

Parenting Education

A cornerstone of intergenerational solidarity

50th Session of the Commission on Population
and Development – Side Event

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Larger context and greater challenges

Given a magic wand, any of us would surely give every parent, everywhere in the world . . .

- Food & clean water, clothing and shelter, of course
- Training and education to prepare them to provide for themselves and their children and, if need be, for family members who are ill or elderly
- Rewarding work outside the home that suits their abilities and their family's needs
- **A supportive community, with appropriate services, and family and friends nearby**

First, what is **parenting** ?

It is an odd 'business' really,
...**part service** ...and **part production**.

and what is **parenting education** ?

It has three main elements:

- **knowledge** about children's growth & development
- **skill** in providing care appropriate to the child's age
- **support** for social-emotional development
in parents and children

In the old days . . .

Parents learned what they needed to know about childrearing from their own parents, and from aunts and uncles.

Families lived in small communities where parents were able to – and did – help each other.

Now . . .

=> Families are dispersed => Child-rearing is often “out-sourced” to people who are not family => Many children are in single-parent homes or are “left behind” to be raised by grandparents.

Parenting education is not new (1)

The English verb “to parent” was first used in the 1660s, about the time that John Walmot famously wrote:

*“Before I got married I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children and no theories.”**

In the 19th century in the US, parent educators taught mothers about children’s health needs and the importance of home hygiene.

After WWII, formal parenting education organizations were organized in various countries, including the International Federation for Parent Education (FIEP) and the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD), the latter now active in 66 countries.

* <http://www.parent.co/how-parenting-advice-became-an-industry/>

Parenting education is not new (2)

In the 1980s, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) provided the first certification for Family Life Educators.

Since the early 2000s the National Parenting Education Network (NPEEN) has served as a platform for parenting educators to act as advocates for social policy in this field.

Also, the recovery movement, dating from the late 1930s (AA and Al-Anon are the best known), along with dedicated “parents of ...” organizations for those caring for children with medical conditions and special needs, provide unique and important resources for parents using a peer support model.



Parenting education now:

- Individual and family counseling
- Group classes and workshops
- Home visiting
- Online training
- State and court-mandated training,
including classes for divorcing parents
- High school classes: preparation for parenting
- Parent coaching
- Child care center and K-12 parent
engagement
- Public health and pediatric clinics
- Workplace seminars
- Peer support programs, both focused and generic



What is next ?

Given the programming patchwork above,
how should we go forward?

Instead of adding more bits and pieces, no matter how attractive and effective each one may be, I suggest we step back and **look at parenting education as life skills training and make parenting education universal.**

We must also engage parents in helping each other – and – use social media to address the unfortunate stigma that keeps people from seeking help.

How can we make this work?

How can we reach more than just a *few* parents?

There are simply not enough people in the helping professions to meet the multiple challenges faced by youth and the elderly as well as by parents in today's society.

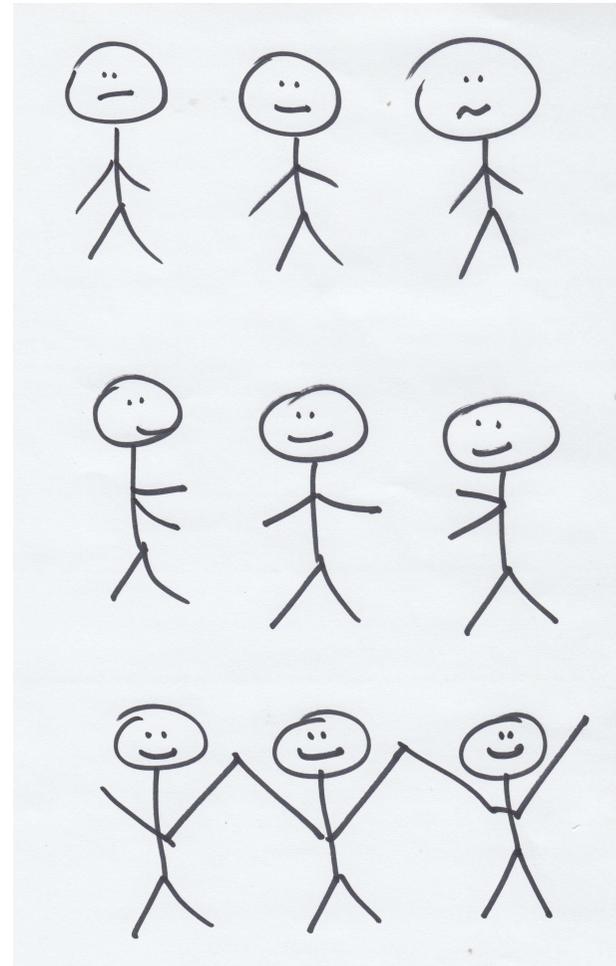
We must engage parents in helping each other – and – we must use social media to address the unfortunate stigma that keeps people in all demographics from seeking the help they need.

With peer support we can . . .

move from
isolated and confused

through
involved and concerned

to **become**
inspired and confident.



So, here is Our Call * . . .

Parenting and family life education shall be provided as essential and universally accessible offerings to support our common interest: improving individual and community wellbeing.

* See full text, coauthored w/Jamesa Wagwau and Dr. Aya Isumi,
12/12/16 in the Communications Initiative bit.ly/2huhjtl



Why do this?

Parenting education . . .

- Builds parents' competence and confidence
- Strengthens families
- Serves as an effective intervention to address multiple social problems: child maltreatment, juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, academic disengagement and addictions

(U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2006)

- And saves money: Communities hosting the "Strengthening Families" program show a \$9.60 return for every \$1 invested, by reduction in substance use and abuse and increases in high school completion.

(Family Life Education...ROI, www.NCFR.org)

Where to find good programs

Programs in these U.S. registries have *proven* return on investment:

- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – government-managed

www.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA: Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services Administration

- Blueprints for Healthy Development – privately managed

www.blueprintsprograms.com



My own experience . . .

I faced some challenges raising my three sons. The main reward I see is the parenting that the two who are dads are doing. The other reward, of course, is grandkids!

A photograph of a dark blue jacket hanging on a rack. The words "HARD FEELINGS" are sewn onto the back of the jacket in large, white, arched, block letters. In the background, a sign with the word "PORTERS" and a large "D" is partially visible.

HARD
FEELINGS

A barista at the bookstore café I visit often sewed these letters onto his jacket. “Why?” I asked him. He said, “Because **everyone has hard feelings.**”

*In closing, please let Parents Forum
hear from you and look for . . .*

*Where the Heart Listens: a handbook
for parents and their allies in a global society*

in print, ebook and audio formats.

Thank you!

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