two do you think we should work on?

**Teacher:** Well I'm really concerned about his interactions with this other kid. Frank—hmm—when the two of them are together it's really tough to manage and I feel like Cody's the one who is kind of instigating these interactions between them and when Frank is upset Cody is the one who goes in for the kill and really is out of control with him so I'd like to see that stop.

**Parent:** Okay so it sounds like maybe you are directing him to stop and he's blatantly ignoring you and egging on Frank is it?

**Teacher:** Exactly it feels pretty defiant I mean I've told him, I think he understands and still can't resist going over there and give Frank a hard time so—that would be one of my top ones and I think the other one is when they have choice time and doing some play time together he is kind of running around the classroom getting into other kid's stuff. If somebody else has something he runs over immediately and grabs it from them and says it was his. And if I try to have him give it back, he melts down and falls apart and it really disregulates the other kids and other kids start to argue too—so those would be my top two for right now. I need some suggestions for how to keep him calm in the playtimes and how to keep him away from Frank.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why is the parent trying to pinpoint one or two behaviors to work on at first?
2. How could you state the goals?

## Considerations

It is important not to work on too many problems at once or it will be overwhelming and hard to realistically implement all the solutions. Identifying a place to start is an important first step and then laying out a plan for how you will progress to eventually work with all the problems over time.

## Brainstorming Solutions

### Narration

Now that they have determined their goals for Cody, they are ready to brainstorm. The mother has come to the meeting prepared to share some of the strategies that have worked at home. Let's watch how she does this.

### Vignette 12C



- Parent:** Okay I can think of a couple of suggestions for helping keep him calm. We're actually involved in this group right now, it's dinosaur school that is having a great effect on him. One of the things that he is learning that we work on a lot at home is the thermometer method. What that basically is it goes from red to blue with red being your high energy, you're frustrated, you're angry—I use it for different feelings no matter what they are and it's basically telling him to stop, take three to five slow deep breaths, and go from color to color until he's blue where he's calm. I found that to be very useful, maybe that is something you could try in the classroom?
- Teacher:** What does it look like? Where would I get one?
- Parent:** Well basically it's just a picture of a thermometer it's got the calmness at the very bottom and as the temperature rises like any normal thermometer it goes up in different colors and red is the one that he is out of control.
- Teacher:** And that is working for him?
- Parent:** It does seem to be working because what it does is forces him to stop think about what he is doing and physically calm himself down. That's one suggestion Hmm.. maybe another one would be—let's see—have you ever heard of the Tiny Turtle?
- Teacher:** I might have heard something about that. I think our school counselor might use a turtle. I don't really know how that works.
- Parent:** That one we might have to tweak a little bit depending on what the situation is.
- Teacher:** I'm going to write some of these down so we don't forget.

**Parent:** That's a great idea. Tiny Turtle is something like if he gets frustrated—I don't know if we could tweak this somehow if he's being disruptive in the class or not but maybe for the other little boy Frank when he's bothering Frank, Tiny Turtle basically says when you're frustrated you go into this invisible shell that you have and you calm yourself down, however that might be, count to three, and you do self-talk "I can calm myself down, I can come out when I'm ready I can deal with it, I can get through this". He's very aware of who Tiny Turtle is so maybe when he's in the situation where he's instigating this other little boy maybe you could suggest, "Let's leave Frank alone right now, Frank is in his Turtle Shell just like Tiny and he's trying to calm himself down in his own way. Let's give him some room and some space to do that." Then maybe if that doesn't quite work you can say you know if you can do this you can get a reward for following directions you can get a sticker or hand stamp. They do a lot of hand stamps—that every time he gets caught doing something good he gets a hand stamp. What do you think about that?

**Teacher:** Hmm, yeah I think the thermometer thing sounds kind of interesting—it sounds like you have one at home, could I have a copy of that? It would be hard for me to—I really don't have the time to go and find one myself but it sounds like if it is something that is working with him I'd be willing to try that. I might be able to do a hand stamp. I've got a lot of things going on for other kids too and it gets kind of confusing to use lots of different strategies for different kids. You know though it strikes me Frank the little boy that I'm working with who also has some similar issues to Cody is earning Pokémon cards if he basically when he stays calm for different parts of the day he gets points and if he gets enough points he gets a Pokémon card at the end of the day and Cody's kind of jealous of that and he thinks they are pretty cool. Maybe we should figure out some way to incorporate him into that system.

**Parent:** That's a great idea I can certainly pick up some.

**Teacher:** Could you? That would be great.

**Parent:** I absolutely would do that and I would bring them in, maybe you could just set them aside specifically for him so they don't get dispersed to the other kids because I would hate for him to see that and it might cause more problems for you.

**Teacher:** Yeah I don't give them to all the kids; I try to keep it pretty private at the end of the day. Cody notices everything he's a bright little kid and when he's not doing this I do enjoy him and there are some really fun things about him. I'm kind of at my wit's end with him sometimes but there's also one other thing that has been working pretty well with him which is—it doesn't work all the time but—sometimes when he's in the middle of a situation with another kid and is racing around the room and grabbing their things I've tried pretending I have a remote and telling him to pause and rewind. And then if he can go back and do it again then I make a

big deal out of it and clap for him and that's if he's not too off the chart and too upset that's been working okay with him too.

**Parent:** That's a great idea.

**Teacher;** That's why I think the thermometer might be another thing kind of similar to that—I think he likes—he's got a good imagination and kind of likes anything that's a little bit novel, or new or interesting. If I put the thermometer on his desk I could also have him go back to his desk and move—you said there is some sort of arrow on it that he could move it?

**Parent:** There is an arrow on it yes.

**Teacher:** That might also get him away from the other kids—sometimes I think he just gets in the middle of something and he can't disengage and he can't get away from them.

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How does this parent effectively advocate for her child?
2. What strategies have you learned that have worked with your child, that you could share with your child's teacher? (in a way that does not make the teacher feel you are telling him or her how to do their job!)



## Considerations

It is important for parents to think ahead of time of one or two strategies that have really worked well at home to manage your child's behavior or teach them something new. Sharing these with teachers can be done in a collaborative way just as parents can ask teachers for input on what they have found works in the classroom. This mutual sharing of ideas can be very beneficial to both teachers and the parents.

## Deciding on the Plan

### Narration

Now that they have generated a variety of solutions, next the mother ties to pin down a few specific ideas they will try. This is important in order to come with a realistic plan.



### Vignette 12D

**Parent:** How about we—so we don't get too many things going at once because I think that might be overwhelming why don't we work on a couple of these? I really like the rewind idea, I think that's great and I can also incorporate that at home. If you can incorporate the thermometer and definitely the Pokémon cards and I will get those to you we can go from there.

**Teacher:** So the Pokémon cards so that we're on the same page and if you talk to Cody about it and we know what we're doing. What I do with the other little boy is there are 5 different parts of our day and the first one is morning circle, and there's choice time, lunch time so he gets a point for each of those times if he can stay calm when he's frustrated. So for Cody I'd like to give him the Pokémon cards for leaving Frank alone and give him privacy and I'd also like his goal to be that he stays calm when he's playing with other kids. What do you think about that?

**Parent:** I can see how that would be very important and very helpful for you. Well do you have any other kids that have this problem, is anything else working with them?

**Teacher:** Those are the only two kids who really lose it. All the kids in my class have trouble sharing sometimes but you know all kids have meltdowns. Cody and this other little boy are the two who have more frequent meltdowns.

**Parent:** Well Cody does respond very well to praise and anytime you catch him doing the right thing, catch him being still, catch him sharing. I like to jump on those situations then say "great job staying calm" or "great job sharing and being a friend" maybe give him a sticker for that because he loves stickers—he does really well with them. So is that something?

**Teacher:** So for him would it work better if we did some stickers on a card and if he had a certain number of stickers at the end of the day then he gets the Pokémon card at the end.

**Parent:** I think that's a great idea because it is more of a visual for him and sometimes it works a little bit better because he can see how many stickers he's at for the day and he goes oh I have 3 I need to get 2 more.

**Teacher:** So I'll give him the stickers for times when I see him being calm and I could also use it for times when he stays calm when Frank is nearby. I could still use it for that if I see him staying calm or focused on his own body when Frank is upset I could give him a

sticker for that and when he is calm he has some friendly behaviors too. He can ask and he can share and he can be really generous. So I focus on those right now and see if that helps.

**Parent:** Okay why don't we try these out for a couple of weeks and I'd really like to meet with you again just to see if they're working and if there's anything we need to adjust or do differently and then maybe when he starts to get a little bit better with these particular issues we can work on some more because I do realize how frustrating it is for you and I know that you have a lot of different kids and I want to do everything I can to help with that.

**Teacher:** It helps to know that and I'm really glad that you took the time to come in here and meet with me. Sometimes when I call parents with problems they are not as responsive as you are so it's really good to be able to talk to you and to get your input on the problem too and I think I could work a bit harder to do some of these things with him when he's here at school. So I'll let him take the card home everyday so you can see how many stickers he's earned.

### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why is it important to delineate just a few ideas to try out at first?
2. How does the parent support the teacher's reinforcement system?
3. What else does the parent need to do?



### Considerations

Teachers have very small budgets for reinforcement or incentive items. Consequently if parents can help with this it can make a big difference to having a reward that will really be motivating for the child.

## Supporting the Teacher

### Narration

We can see now that the teacher is feeling more hopeful, has some new ideas and most importantly feels the support of the parent. They are collaborating with a plan that can cross settings from school to home which will make success more likely. Let's watch how the parent shows her support for the program and how she thinks ahead to a possible problem with the plan and they brainstorm solutions.



### Vignette 12E

- Parent:** That sounds great and I think what I'll do is incorporate that into the system we have because we have a point system at home as well that every time he gets a Pokémon card that means that he's met his goal at school I'll give him an extra sticker at home so it is an extra reinforcement.
- Teacher:** That sounds like a good idea. I think it's nice when parents back up what is going on at school.
- Parent:** I think that the Pokémon cards are great and we can start with a goal of 5 but I'm a little concerned about what you think we should do if he doesn't get 5 in order to get that card.
- Teacher:** Yeah I can see he probably needs to earn it some in order to make it meaningful. I can see he gets discouraged sometimes too. Hmm How about this? Partly him earning the 5 is dependent on me noticing and there are at least 5 things he does during the day that are friendly. So one thing I can do is make a real effort to make sure that I follow through. If it feels like that's still too much maybe you and I should have a quick phone conference and I guess we could make it he had to earn 3—I hope he can get more than 3 because 3 good things in one day seems not a very good place to start from but I'll work really hard to try to get him to get the five. I think that if I'm really on top of it and I notice I can probably find five things that he's doing well.
- Parent:** How about this, maybe if there is a day he doesn't get five maybe the next day we could drop it down to four or three so that he has a success at getting it and then maybe the next day move it up again and maybe fluctuate it until he gets consistent at meeting a goal or do you think that's too ?
- Teacher:** I wonder if that is too confusing and also if it gives him the message that he wasn't good enough the day before but I do agree with you if there is a day or two in a row where he doesn't get it then something's not working for him. So I would be comfortable if it seems like five is really too much then we could move it down to 3 or 4 and try that for a week and then move it back up again as he's being more successful. I'm not real comfortable fluctuating it on a day-to-day basis because I'll have trouble remembering that frankly and he might be confused about that too. But let's say he

goes for two days in a row and doesn't get the five and if I really can't find five things that are positive about what he is doing then why don't you and I do a quick phone conversation together and reset the goal a little lower. I think it's important that he is successful at the beginning.

**Parent:** That sounds fair.

**Teacher:** If he does come home and hasn't earned it maybe you can challenge him to do a better job the next day or remind him of what he needs to do.

**Parent:** Give him a little extra incentive to earn it.

**Teacher:** Just remind him what he needs to do to earn it so that he gets a fresh start the next day.

**Parent:** I can certainly do that.

### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. What makes this mother's approach proactive?
2. Why does the collaboration make it more likely the behavior plan will be followed?





# Problem Solving With Children

## Introductory Narration

What do young children do when they're experiencing some kind of problem? They cry, they hit, they whine, they complain to their parents, they withdraw, they pout. These responses do little or nothing to resolve the problem. In fact, they often create new problems. Many children do not know any other ways to react when things aren't going their way. Parents can help by teaching their children how to come up with possible solutions to their problems and how to decide which solutions are most effective.

## Provide Adequate Scaffolding

### Narration

Just as contractors need scaffolding or support structures in order to build a house, so do parents need to provide adequate scaffolding in order for their children to learn the cognitive skills to be able to problem solve. When children are young this parental scaffolding includes limit setting, coaching and teaching solutions such as sharing and taking turns and waiting. Without this parental scaffolding children will not be able to successfully work out their conflicts on their own. As children get older and have learned some of these thinking skills then they can have input into the decision making process. When families do activities together such as negotiating who will do what with a cooking project or playing family games there are plenty of opportunities for teaching children how to negotiate, problem solve, and be a member of a team. In the next vignette watch all the ways these parents scaffold in order to help their 6-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter learn to work together.

### Vignette 1

- THE SCENE:** Mother, father and their 8-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son are cooking together.
- Mother:** one teaspoon
- Sophie:** (grabs the vanilla) I got it.
- Charlie:** I going to do it.
- Sophie:** No you stir.
- Mother:** You're stirring right now. It's your turn to stir and it's her turn to put that in. And then Charlie you get to put the chips in. (starts to hold teaspoon so Sophie can pour vanilla) We'll just do one full, so stop.
- Sophie:** (pours vanilla)
- Mother:** So Sophie poured – Sophie you just knocked it out of my hand so you know what let's take your hand off of there, let's let Charlie pour it because you knocked it off so...
- Charlie:** (pours it in batter) Yeh!
- Mother:** Let's put a little bit more in there to make up with what was spilled. (pours in more vanilla) Perfect. Will you take this over to the sink and wash it off please?
- Sophie:** (takes vanilla bottle to sink) Here Daddy.



- Father:** Bring it here Sophie. Thank you.
- Charlie:** I'm making a big mess.
- Mother:** You are making a huge mess. I'll hold that for you while you mix it. Can you mix this part down in the center so it gets mixed equally?
- Sophie:** Can I lick your finger?
- Mother:** You don't want to lick it. (she laughs) I'm going to borrow this (the spatula) real quick. (she starts stirring)
- Charlie:** (starts to pour in flour)
- Mother:** We are going to wait on, wait...
- Father:** Hey Charlie wait, wait...
- Mother:** I don't know if we are even going to need our mixer.
- Father:** Way to be patient.

**BRIEF PAUSE IN VIGNETTE**



**Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. How do these parents scaffold the interactions between these children?
2. What behaviors are the parents reinforcing?
3. What are the children learning?

## Empathy training

### “She hit me!”

#### Narration

Many children do not understand or even think about the other child’s point of view concerning a problem situation. In some of the prior examples, we have observed parents helping their children understand a sibling’s point of view by reminding them of a similar situation when they behaved the same way at a younger age. In some scenes we also saw parents helping their children realize that other children might feel the same way about a problem as they do or that the other child’s response was not intended to be deliberately hurtful or vindictive.

Another approach parents can take to help their children develop empathy is to raise questions about how they can find out what another child feels or thinks about a problem.

In the next scene watch how the parent encourages her son to try to understand why his sister won’t share her book with him.

#### Vignette 12



- THE SCENE:** Mother is in kitchen making salad. Son enters.
- Jay:** She hit me!
- Mother:** Who hit you?
- Jay:** Sarah.
- Mother:** Well, what happened? (Elicits child’s view of problem)
- Jay:** She just hit me.
- Mother:** She just hit you for no reason? (Encourages child to think of causes)
- Jay:** Well, I hit her first.
- Mother:** Why did you do that?
- Jay:** She wouldn’t let me look at the book.
- Mother:** Oh, so that made you angry. How did she feel when you hit her?  
(Validates child’s feelings and helps him think of sister’s feelings)
- Jay:** Angry.
- Mother:** So that’s why she hit you back. Do you know why she wouldn’t let you look at the book? (Helps Jay see Sarah’s viewpoint)
- Jay:** No.
- Mother:** Well, how do you think you could find out?
- Jay:** Well, I could ask her.
- Mother:** Why don’t you do that? (Encourages him to seek facts and discover problem)
- Jay:** O.K.
- A LITTLE LATER.**
- Jay:** She said I never let her look at my books.

- Mother:** Oh, now you know why she said no. Can you think of a way you could ask her so she would let you look at the book?
- Jay:** Well, I could threaten her and tell her I won't play with her until she gives me the book. (Solution No. 1)
- Mother:** Well, you could do that. What do you think would happen if you did that?
- Jay:** Well, she might not play with me and might not be my friend. (Consequence)
- Mother:** Well, that's probably true, do you want her to be your friend? (Evaluating consequence)
- Jay:** Yes.
- Mother:** Well, can you think of a way that you could ask her so she would still be your friend?
- Jay:** Well, I could offer to trade her one of my books for one of her books. (Solution No. 2)
- Mother:** That's a good idea. I wonder what would happen if you did that? (Consequence)



## **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. What makes this mother's approach effective?
2. How could she have made her problem clarification less threatening?
3. Why is it important to help children understand the point of view of another child?
4. How does the mother help her son to evaluate the consequence of threats?
5. How does the mother leave the conversation open for further discussion?

## **Considerations**

This mother uses many effective problem-solving strategies. She clarifies the problem and her son's point of view and feelings, she encourages him to understand his sister's point of view by getting more information, she helps him think of several possible solutions and consequences, and supports his decision to try one approach.

Notice how the mother does not lecture or offer advice on the pros and cons of hitting, but instead helps him think of his sister's feelings.

# Family Meeting About Household Chores

## Narration

In the next vignette we see a father having a meeting with his two sons about their chores. Watch how he brings up the problem and invites their solutions.

## Vignette 4A

**THE SCENE:** Dad talks to his two children (aged 11 and 15 years) about their chores.

**Father:** Let's review the whole chore thing that you've been all working on. We've got a lot on here and you've both been doing great at getting your clothes picked up and your towels hung up and your homework done and so I am really proud of you guys for doing that, but there is in terms of getting Ranger fed and Chance fed, mom said sometimes she wasn't sure whether they had been fed or not so my guess is that you guys are being a little bit inconsistent with that and so we really need for you all to honor your commitment to this to get them fed in the morning before you head off to school because otherwise we don't want to feed them twice. Otherwise then it's not any fun if you miss breakfast so shall we talk about what we could do to help you all remember how to do that? Maybe you guys can remind each other or what do you think?

**Coulter:** Well I think that like if these were a little bit like where we would see them a little bit more...

**Father:** Yup okay.

**Coulter:** We could humm—this would remind us a little bit more.

**Father:** So that's an idea so maybe we could post the chore chart on the fridge because you're going to go into the fridge to get milk for breakfast and what not and so you guys are alternative right? You feed Chance one morning and you feed Ranger that morning and the next morning you switch?

**Pedro:** Yup.

**Coulter:** Okay.



## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What is effective about the way the father starts out the meeting?
2. How does he introduce the problem he is concerned about?
3. How does he involve them in the solution?



## Towels

### Narration

One of the ways that this father assures successful problem solving is the way he brings up the problem in a non blaming way and then invites his children to come up with solutions to the problem. Let's watch how he does that and what makes his approach particularly effective.



### Vignette 4B

**THE SCENE:** Father brings up the problem of Coulter's green wet towel on the floor and how their mother is unhappy about that.

**Father:** For you Mr. Coulter hmm—what was the one that mom was telling me she didn't think was happening consistently hmm—are you getting your towel hung up after you take your shower at night? Mom says—you know she would be here if she could but she had to work today but she's been telling me that she's coming home from working late at night and there's the green wet towel on the floor and I think the green one's yours isn't it?

**Coulter:** Yeah.

**Father:** Okay what can we do to help you get that—she doesn't want to nag you guys and I know you all want to earn the money for the allowance so I want to help you be successful.

**Coulter:** Well if we could have like something that's a little bit easier to put on .

**Father:** So you don't like having to fold it up and hang it on the thing?

**Coulter:** No I'd rather have an actual towel hanger so we could actually put our towel on it.

**Father:** Hanging on a hook?

**Coulter:** Yes.

**Father:** Okay how about—well that seems reasonable. I bet we can get one of these hooks that you can hang on the back of your door in your room and that way you can hang your towel up in your room and you know it's yours and it will be dry the next day. Do you want one of those too Pedro? You're pretty good at getting your towel hung up.

**Pedro:** No I'm fine.

**Father:** You're fine you can handle folding it and what not? Okay.

**Pedro:** To tell the truth I just kind of throw it over the top of where the curtain is to block the bathtub and shower. I just kind of throw it over that and spread it out.

- Father:** Yeah that's where I put my towel too, yours is the other one up there. Okay that's great, like I said I'm really impressed with how hard you are working in school and that is definitely your priority and taking care of the critters just because you know they are dependent upon us and I think it makes sense we have to fine tune this every couple of weeks. That is just the way things work so good work okay so then have you guys fed the dogs yet this morning?
- Coulter:** No I haven't.
- Pedro:** I've fed Ranger.
- Father:** Okay do you want to feed Chance?
- Coulter:** Okay.
- Father:** Okay bud if you have fed Ranger then you are done, you are off the hook.

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What was effective about the father's approach?
2. How does the father present the problem in a non-blaming fashion?
3. How does the father set a collaborative tone?
4. Why is this solution likely to work?
5. Would you talk to them about the consequences of not doing their chores?



## Considerations

This father stays very positive during the problem solving process pointing out what his sons do well. After defining the problem he asks them for feedback on solving the problem. Then he praises their ideas. He is respectful and collaborative. With this approach he is more likely to have a successful solution. The father might talk about consequences for not doing their chores—such as loss of allowance or wait to discuss that at a follow up meeting.

## Starting a Family Meeting

### Narration

The father we just saw was effective at bringing up a problem with his children in a non blaming way. He started his meetings by being positive about his children's successes and by inviting their input in order to solve the problems. He acknowledges their point of view and praises their ideas to solve the problem. Finally he summarizes a clear plan and arranges a system to monitor that the plan is followed through upon.

This looks easier to do than it might seem—especially when your children are less cooperative than the boys we just saw. In the next vignette we will see two parents who have already met privately to problem solve some ways they can help their 12 year old daughter get ready for school in mornings without so much fighting and defiance. Next they have planned a family problem solving meeting to discuss with their daughter the morning routine problem. First let's watch how they bring up the problem and think about how you might present a problem for discussion.



### Vignette 5A

**THE SCENE:** Mother and father are meeting with their 12-year-old daughter to discuss a morning routine problem.

**Father:** Do I get to bring it up? Or do you want to?

**Mother:** You can start.

**Father:** Okay, so Sophie we want to talk to you about a problem that I think we are all having and I think if we can figure out some solutions to this problem—if we can solve some of these problems it will make things better for all of us. And the problem which I think you know is getting ready for school in the mornings.

**Sophie:** I don't think it is a problem.

**Father:** Well Sophie it is a problem, this morning you were yelling at both me and Mommy and you were not ready for school on time.

**Sophie:** Yes I was. I think I made it to school just fine, time to spare in fact.



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How does the father do at introducing the problem?
2. How would you handle Sophie's denial of the problem?
3. What would you say next?

### Considerations

This father starts out with a positive presentation of the problem and rather than blaming Sophie as the cause of the problem he frames it as a problem the whole family is having. This is an effective way of presenting the problem by taking some of the responsibility for the problem himself. However, his daughter is unwilling to acknowledge the problem. This is a common occurrence for children who want to assert their independence and parents will need help knowing how to respond to this denial without becoming blaming or angry.



## Defining the Problem

### Narration

Bringing up a problem to children this age is tricky because adolescents are striving for independence and want to express their individuality. Especially if they feel blamed, they will react by resisting or challenging parental authority—and even denying there is a problem. Let's watch how these parents try to help their daughter understand there is a problem. As you watch this think about how you might invite Sophie's input regarding the problem.

### Vignette 5B

**Mother:** Sophie often you are able to get out of the door on time for school because I have packed your back pack for you.

**Sophie:** And I thank you for that.

**Mother:** And also I think it's your responsibility to pack your own backpack. The second problem is that you are usually eating breakfast in the car.

**Sophie:** I don't see a problem with that.

**Mother:** Generally speaking it's not a big problem, I don't think it is a big deal but I think an ideal situation would be for you to start finishing your breakfast in the house and going and brushing your teeth.

**Sophie:** Actually I've thought of that too. It's so hard to get up though.

**Father:** Well you can get up.

**Sophie:** No I can't! I hate getting up.

**Father:** You get up for things that are important to you. You got up the other morning at 3 am and did homework because you were behind. If you can get up at 3 am to do homework... we are only asking you to get up maybe 10 or 15 minutes earlier than you currently get up and you can do that. And I think—well first of all you need to accept—I want you to accept the responsibility that you have a duty to be ready for school on time.

**Sophie:** And I am!

**Father:** Yes but it is often frantic and like Mommy said a lot of times she has to do stuff for you.

**Sophie:** And I thank her for it.

**Mother:** Right but you're getting older and you have got to do everything for yourself.



**Father:** And you need to get in the habit of eating before you leave because Mommy isn't the one who drives, I understand that she drives almost all the time but sometimes she doesn't and you can't bring food into other people's cars. And it's not okay for you to just skip breakfast on those mornings because you can't eat in other people's cars. And say next year or the year after the car pool arrangement could change maybe Mommy will be driving one-fourth of the time. And these are good things to learn. I would hope you could agree that you have an important responsibility to be ready on time without people being yelled at, without you crying, without things just being—things could just be positive and relaxed in the mornings.

**Sophie:** But I'm already tired in the morning, you know how grumpy I get in the morning. I don't see why I have to get up earlier.

**Father:** Well the mornings can be hard for everybody.

**Sophie:** School should start later.

**Father:** The mornings can be hard for everybody. But it's not okay to just take that out on other people right?

**Mother:** We can't make school change.

**Sophie:** You can try.

**Mother:** Well that's a different issue, we cannot tell them Sophie can't get up so she's not coming to school until two hours later. We cannot do that.

**Sophie:** Well I was only talking about 20 minutes.

**Father:** So let's work on what we can work on.



## **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. What trap does the father fall into?
2. How could he define the problem more simply and clearly?
3. How could she be involved in defining the problem?

## ***Considerations***

The mother starts out by commenting positively on times Sophie is ready on time. However, father gets bogged down with providing lots of reasons why this is a problem and trying to convince Sophie of the problem and her need to be more responsible. Then he argues with her whether she can or can't get up in the mornings. It would have been more effective if he could ask her what she sees as the difficulty getting ready on time in the morning. For example, explore why she is so tired in the mornings. Mother could ask her how she can get everything done on time including making her own lunch. Instead the parents present their own solution (get up earlier) before getting Sophie's input into the nature of the problem or her ideas about solving the problem. By inviting the child to come up with some solutions there is a higher likelihood that the child will buy into the plan.

## Solution #1

### Narration

While these parents have attempted to help their daughter recognize that she has a problem they have ended up arguing with her about it and she has responded by digging in her heels to defend her position. Remember the principles of defining the problem is to state the problem simply, in a non judgemental or non blaming way, to use “I statements” and to avoid arguments. For example the parent might say, “ I want the mornings to go more calmly for all of us—with the goal of having everything and everyone ready by 7:20. Let’s see how we can accomplish this.” Think about stating what you want rather than what you don’t want.

Now let’s watch as the parents discuss their first solution to the problem. Think about what else you would do in this discussion.

### Vignette 5C



- THE SCENE:** Mother says there are strategies that they have thought of that they think would be helpful.
- Mother:** So there are some strategies that Mommy and Daddy thought of that we think would be very helpful. The first one is that you commit to getting up 45 minutes before we need to leave.
- Sophie:** No, nope.
- Father:** What time do you have to be out the door?
- Sophie:** We have to be out the door by 7:20.
- Father:** 7:20, so we would be asking you to get up at 6:35.
- Sophie:** No.
- Father:** How about this, we start with that and if after a week or two you demonstrate that you could have 5 or 10 minutes extra to sleep then that could be a reward.
- Sophie:** I don’t see why I have to get up that early.
- Father:** Maybe you don’t need that much time, well you need to show us.
- Sophie:** Why should I? I don’t need extra time in the morning.
- Father:** Let’s see if that really is the case.
- Mother:** Well I’m not going to just sit here and let you argue with us back and forth about whether you really need to get up at that time. I think Daddy’s right. I think we should try it out and after two weeks if you show...
- Sophie:** Two! He said one.
- Father:** I said one or two.
- Mother:** All right, fine.
- Sophie:** I didn’t hear two.
- Mother:** How about if we compromise in 10 days—a week and a half.
- Father:** School days.

**Mother:** That is not helpful. If you can show us that you can be ready on time by 7:20 then we can see if you can have five or ten more minutes of sleep.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. Do you think you would give in to her request to sleep in more?
2. How can they get Sophie to solve the problem?
3. What about the strategy of Sophie earning the privilege of sleeping in more when she has shown she can be ready on time?

### ***Considerations***

These parents get trapped into responding to Sophie's arguments about the time limit they have set. However, they stick to the time limit they have decided and let her know that they will revisit this when they see that she can be ready on time. It might have been more prudent to ask Sophie how much time she thought she needed to get ready in the morning first.

## Solution #2

### Narration

While the parents have decided themselves what amount of time they think their daughter needs to be ready in the morning, they have not invited her ideas about what time she thinks she needs to be ready. By involving children in the decision making and in generating solutions they will be more likely to buy into the plan. Let's see how she reacts to their second solution and think about how you might have presented this idea.

### Vignette 5D

**THE SCENE:** Mother brings up the second solution they have thought of that would be helpful.

**Mother:** The second strategy that we thought of that would be really helpful is to pack your backpack the night before.

**Sophie:** I do that.

**Mother:** Not every day Sophie.

**Sophie:** Most days I do.

**Mother:** Well that's debatable and now I think it would be a good idea for us before you go to bed that one of us will say, "Sophie is your backpack packed?" And we'll come in the living room by the door and see that it is there packed.

**Sophie:** But some days I do a little bit of homework in the mornings.

**Mother:** Right so we will make an exception on those days. We'd like you to try not to have homework to do in the mornings but that is a different issue. So we're not talking about that now but that doesn't happen frequently enough to have it be a consideration, okay?



### Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How does mother present the solution?
2. How does she avoid getting side tracked?
3. Is this extra monitoring the backpack important to her success?



### Considerations

Recognizing that getting her back pack ready in the morning is time consuming they think ahead to help Sophie prepare the night before. Help the parents to think about how they might set up a routine in the evening where she prepares everything (lunch, back pack, homework, clothing decided etc.) for the next morning. Help them think about how they could set up a chart for the child that helps them remember the tasks but doesn't necessarily involve a lot of parental reminders and nagging. (For example a chart on the refrigerator with magnets where Sophie can move the magnet when each task is completed.) Help parents think about whether an evening reinforcement chart might be a good idea to get this habit established.

## Solution #3

### Narration

Recognizing efforts your children do make is important to getting their cooperation. In this case since there are times Sophie does get her backpack ready it is important to praise and acknowledge this effort. Now let's look at their third solution and think about how you might get Sophie's cooperation.



### Vignette 5E

**THE SCENE:** Mother brings up the third solution that she is to be dressed and ready to eat breakfast by 5 to 7.

**Mother:** The third thing that we thought of was for you to be dressed and ready to eat breakfast by 5 to 7, and dressed means your shoes are on and your hair is fixed.

**Sophie:** Wait a minute, wait a minute by 5 to 7. It doesn't take me 25 minutes to eat breakfast.

**Mother:** By 5 to 7.

**Sophie:** That is ridiculous!

**Mother:** The reason why I think that is a good time for you to be down here is because I think that's enough time for you to have breakfast without being rushed and then you can go upstairs and brush your teeth and come back down and put your coat and backpack on and all of that.

**Sophie:** I think 7 o'clock is reasonable not 5 to 7.

**Father:** Well let's start with 5 to 7.

**Sophie:** (whines) Oh it's too early.

**Father:** Well Sophie you know how often you don't drink your vitamin drink in the morning and we end up throwing that away or it gets stuck in the fridge.

**Sophie:** I'll drink it in the afternoon. Don't throw it away.

**Father:** Yes but the idea is... well sometimes it does get thrown away...

**Mother:** It would be better if you drank it in the morning and then you would have one in the afternoon sometimes too, an additional one.

**Father:** The idea is to do these things in the morning so it is semi-relaxed and you are not upset because you're in a rush or people are rushing you.

**Sophie:** I don't get upset when I'm in a rush.

**Father:** Sophie we're going to start with these times and...

**Mother:** I don't think that's true.

**Father:** And if you can demonstrate that you don't need this much time then that could be a reward. If you really show that you can do all those things by being down here at 7 then we could switch to

that. But it also builds a little bit of leeway into the schedule if you realize at ten minutes after seven that you don't know where your shoes are or don't know where your hair scrunchy is then there is time to deal with it.

**Sophie:** But it says on there I have to have my hair tidy.

**Father:** Right, and ideally you will. So let's start with these times, okay?"

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How does mother present the third solution?
2. How does she avoid getting side tracked?
3. How does Sophie side track her parents?
4. Why was it important that both parents be united in their decision regarding the time she comes downstairs?



## Setting Up Positive Consequences

### Narration

Once family members have agreed to the solutions to the problem then the next task is to outline how the solutions will be monitored or supervised. In this case these parents introduce the idea of a positive incentive to encourage Sophie's cooperation. Think about how you would respond to her response.

### Vignette 5F

**Father:** If you meet these things, if you do get up 45 minutes before you are supposed to leave then we are going to have a sticker program. Okay?

**Sophie:** Ah, not sticker program, no I'm not doing a sticker program.

**Father:** Well, okay...

**Sophie:** (gets up and leaves the room)



## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What would you do next?
2. How would you make a program more motivating?



## Considerations

It is natural for children this age to resist the idea of a chart. Perhaps they think it is something that just little children do and they have grown beyond that. However, when they realize they can earn something they want that often changes their attitude. The trick is to find something that will be motivating to the child.



**Vignette 5F continues**

- Mother:** Okay we are not going to call it a sticker program.
- Sophie:** I am not doing a sticker program!
- Mother:** It's not stickers it's points.
- Sophie:** I'm not doing a point program.
- Mother:** So that means you don't want any reward for doing what we say you want only to have consequences for not doing what we say? How do you propose that we come up with the rewards then if you won't agree to having a point system. I don't think you are too old to have a point system.
- Sophie:** Yes I am.
- Father:** No one is too old to have a point system.
- Mother:** I had Daddy on the point system for doing the dishes.
- Sophie:** I'll go on on a point system if you put Adrian on a point program for doing his homework.
- Mother:** You cannot dictate something for another child in the family.
- Sophie:** Come on!
- Mother:** No Sophie it is not up to you to say what we should do with our other child.
- Sophie:** I want Adrian to have a sticker program too.
- Father:** This isn't about Adrian.
- Sophie:** Can we get smiley face stickers for Adrian?
- Father:** This isn't about Adrian, everybody has in some way or another incentives and reward programs and that's really all this is. Okay the points or stickers is just a way of keeping track.
- Sophie:** Okay but no stickers.
- Father:** If you don't want to have stickers we don't have to have stickers, they can be little hash marks on a piece of paper. I don't think that that really matters. But we do want a way to keep track so we can reward you when you have done all these things that you will agree to do.
- Sophie:** Okay.



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## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. What do you think of the mother's response to Sophie's request that her brother be on a program as well as herself?
2. How effective are their explanations regarding the point program?
3. Why is their compromise important with this age group?



## Considerations

Sophie tries to negotiate that she will only go on a reward program if her older brother is on a program too. The mother effectively sets a limit on this and lets her daughter know that she is the parent and in charge of who is put on a sticker program not her daughter. It is important when setting up these systems that you get children's input into the program but it is also important that parents set clear limits on determining the rewards and what is within their budget constraints.

## Setting Up a Reward System

### Narration

It is not unusual for children to resist incentive programs at first—until they begin to see if there is anything beneficial in it for them. Now let's watch how these parents discuss their incentive system with her.



### Vignette 5G

- Mother:** So one of the rewards that we thought of was to go on a trip shopping for a book that you might like.
- Sophie:** It's called a library.
- Father:** What are the cat books—Warrior books? You don't want any of those in hard bound?
- Sophie:** No.
- Mother:** There's no books that you can think of that you might like to have for yourself?
- Sophie:** I can.
- Mother:** Well all right if that's not going to be motivating for you...
- Father:** I don't want to encourage you to want to own books instead of checking them out of the library so that's fine.
- Sophie:** I guess that would be okay, I mean...
- Father:** Well we can maybe find something that you would really enjoy.
- Sophie:** Don't let it be one of the bigger rewards, I mean it's just—well it mean the world to me to be able to... well I guess it would be more effective to me if it was one of the lower points thingies—whatever.
- Mother:** So you think there should be some reward on here that is some big thing.
- Sophie:** Well bigger.
- Mother:** Like what?
- Sophie:** I don't know maybe we could talk about maybe you paying part of the trip to France from eighth grade or something like that.
- Mother:** No, No, first of all, no, you are not necessarily going on that trip for sure. Second of all, that's a lot. Third of all, this is to try to teach you good habits it's not for you to get big huge monetary things out of Mommy and Daddy.
- Sophie:** I'm not asking for it the whole time I'm just...
- Mother:** That's hundreds of dollars, we're talking about something that would motivate you to learn...
- Sophie:** Why would it motivate me?
- Mother:** ...to learn these good habits.

- Father:** It's kind of a distant reward, we are trying to think of something that is a little more immediate. We had in mind if you earned 30 points...
- Sophie:** Well how many points are we talking about earning in a day?
- Father:** Well you could get three points per day.
- Sophie:** Well what are the three points for?
- Father:** Well like I was saying a minute ago...
- Sophie:** Is it like three or nothing or is it?
- Father:** No, up to three.
- Mother:** One for getting up 45 minutes before we have to leave.
- Sophie:** (whines)
- Mother:** One for having your backpack packed the night before and one for being dressed and ready to go at five to seven.
- Father:** So if you got 30 points—3 points a day for two weeks of school then we wanted to think of a reward that you would get with that 30 points.

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How effective is the mother's limit setting regarding the rewards she will work for?
2. How does the father make the program clear?
3. How do these two parents work together effectively?
4. What incentives do think will motivate your child?



## Buzz

Pair up parents to share with each other some things they think might be reinforcing to their children.



## Considerations

Here we see the same pattern of Sophie trying to argue her way into a bigger reward. The good news is she is motivated by the idea of earning some extra privilege. The parents then have to set clear limits on what is acceptable. They make it clear that going to France is not one of the options!

## Determining the Value of Rewards

### Narration

The key to setting up a successful reward system is to find out what is reinforcing for your child. While these parents have some ideas they are discovering some of the things they thought were motivating are not so motivating any more—or at least she wants to express some control over what she works for. It is important to invite her input and ideas about what she can include on her list—even though parents will eventually determine if it is too costly. Watch as the parents try to get more ideas from her how her attitude begins to change.



### Vignette 5H

**Father:** I thought you would like some of those Warrior books but if you...

**Sophie:** Well maybe I don't know, they're not really like really important books to me, there just kind of entertaining reading.

**Father:** Okay well let's think of something else. I'm not trying to encourage you to...

**Sophie:** I can think of books I'd like to own.

**Father:** Really?

**Sophie:** Yeah.

**Father:** Like?

**Sophie:** Well maybe I can't think of them on the top of my head but like I could make a list or something. But there are books I would like to own.

**Father:** Okay what about a fish?

**Mother:** For your aquarium.

**Sophie:** Well I'd have to do a lot of research before I'd do that.

**Mother:** That would be fine you could do research during the ten days when you are supposed to be coming up with your...

**Sophie:** That would be cool.

**Mother:** Okay fish for the aquarium. (she writes it down)

**Father:** Can you think of any others? I'm glad that there aren't all kinds of things that you want.

**Mother:** Do you like the idea of going shopping for clothes?

**Sophie:** Oh yeah, I like shopping for other things too.

**Father:** Like?

**Sophie:** Like, I don't know. Like other things, just not clothes.

**Father:** We were thinking that could maybe be a bigger milestone.

**Sophie:** Huh.

**Mother:** Like 60 points. It has to be for some specific thing, you can't just drag Daddy out to the mall or make him walk around downtown for a couple hours with no goal.

**Sophie:** Can I bring a friend?

- Father:** Yeah I think so as long as like Mommy is saying it wouldn't be just to traipse around stores for hours on end but for a specific place for a specific amount of time.
- Sophie:** Alright, I can deal with that.
- Father:** What about ice skating?
- Sophie:** That would be fun.
- Mother:** Do we have a certain number of points we would attach to ice skating?
- Sophie:** I don't know.
- Mother:** We could have it also be 60 and if you got 60 points you could choose between those two things. Would that be good?
- Sophie:** Yeah.
- Mother:** Okay. (writes it down)

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. How are they beginning to get her involvement in this plan?
2. Do you think 60 points is too many?
3. Why is father's compromise around bringing a friend important?
4. What other things might you put on a reward menu that might work with this age group?
5. How long do you think it should take to earn a reward? Is 2 weeks too long? Too short?



## Considerations

It may take some time and further discussion to come up with a reward menu that Sophie is motivated by. Some of her initial opposition may be just her desire to exert control—so parents need to understand that some items may actually be more reinforcing than children may let on at first. It can be helpful to have items on the list that can be traded in every 2–3 days for children ages 6–8 while older children ages 10–12 years may be able to wait 1–2 weeks or even longer for a bigger reward. Therefore reward menus may include lower cost items that require fewer points such as extra computer time or choosing favorite dessert versus higher costs items such as renting a DVD or having a friend overnight or purchasing a book.

## Setting Up Negative Consequences

### Narration

These parents are good about defining and setting clear limits regarding the scope of their reward program. They work out how long it might take for her to earn something—of course getting 30 points in 10 days means perfect attendance so it will be important to set up realistic expectations. Next the parents talk about what the consequences will be if she doesn't adhere to the plan. Think about the effect of this approach.



### Vignette 5I

**Mother:** So if we have some problems and you don't do this, then we are going to have some immediate consequences for that day. One is that you can't watch TV all the entire day and the other one is that you cannot instant message your friends at all that entire day.

**Sophie:** Okay.

**Mother:** So do you agree to this whole plan?

**Sophie:** Is it one or the other or both?

**Father:** It's both. Actually I thought there was a third one as well. No I guess that is it.

**Mother:** I think that's the only one. So do you agree to this plan Sophie? Do you think this will be something that will work for us and keep us from having fights in the morning? Are you willing to give it a try?

**Sophie:** Yes.

**Mother:** Good.

**Sophie:** I suggest we do a two-week test run.

**Mother:** Two week test run?

**Father:** What do you mean by a two-week test run?

**Sophie:** Try it out and then we could discuss it a bit more and then if we want to change something we can—I would agree with that.

**Mother:** Okay that is great, that makes me very happy.

**Sophie:** Okay.

**Mother:** Do you have any questions? Do you want to say anything or talk about anything?

**Sophie:** No.

**Mother:** No comments at all.

**Father:** Don't you think it would be nice to not fight in the morning?

**Sophie:** I don't know.

**Mother:** You like to fight?

**Sophie:** No.

**Father:** Are you sure about that?

**Mother:** (laughs and kisses her.)

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why is it necessary to have a negative consequence as well as a positive consequence?
2. Do you think they should take away both TV and instant messaging at the same time if she isn't ready on time one morning?
3. What are some negative consequences that might work with your child? What about work chores as negative consequences?



## Considerations

Help parents understand that it is only necessary to have one brief consequence (such as losing TV for one night) for not being ready on time. Adding on more negative consequences or longer negative consequences will not make the discipline more effective—in fact, it might do the opposite because the child may become resentful about the unfairness of the consequence. Short, brief consequences with new opportunities to be successful are most effective. Logical consequences can be particularly effective. For example, for every minute the child is late for school or keeps the parent waiting is a minute of extra chores or a minute of loss of TV or computer time.

## Buzz

Pair up buddies to talk about 2–3 possible negative consequences that work with their children. (e.g., loss of bike for one evening, no TV or computer one night, no phone privileges, work chore such as cleaning up back yard etc.)



## Rules about Computer Time

### Narration

In the next vignette the father sets up a meeting to talk about a problem that has been occurring with the amount of time his son is spending on the computer. Watch first to see how he sets up this meeting.



### Vignette 6

**THE SCENE:** The two brothers are playing a computer game. Father goes over to talk with his older son.

**Father:** What are you playing?

**Pedro:** Just this really fun game I found.

**Father:** Territory War or whatever it is? Well listen I want to talk to you about computer time and all that sort of thing and so it looks like you are in the middle of a complicated...

**Pedro:** Endeavor.

**Father:** Endeavor, nice word, I like that one. How about in the next 15 or 20 minutes you find a place where you can pause it and not lose all your battles and what not—I think I probably want to talk in about 15 minutes. Okay? So give me a holler, don't wait for me to come to you. I want you to pick when you want to pause it. Give me a holler. Thanks Pedro.

**Pedro:** No problem.

#### PAUSE FOR DISCUSSION

**Pedro:** Okay I'm ready Dad.

**Father:** Are you? Great thanks for remembering.

**Pedro:** No problem.

**Father:** 25 minutes, you made it by 5 minutes, good job! So here's the deal you know I've been a little worried that I've noticed on the weekends you're playing the video games a lot—like 10–12 hours a day. You know we talked before about the responsibility that comes with having the privilege of doing it? And I know it is a really, really great game and so your mom and I were thinking that we're probably going to want to set a specific time limit for how much you do that. Because it's the World of Warcraft game isn't it?

**Pedro:** Yup.

**Father:** So before we get into the whole time limit piece why don't you tell me a little bit about what's going on here in this battle?

**Pedro:** Well this is what we call a raid where me and a bunch of friends kind of get together and all of us are at the highest level we can be so we get together and we fight the strongest guys that the game has to offer. The reason why it takes a really long time is because we need to get around 20 or 40 guys to go and take down these guys.

**Father:** It makes sense it takes a long time to do it.



---

## Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Why was it important that the father schedule a meeting to talk about the computer problem?
2. What is effective about the way he introduces the problem?
3. Why is this approach more likely to lead to successful resolution or adherence to the rules?



## Considerations

This father does a great job of letting his son know he has a problem he needs to discuss but then letting his son have some time to continue his activity and then call him when he is ready to talk about the problem. This is very respectful approach and assures that his son will be able to listen. Then he shows interest in the activity and understanding about how hard it is to disengage from it or limit his time. He has skillfully set the stage for a productive discussion.

## Role-play

Role Play having a discussion with your child about the rules regarding TV or computer game time.



## ***Narration***

Next the father proposes daily limit on the amount of time on the computer and asks for his son's input. Think about his approach here.



### **Vignette continues**

**Father:** So if we limit it to... and you don't watch TV at all... so I think, Mom and I were talking and we thought two hours a day would be plenty once you get your homework done. Is that enough time?

**Pedro:** Yeah.

**Father:** On the weekends we could maybe negotiate more time I just don't want you doing it all day long just because we don't want you to stop seeing your friends and not want to go to soccer practice and that sort of thing. So does that seem reasonable? A couple of hours?

**Pedro:** Yeah that is reasonable.



### **Questions to Facilitate Discussion**

1. Could the father have been more collaborative in getting his son to generate some solutions? How?
2. Why might it be helpful to get Pedro to come up with the amount of computer time he thinks he should have each day?
3. What do you think about the incentive?
4. Why is writing up the contract important?

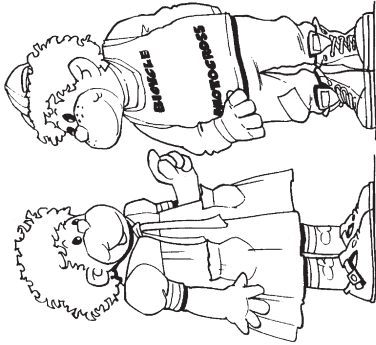
## ***Considerations***

In this case the father has decided on the bottom line in terms of how much computer time he thinks is enough on a daily basis. He does not ask for his son's input on the time limit but does ask him if he thinks it is reasonable. He helps him understand why he is concerned about it in terms of its effects on his friendships and sports. He also gives him the opportunity to earn more time on the computer on the weekends if he can adhere to the rules. It is effective to write up the agreement so that there is no ambiguity in the future about what was decided.



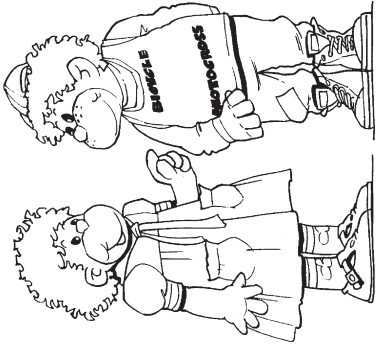
### ***Role Play/Practice***

Replay this scene with the parent inviting the son to come up with some solutions to the problem of too much computer time. Think about the pros and cons of setting the limit for the child versus letting the child have input into the decision.



**REFRIGERATOR NOTES  
ABOUT ACTIVE LISTENING**

- Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes and think about their point of view.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Allow the speaker to finish.
- Listen for the content and feelings of the speaker.
- Summarize and validate the speaker's feelings.
- Encourage the speaker to continue talking.
- Avoid "why" questions.



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**REFRIGERATOR NOTES  
ABOUT SPEAKING UP**



- Choose timing for speaking up—ask if listener has time.
- Be positive.
- Use “I” messages to explain feelings.
- Be clear and specific.
- Be “present” oriented (edit old complaints).
- Ask for feedback.
- Avoid too much negative speaking up—be brief and selective.
- Express positive feelings as well.

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- Express positive feelings as well.



## Brainstorm/Buzz–Positive Statements



Practice turning the following negative gripes or blaming statements into positive suggestions & “I” statements:



<u>Negative Gripe</u>	<u>Positive Suggestions</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. You rarely pay me a compliment.</li><li>2. You spend money without figuring out the balance.</li><li>3. You haven't cleaned the living room in 3 months.</li><li>4. You haven't taken the children to daycare in a year.</li><li>5. You don't ask for my opinion in parenting.</li><li>6. You don't help me prepare any meals.</li><li>7. At breakfast you bury your head in the newspaper.</li><li>8. You never throw out your beer cans (newspaper).</li><li>9. On Friday you didn't say anything about dinner, after I spent three hours preparing it.</li><li>10. You don't help the children with homework.</li><li>11. You make fun of Billy's opinions.</li><li>12. You keep saying “that's dumb” if you disagree with the children.</li><li>13. You don't do what I ask you to do.</li><li>14. You throw your food on the floor.</li><li>15. You eat with your fingers instead of your utensils.</li><li>16. You keep yelling and criticizing me.</li></ol>	<p>I would like you to compliment me once a day.</p>



## Brainstorm/Buzz–Practice Coping Thoughts

Practice turning the following negative and irrational thoughts into coping thoughts:



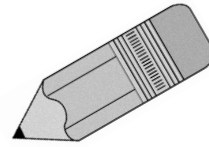
Negative Thoughts	Examples of Coping Thoughts
<p>"My child is a monster. This is ridiculous. He'll never change." (negative labeling)</p> <p>"He just married me to have a maid. Things are going to change or else!" (threats)</p> <p>"He's just like his father. I can't handle it when he's angry." (blame spouse)</p> <p>"She does it on purpose." (mind-reading)</p> <p>"I know he'll say no so I won't ask." (mind-reading)</p> <p>"He'll never outgrow it." (prophesize gloom)</p> <p>"She's driving me crazy, I can't stand it." (catastrophizing)</p> <p>"They should respect me." (shoulds and musts)</p> <p>"He deserves to be spanked." (desire for revenge)</p> <p>"I can't, it's my fault." (self-criticism)</p> <p>"She doesn't love me, forget it!" (give up, walk away)</p> <p>"People belonging to that organization are dishonest." (over-generalizing)</p> <p>"Well, he yelled, so I can, too." (rationalizing a mistake or lie)</p> <p>"It was nothing, anyone could have done that." (discounting positive)</p> <p>"I should not have done that..." (unrealistic expectations)</p> <p>"No one will see my skills, I'll never get a job." (exaggerating)</p>	<p>"My child is testing the limits, he's had a bad day. I can help him calm down."</p>

## Handout

### SELF-TALK IN PROBLEM SITUATIONS

Identify a problem situation and the upsetting thoughts you have at the time. Write down some alternative calming thoughts that you might use to redefine the situation. Next time you find yourself using negative self-talk, give yourself some time to think positively and consider the alternatives available to you for dealing with the situation.

**Problem Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Upsetting Thoughts**

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for writing upsetting thoughts. The box is positioned on the left side of the worksheet.

**Calming Thoughts**

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for writing calming thoughts. The box is positioned on the right side of the worksheet.

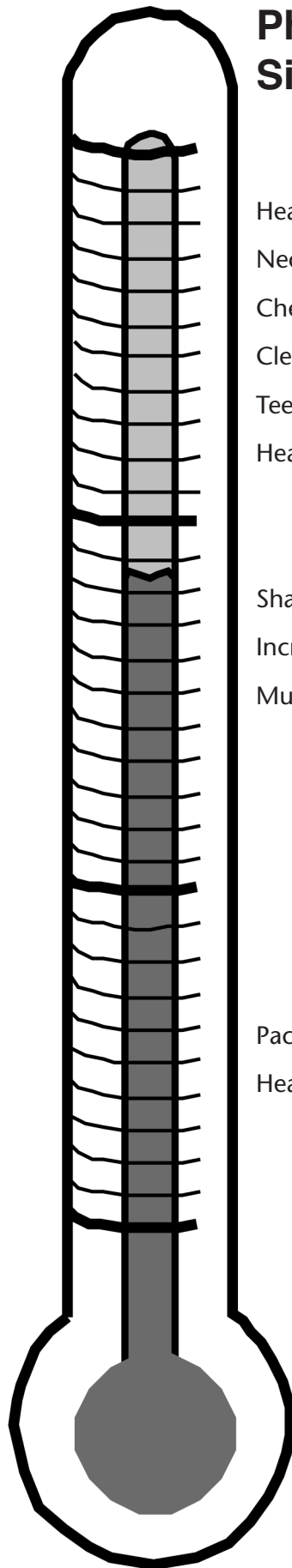
# Feelings

Furious  
Contemptuous  
Angry

Defensive  
Guilt  
Withdrawn  
Frustrated  
Depression

Irritated  
Anxious  
Worried

Alert/Interested  
Receptive/Open to  
Influence/Flexible  
Calm  
Happy  
Confident  
Content  
Loving/Affectionate



# Physiological Signs

Heart racing  
Neck muscles tight  
Chest Tight  
Clenched fists  
Teeth clenched  
Headache

Shallow rapid breathing  
Increased perspiration  
Muscles tense

Pacing  
Headache developing

# Behaviors

Yelling  
Hitting

Threatening  
Withdrawing  
Stonewalling  
Criticizing

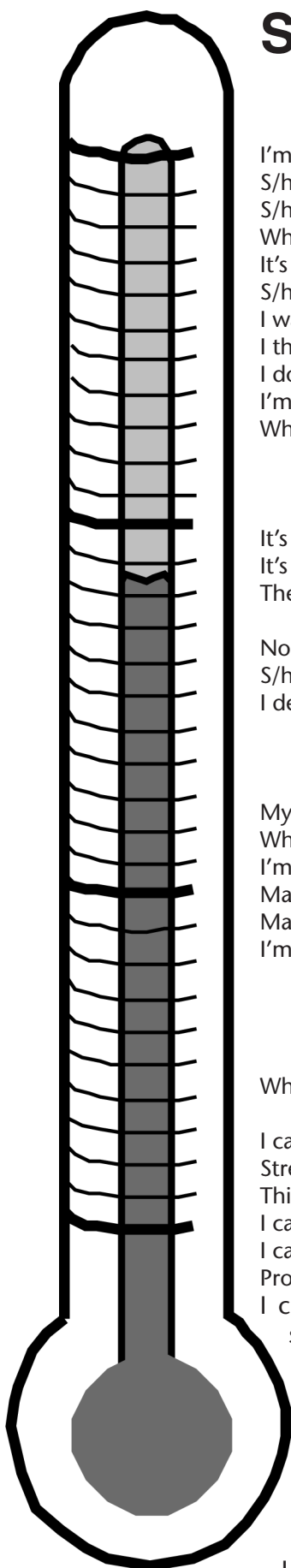
Difficulty listening  
Thinking narrow  
Less open to new ideas

Calm  
Pleasant  
Able to problem solve  
Able to listen



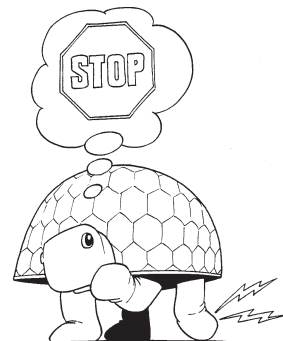
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- Receptive/Open to  
Influence/Flexible
- Calm
- Happy
- Confident
- Content
- Loving/Affectionate



# Self-Talk

I'm so mad I could hurt...  
 S/he deserves to be...  
 S/he is no good/rotten.  
 What did I do to deserve...  
 It's not my fault; it's his/hers.  
 S/he's just like...  
 I was never like this.  
 I think s/he'll end up in jail.  
 I don't have time to deal with this.  
 I'm a bad parent (partner). I'm hopeless  
 Why me? This is too stressful.



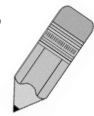
It's not working to stay calm.  
 It's useless...  
 There's no point in doing anything for him/her.  
 It never helps.  
 No matter what I do, nothing changes.  
 S/he just throws it back at me.  
 I deserve this for what I did when...

My parents told me I was...(a criticism)  
 What's going to happen when s/he's a teenager?  
 I'm getting stressed; I need to take a personal time out.  
 Maybe this is too much for me to handle.  
 Maybe I'm not a good parent/spouse.  
 I'm not sure I can do this.

When change occurs, it's supposed to get worse  
 before it gets better.  
 I can make a difference to our future.  
 Stress is a normal part of any relationship.  
 This stage won't last forever. Things will get better.  
 I can handle this; I can control my anger.  
 I can teach him to...  
 Problems occur so we can all learn to manage conflict.  
 I can talk to him about...and come up with some  
 solutions.  
 We'll manage; we all need learning trials.  
 Everyone makes mistakes.  
 I can help by...  
 His/her positive qualities are...  
 I'm a caring parent/partner because I'm trying by...  
 I stay calm most of the time.  
 I enjoy being with him/her, especially when we...  
 I love (appreciate)...



## Brainstorm/Buzz Staying Calm & Managing Anger

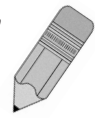


Rewrite the following negative self-talk with positive coping thoughts.



Negative Self-Talk	Positive Coping Thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can't stand this—it's too hard!</li><li>• I don't know what to do.</li><li>• Ignoring will never work.</li><li>• I am losing control and will explode soon.</li><li>• I am going to hit her just like my mom did to me.</li><li>• It's awful to let him disrespect me. It's not good to look weak in front of my child.</li><li>• I hate being disrespected.</li><li>• She will never change.</li><li>• I can't let him challenge my authority.</li><li>• He hurt me so I should hurt him.</li><li>• I don't like him when he's like this.</li></ul>	

# Brainstorm/Buzz Staying Calm & Managing Anger

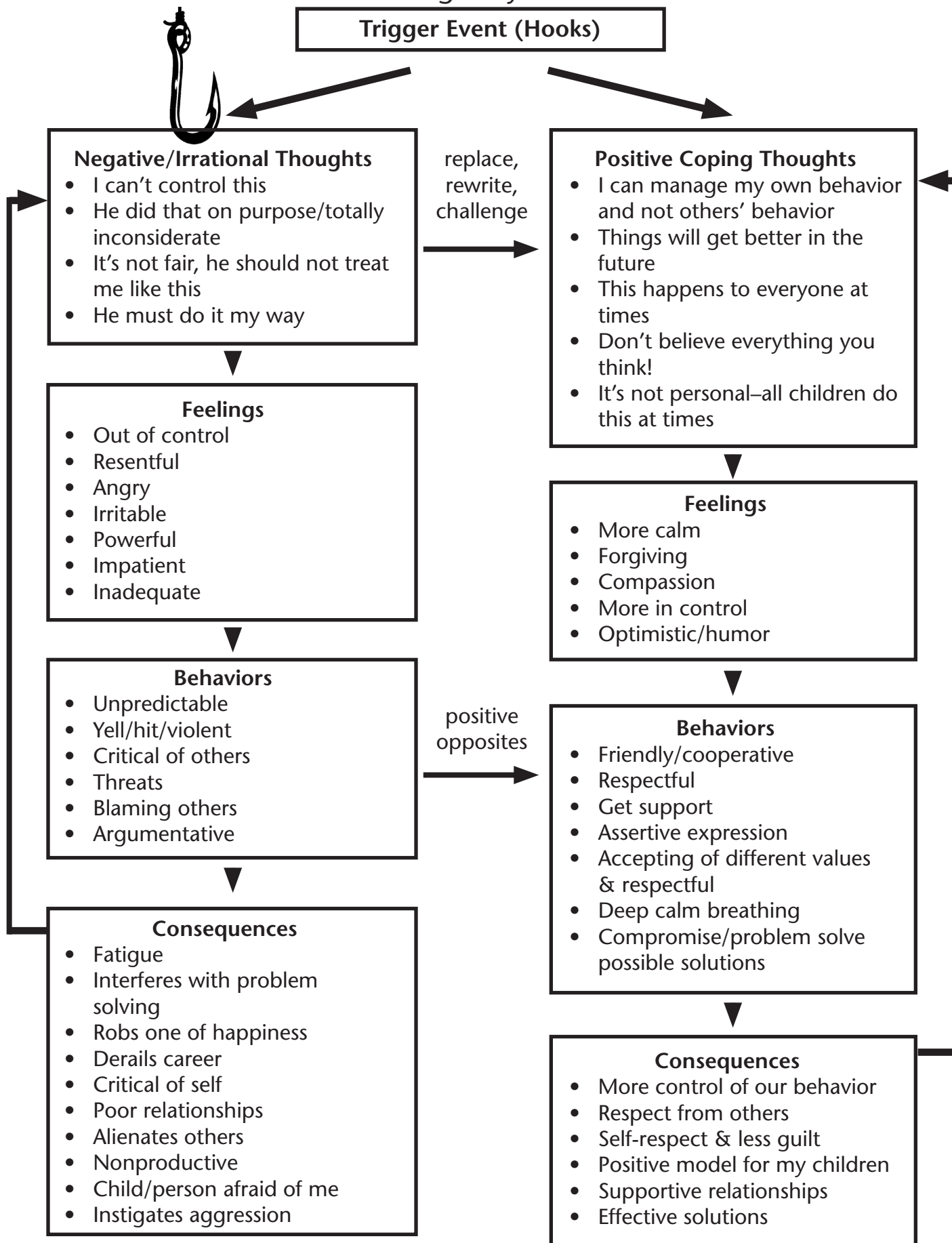


Continued, from previous page.



Negative Self-Talk	Positive Coping Thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The neighbors will complain if I don't get this stopped.</li><li>• She will never stop whining.</li><li>• A little more force on my part will stop her.</li><li>• That brat knows how much this bugs me—he's doing it on purpose.</li><li>• I'm an inept parent—should never have had children.</li><li>• I can't let her get away with that.</li><li>• It's all his dad's (or mom's) fault.</li></ul>	
<p><b><i>Goal: I will commit to stopping and challenging my negative self-talk and working on practicing using coping and positive self-talk as well as giving myself time to calm down.</i></b></p>	

# Anger Cycle



# Depression Cycle

## Trigger Event (Hooks)



### Negative/Irrational Thoughts

- I'm a failure/unworthy
- I'm unlovable
- She doesn't care about me
- Life is scary
- I can't handle this
- I should be a better parent

replace,  
rewrite,  
challenge

### Positive Coping Thoughts

- This is a learning opportunity
- I can cope with this
- Others care about me
- The world is exciting
- I was successful today at...
- No one is perfect

### Feelings

- Helpless
- Sad
- Lonely
- Anxious

### Feelings

- Confident
- Patient
- Peaceful
- Supported

### Behaviors

- Withdrawal from others
- Critical of others/suspicious
- No activities
- Poor self-care
- Sleep a lot

positive  
opposites

### Behaviors

- Praise & support others
- Do pleasurable activity/  
self-care
- Stay calm/optimistic
- Read happy thought journal
- Exercise

### Consequences

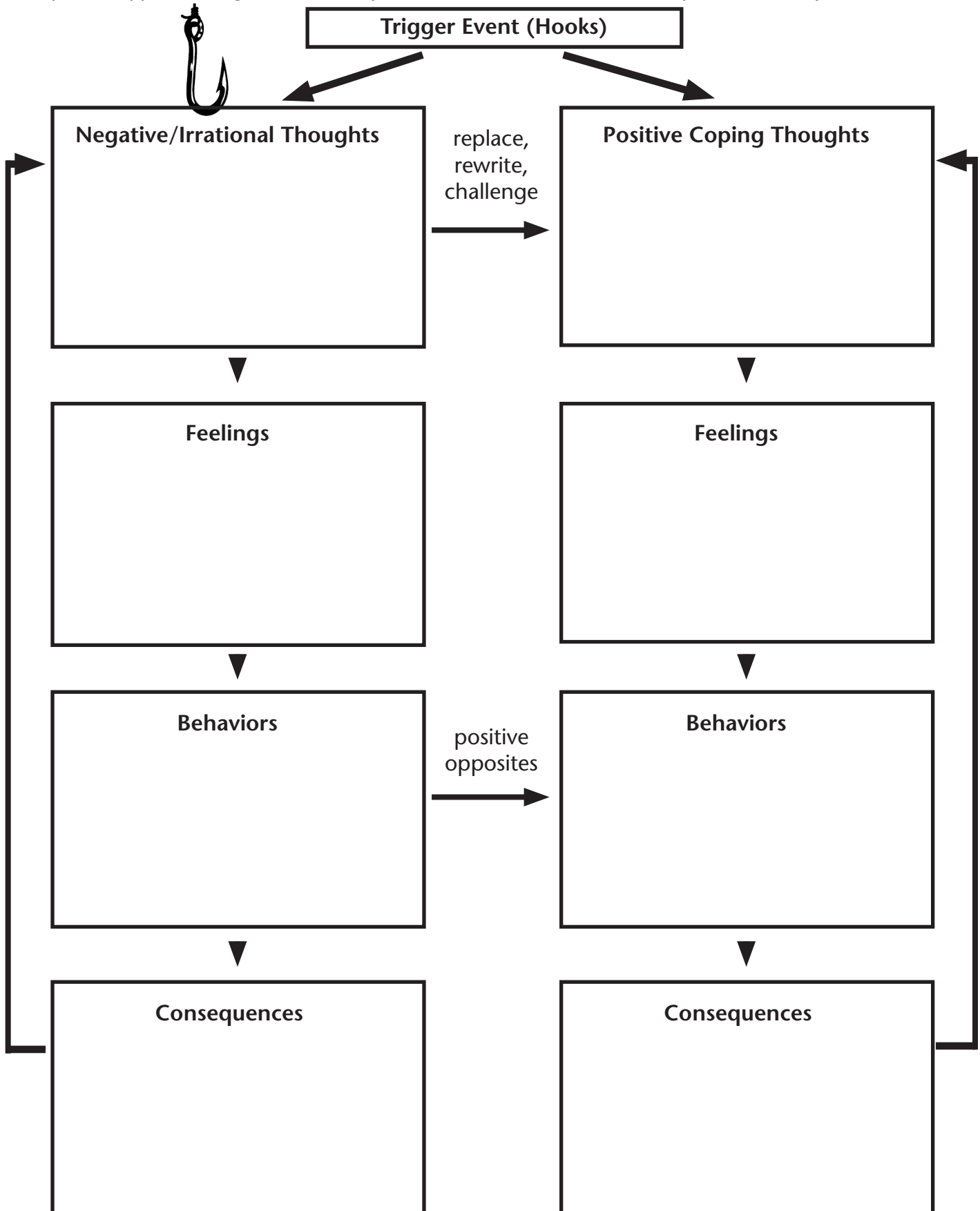
- Very few friends
- Isolated/rejected
- Problems with job
- Neglect children
- Lower self-esteem

### Consequences

- Make friends
- More success at job
- Able to attend to children/  
partner/friends
- Increased self-esteem

# Thought & Feeling Diary for Coping with a Difficult Situation

Identify situations or triggers that make your angry or depressed. Work on replacing irrational or negative thoughts with positive opposite thoughts. Remember you can't control what others do, but you can control your own behavior.



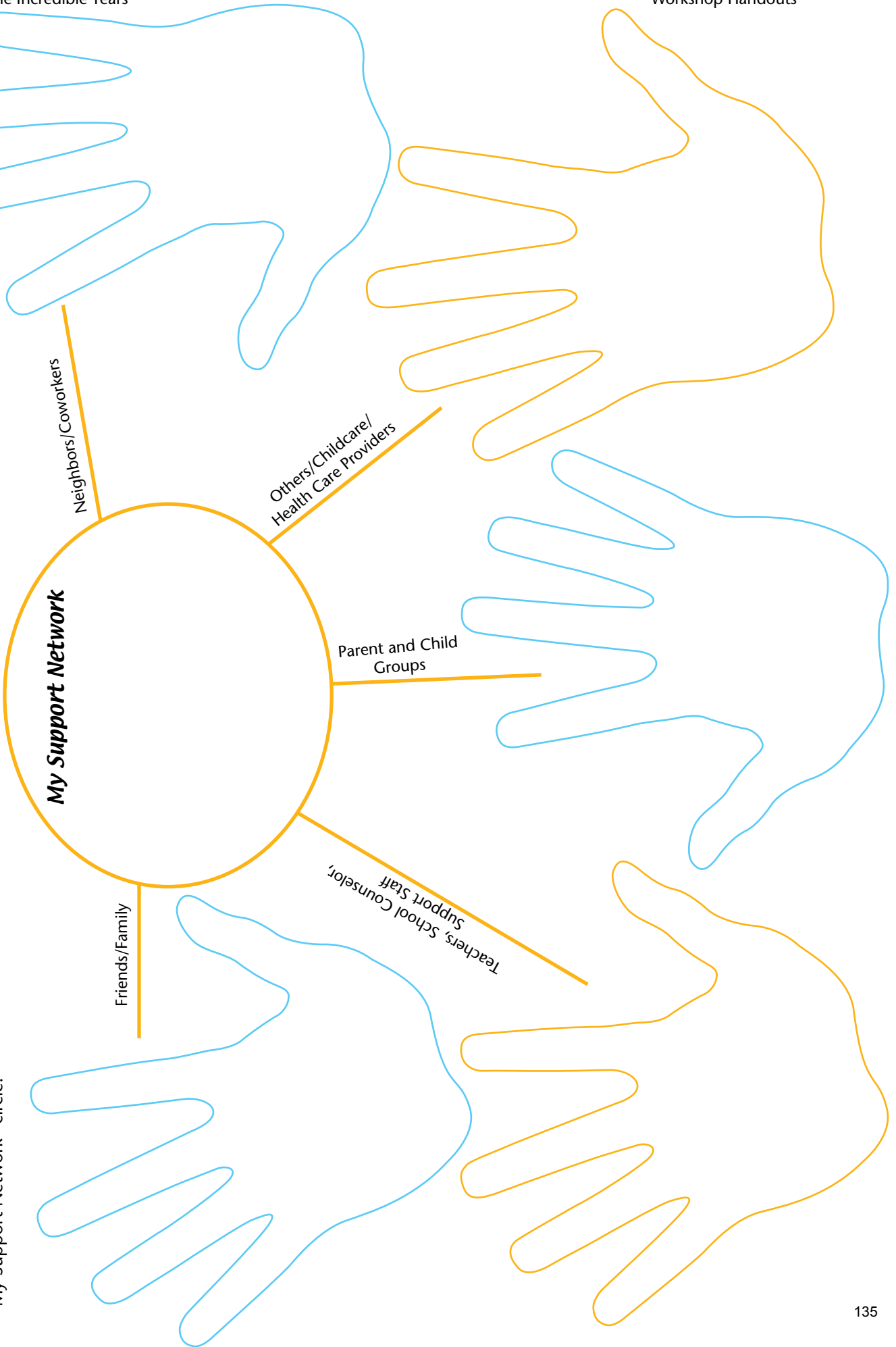
*"There is more than one way to think about something—  
feelings don't have to determine actions."*



# Parent Support Network

Who can lend a helping hand?

Think about people in your support network. Each hand represents a different group of people. Write in each hand specific people from that network who can help provide support to you and your child! You can draw or paste of picture of your family in the "My Support Network" circle!





**HANDOUT**  
**PROBLEM-SOLVING CHECKLIST**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Step 1: Schedule a meeting	___	___
Step 2: Define the problem	___	___
1. Focus on one problem at a time	___	___
2. Collaborate and be positive	___	___
3. State and be positive	___	___
4. Express feelings	___	___
5. Be future oriented	___	___
6. Make "I" statements	___	___
Step 3: Summarize the problem and goal in order to be sure everyone understands the problem Write down the problem.	___	___
_____		
_____		
Step 4: Brainstorm solutions	___	___
1. Remain open	___	___
2. Be wild, innovative, humorous	___	___
3. Increase quantity	___	___
4. Postpone details	___	___
Step 5: Evaluate solutions and make plans	___	___
1. Review the entire list	___	___
2. Evaluate each solution	___	___
3. Make realistic plans	___	___
4. Write down the plan	___	___
5. Schedule next meeting	___	___
6. Praise all efforts	___	___
Step 6: Schedule a follow up meeting	___	___
1. Reinforce progress	___	___
2. Refine problem solving plan	___	___

Evaluating your responses to the items on this checklist will highlight some of the ways you can improve your problem-solving meetings.





## ***Incredible Years Problem Solving Worksheet For Managing Family Problems***

### ***Problem Definition:***

1. Problem defined: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Triggers of problem occurring: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do I respond? (thoughts and feelings) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Goals:***

4. What thoughts will I use? What positive outcome do I want to achieve? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Solutions:***

5. What skills/strategies can I use to stay calm to solve this problem?  
Special time with person to strengthen relationship \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pleasurable time strategy to fuel personal strength \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Coping strategies I will use \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Support I will give or get \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Choose from the list below how you will reduce this problem occurring  
Schedule: Do I have a predictable plan? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Distract/Redirection: How can I redirect or calm down or refuel myself so my response doesn't escalate? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is the positive consequence if I complete my plan? \_\_\_\_\_

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***Carrying Out my Plan:***

7. To whom should I communicate this plan? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Who can I call for support and check in with? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. How will I take care of myself while this is going on? \_\_\_\_\_

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***Evaluating the Success of Solutions***

10. How will I know I am making progress? What will be different? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. How will I celebrate my success at achieving my goal? \_\_\_\_\_

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## REFRIGERATOR NOTES ABOUT TALKING WITH TEACHERS WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS A PROBLEM



- Clarify the teacher's view of the problem.
- Listen attentively and validate her point of view. (Don't argue or interrupt.)
- Ask how the teacher is planning to address the problem.
- Brainstorm solutions—share strategies that work at home with your child.
- Share incentives and privileges that are motivating for your child.
- Express your support and appreciation for the teacher's efforts.
- Make a home/school plan that is coordinated (e.g., regular positive notes home from the teacher about your child's successes are reinforced by parents on a sticker chart).
- Give positive rather than negative comments and requests to teacher.
- Review with your child's teacher what you will do at home to support her efforts and clarify what she will do at school.
- Arrange a follow-up meeting to assess progress.
- Tell your teacher how and where it is easiest to contact you and ask when it is the optimal time to call your teacher.

### **Remember when talking with your child's teacher:**

- Edit: be polite and positive.
- Stick to the point and avoid unloading multiple gripes.
- Focus on fixing the problem and not blaming.
- Take one step at a time—be realistic.
- Remain calm.
- Make positive recommendations.
- Express your confidence in your teacher's abilities.

**Note: When was the last time you praised your child's teacher for his/her efforts?**

**HANDOUT**  
**PROBLEM SOLVING CHECKLIST**

	Yes	No
<b>Step 1: Schedule a meeting</b>	_____	_____
<b>Step 2: Define the problem</b>		
1. Focus on one problem at a time	_____	_____
2. Collaborate and be positive	_____	_____
3. State and be positive	_____	_____
4. Express feelings	_____	_____
5. Be future oriented	_____	_____
6. Make "I" statements	_____	_____
<b>Step 3: Summarize the problem and goal in order to be sure everyone understands the problem</b>	_____	_____
<b>Step 4: Brainstorm solutions</b>		
1. Remain open	_____	_____
2. Be wild, innovative, humorous	_____	_____
3. Increase quantity	_____	_____
4. Postpone details	_____	_____
<b>Step 5: Evaluate solutions and make plans</b>		
1. Review the entire list	_____	_____
2. Evaluate each solution	_____	_____
3. Make realistic plans	_____	_____
4. Write down the plan	_____	_____
5. Schedule next meeting	_____	_____
6. Praise all efforts	_____	_____
<b>Step 6: Schedule a follow up meeting</b>		
1. Reinforce progress	_____	_____
2. Refine problem solving plan	_____	_____

Evaluating your responses to the items on this checklist will highlight some of the ways you can improve your problem solving meetings.



## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN TO USE**

Yell at him.*	Wait awhile.	Laugh at him.
Look sad or cry.	Ignore him; walk away.	Play somewhere else.
Take it.*	Hit him.*	Tell her not to be mad.
Ask him.	Say please.	Do something fun.
Trade something.	Apologize.	Get help from your parent or teacher.
Talk about your feelings.	Beg him.	Offer to share.
Get another one.	Take turns.	Flip a coin.
Admit mistake.	Calm down first.	Tell the truth.
Give compliment.	Be a good sport.	Say "no."
Stop your anger.	Be brave.	Forgive.

\*These are inappropriate solutions. Encourage children to think of consequences and to make another choice with a better consequence.



## ***Incredible Years Problem Solving Worksheet For Managing Challenging Behaviors!***

### ***Problem Definition:***

1. My child's challenging behavior: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the triggers/precipitants of my child's misbehavior? (developmental problem, not enough sleep, not getting what he wants, a family transition or stress, low frustration tolerance, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do I usually respond to this misbehavior? (Do I give it attention? Do I get angry?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Goals:***

4. What is my goal? What positive opposite behavior do I want to see instead? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Solutions:***

5. What skills/strategies can I use from the bottom of the Pyramid to support this positive behavior?

Play/Special Time: What kind of play or special time might best help my child here? (Remember, it is best if it is child-led.) (persistence, academic, social, or emotion coaching) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Praise: What behaviors can I praise and how? (Remember they should be the "positive opposites" of the behaviors you want to decrease.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Stickers and Rewards: How can I reward this good behavior? What incentives will motivate my child? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Choose from the list below those responses from the top of the pyramid than can be used to reduce this misbehavior.

Routines: Do I have a predictable routine for this problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Distraction/Redirection: How can I distract or redirect my child before misbehavior escalates? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ignore: What part of this behavior could I ignore? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will I say to myself while I ignore it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Consequence: What natural or logical consequence can I use to teach my child to change this behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Calm Down Strategies: What calm down strategies can I teach my child? (use of turtle shell, deep breathing, positive self-talk "I can do it, I can calm down," use of the calm-down thermometer) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Carrying Out my Plan:***

7. To whom should I communicate this plan? (teachers, grandparents, partners, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Who can I call for support and to check in? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. How will I take care of myself while this is going on? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Evaluating the Success of Solutions***

10. How will I know I am making progress? What will be different? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. How will I celebrate my child's success? As well as my own? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Congratulations! You have a plan to change your child's behavior! Remember, it can take three weeks or more to see changes, so don't give up!***





Carolyn Webster-Stratton has published numerous scientific articles and treatment studies showing the efficacy of the Incredible Years programs. These articles and studies may be accessed from the Incredible Years website: <http://www.incredibleyears.com/research-library/> Independent replications and treatment studies by other recognized authors from Incredible Years implementations around the world may also be found in our website library.

Webster-Stratton, C. (1994). Advancing videotape parent training: A comparison study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 62*(3), 583-593.

**Advancing Videotape Parent Training: A Comparison Study**  
**Carolyn Webster-Stratton**

**Abstract**

This study examines the specific effects of adding a broader based, videotape treatment component (ADVANCE) to a basic videotape parent skills training program (GDVM). ADVANCE treatment trains parents to cope with interpersonal distress through improved communication, problem solving, and self-control skills. Seventy-eight families with a child diagnosed as oppositional-defiant or conduct-disordered were randomly assigned to either GDVM alone or GDVM plus ADVANCE. Parent reports of child adjustment and parent distress, assessment of child's knowledge of social skills, as well as independent observations of mother-and father-child interactions and communication and of problem solving between parents were obtained at pre- and post-GDVM and at post-ADVANCE. Both groups significantly improved at short-term follow-up. ADVANCE produced additional significant improvements in parents' communication, problem-solving skills, and consumer satisfaction, as well as children's increased knowledge of prosocial solutions. The clinical significance of these findings is discussed.

**Read the article at:**

[http://www.incredibleyears.com/wp-content/uploads/advancing-videotape-parent-training-comparison-study\\_94.pdf](http://www.incredibleyears.com/wp-content/uploads/advancing-videotape-parent-training-comparison-study_94.pdf)

