

Instructor's Guide

Class Meeting 6

Facilitating a Secure Attachment: Attitudes toward Discipline Making Plans for an Ongoing Support Group

Schedule of Activities

1. Introduce, The next stage in child development: Toddlerhood Discuss how to “Take Charge: Bigger, Stronger, Wiser, and Kind.”

(**Reference** pages 100-114 in *Raising a Secure Child* and Chapter 10 in [*Compassionate Child-Rearing*](#))

2. Emphasize the importance of parents’ attitudes in situations requiring discipline.

“Discipline is best practiced with firmness, not cruelty; with understanding, not condemnation; and from an underlying motive of helping the child become not only the kind of person who likes himself/herself, but also the kind of person whom other people like, respect, and enjoy being with.” ~ Robert W. Firestone

3. Distribute the handout “[Guidelines for Discipline and Socialization](#),” discuss the points, and answer any questions parents may raise.
4. Describe journaling Exercise 9.2 from *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice* “[What Do You Think When You Are Angry at your Child?](#)”

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5. Describe the four characteristics of parents who are effective in helping their children develop into people who feel good about themselves and who others like and enjoy being with.

(References: “Taking Charge: “Bigger, Stronger, Wiser, and Kind” in [*Raising a Secure Child*](#) (pp. 100-114), *No Drama Discipline* and the *No Drama Discipline Workbook* by Dan Siegel and Tina Bryson.

6. Describe the importance of parents being positive role models for their children. Parents need to (1) feel good about themselves, (2) have a life of their own separate from their role as parents, and (3) have personal integrity in their lives in order to be good role models. Besides making sense of their past and earliest attachments, these three characteristics probably have the most significant effect on the ways that parent’s guide and discipline their children.

15-Minute Break

7. View and discuss videotaped interviews with other parents about discipline and sharing child-rearing functions with family members and friends.
8. Initiate a discussion about participant’s recollections of how they were disciplined as children. Refer to Questions 1, 2, and 3 on pages 17 and 18 of [Parent’s Workbook](#).
9. Summary of ideas and information. Ask for parents’ reactions to the course. What was the most valuable aspect of the program?
10. Continue planning ongoing parents’ support group to share in the care of each other’s children and/or a playgroup for the children.
11. Describe further explorations into Compassionate Parenting through the eCourse, “Making Sense of Your Life” from PsychAlive.com.
12. Talk about the possibility of having a reunion with instructor and class sometime during the next year.
13. Say goodbye to participants and to their children if they are present or have been in child-care in an adjacent room or facility.



Handouts for Class Meeting 6:
“Guidelines for Discipline and Socialization”

“Practices of Integrative Communication”

“What Do You Think When You Are Angry at Your Child” Exercise 9.2 from
Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice



Guidelines for Group Process and Topics for Discussion

The Importance of Parents' Attitudes and Intentions

(Reference Chapter 15 from *Compassionate Child-Rearing* and pages 100-114 in *Raising a Secure Child*)

Discuss the times when parents feel anger, resentment, a sense of obligation, of being burdened, of being isolated, of feeling unsure of themselves as parents. Describe how talking with a trusted friend or in a group of parents who are in similar circumstances can help mothers and fathers accept feelings that they may have thought of as unacceptable.

Balancing “Bigger, Stronger, Wiser, and Kind” in interacting with your Toddler

“Our children need us to be bigger and stronger so they can feel safe, knowing that someone is willing and able to protect them. But it’s not just for safety. It’s important for them to know they can rely on us – that we’re not going to let something happen to them, that we’re going to do our best to be there. Like their steady rock. And in the real world where things need to get done and time is often short, it’s simply not always possible to follow your child’s needs. For example, a child’s desire to explore a new toy can sometimes clash with our need to get to an appointment...’

Taking charge does not, of course, imply being an authoritarian tyrant. It never requires stepping into being *mea*. Taking charge in a kind way is a way of saying, explicitly and implicitly, “I’m always going to be there for you, but that doesn’t mean that I always have to be nice, because sometimes it is about really letting you know that that is a boundary, you’ve crossed it, and we need to step back...”



“Children who want their parents to take charge often push limits.

Being bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind gives our children access to a kind or no nonsense tenderness that leads to security. This is a balance between firmness and affection. It’s not that there are bigger and stronger moments and kind moments. It’s that every moment requires us to find a way to blend the two. That’s where wisdom comes in...It’s where our quiet, attuned awareness enables us to find-tune our responses to strike just the right balance of firmness and affection.

The Challenge

“To put it simply, the challenge is just to stay aware of what aspect of bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind you favor and keep trying to achieve balance. We all falter here....We pick up our parents’ habits so automatically through implicit relational knowing, that they can feel like “just the way things are.” To help you see clearly, consider asking yourself whether your own parent(s) tended to be bigger and stronger or wiser and kind when you were growing up.

“Ask yourself: When things seem to be spinning out of control for your child, are you more likely to step in and exercise your authority or to acquiesce, or to support and comfort? Once you know, you can ask yourself in individual interactions with your child whether that’s what your child needs at that moment.”

Parents’ Attitudes toward Discipline

Adulthood doesn’t mean that people stop growing and developing—it’s a life-long process. In fact, most adults have many of the same emotions that they had as children, the same longings, the same needs, desires, turmoil, self-doubts, and feelings of vulnerability. Most adults, however, try to cover over their fears and insecurities and



present themselves as fully integrated mature people, both to their friends and to their children.

When parents try to cover their insecurities by a strong parental façade or by acting out the role of the strict disciplinarian, their efforts to provide their children with control, direction and real discipline fail miserably. Discipline means guidance, whereas punishment implies that the child is bad. It is important for parents to learn this basic distinction. It is equally important to avoid being overly permissive, which is a form of parental indifference and neglect.

Recalling the Kind of Discipline Participants Received as Children

Emphasize the importance of the participants recalling their own parents' child-rearing styles, and observations of their friends' methods of discipline. Ask them to describe any child-rearing practices that they admired in their parents as well as the methods they disliked and vowed they would do differently.

Initiate an in-depth discussion about Questions 1, 2, and 3, pp.17 and 18 [Parent's Workbook](#).

Note: When participants in previous Compassionate Childrearing Parent Education program recalled how they were disciplined as children, they have often re-considered their views about discipline and were able to change many of their attitudes toward their children in a positive direction.



Critical Inner Voices that can disrupt attuned interactions with our children

Review everyday situations facing parents that can arouse negative thoughts and feelings about themselves, for example, a crying infant that can't be comforted, a child having a temper tantrum, or paradoxically, a child expressing affection and love to the parents.

Describe how parents can record, in Exercise 9.2, any angry thoughts they have at times toward their child in stressful situations. Next, they identify critical inner voices toward themselves that may be similar to the angry, critical voices they have toward their child in these situations. Next they may recall times when they were children that these kinds of negative statements were directed toward them.

Exercise 9.2 helps parents develop compassion toward themselves in relation to how they were treated (or mistreated) as children especially in terms of discipline and punishment. Self-compassion (not positive self-evaluation), is important for parents to develop as they make sense of their past experiences. Developing a kinder, more congenial attitude toward themselves provides the impetus for making the changes they wish to make in relating to their child. (See [Exercise 9.2 from *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*](#))

Parents as Positive Role-Models

Studies of imitation show that role-modeling is the most powerful method for imparting our value to our children. Robert Firestone writes: “Parents can strive to act responsibly, with integrity, in all their associations and not allow hypocrisy and double standards to compromise their dignity and self-respect. Children are acutely sensitive to variations in parental behavior, and, if forced to ‘swallow’ parents’ duplicity and lies, suffer severe blows to their own integrity.”



Discuss the importance of parents having their own lives, enjoying their relationship, and having integrity-- being honest with their children, at an age-appropriate level, about painful issues of illness, death, financial setbacks, and other family problems.

Focus attention on journaling about their early attachment relationships so as to develop a coherent narrative regarding painful events and any relational trauma they may have experienced

15-MINUTE BREAK

Integrative Communication (see [HANDOUT](#))

It is important to explore the feelings behind the child's behavior and use the situation as a teaching moment. Even more important, you need to take time to reflect on your own feelings, return to the "high road" of functioning before talking with your child about the situation. After stopping the undesirable behavior, attempt to make a connection with your child, use physical touch, get down to his or her level, and together explore what happened in the situation. Creating a coherent narrative of the incident in collaboration with your child, asking what he or she thought and felt, revealing what you were thinking and feeling, is crucial to making meaning out of the situation, transforming it into a moment of learning. The process of collaborative communication or integrative communication helps the child resolve any leftover feelings and prevents "unresolved trauma" from adversely affecting his or her life later on.

The Importance of Repair

(**Reference:** pages 109-112, [Raising a Secure Child](#))

"It's not avoiding ruptures in the attuned interactions with our children that promotes healthy psychological development, but being sure to make repairs."



“Rupture and repair are ways for the baby to begin to accumulate enough interactions to recognize that something good (repair) can in fact follow something bad (rupture) *from the same person*... Recognizing that he sometimes feels good while interacting with Mom and sometimes not so good cements the baby’s awareness that Mom really is a separate person: she has her own emotions, thoughts, drives, beliefs, behaviors.

The Challenge

Actually, making effective repairs is such a tricky balancing act for many of us that there’s not just one main challenge; there are several:

* *Being able to say you’re sorry and mean it is a big issue in rupture and repair.* If you yield to a desire to be right all the time, your child won’t build rust in his own perspective.

* *Blame erects another roadblock to effective repair.* Many ruptures occur when we blame our children for being the problem instead of seeing that they need help with a problem

* *Then there’s self-blame.* If you are convinced that you are in fact bad, and therefore you’re incapable of being a good parent, you’re going to abdicate responsibility and just give up on any possible repair.

* *If you are primarily a bigger-and-stronger kind of person by inclination, you also might have trouble with almost any repair because it feels like you’re giving up your authority, admitting some kind of inferiority, if you apologize....* There’s a big difference between being authoritarian and authoritative. Being authoritative flows from the confident presence of being bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind and from prioritizing helping our children feel better over making ourselves feel better.



** Another challenge with making effective repairs comes from overdoing it. Some parents believe their child's every feeling and need is at the center of the world. If you feel this way, you might find yourself apologizing for everything all the time.*

**Keep in mind that reflection won't get you very far unless it leads to resolution. Repair includes honoring feelings and also looking to find another approach together."*

View videotaped interviews:

View [interviews with parents](#) who have explored their earliest attachments and the relationship they now have with their children. They answer the following questions related to discipline, how to talk to your kids about your feelings, and the importance of seeking support from family member and friends in raising their children.

1. What are your feelings in relation to disciplining your kids?
2. How do you talk to your kids about your feelings?
3. What do you think has helped you the most in gaining compassion for yourself and for your child?
4. Do you think it's important for other people to influence your child?
5. How important is it for you to have your own life?
6. Do you ever feel guilty for going to do something without your child?

Discussion

Ask participants to share with each other recollections of how they were disciplined as children and ways they may be considering doing things differently than (or the same as) their parents. (See questions 1, 2, and 3 on pages 17 and 18 of the [Parent's Workbook](#).)



Planning a Support Group

Formulate plans, in collaboration with participants, about ways to continue meeting as a support group and/or make arrangements for a baby-sitting exchange network. Help parents work out the logistics regarding transportation, scheduling, etc. to put plans into effect.

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