Promoting Strong Families Through Parenting Education

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Parenting is an essential skill

- Fundamental skill from pre-historical times:
  - Families taught children how to hunt and prepare food
  - Parents concerned with educational attainment in and out of the home (Berger, 2000)

- Parenting influenced by:
  - Culture and values
  - Climate
  - Location
  - Economics
  - Religion
  - Parental education and resources

- World War II study (Freud & Burlingham, 1943)
  - Children who were separated from parents more traumatized than the ones who stayed with parents in bombarded city
  - Laid the foundation for conceptualizing family bonds as a protective factor for children in times of mass trauma, long before concepts of resilience and protective factors had been developed.
Critical Role of Parenting in Family Functioning

- “Parenting styles rather than family structure has been found to be the main determinant of effective family functioning and adolescent well-being” (McFarlane, Bellissimo, & Norman, 1995).

- Research indicates warm, nurturing parenting behaviors protect children from the consequences of economic distress and contribute to positive outcomes for children in high-risk situations.

- Parenting practices impact not only the physical, cognitive, and emotional development of children but also the overall functioning of the family unit (Manzeske & Dopkins Stright, 2009).

- Intergenerational: development of supportive and stable romantic unions in next generation.
Dilemmas in Contemporary Family Life

- Diversity of family structures and effects on children
- Work-life negotiation across socio-economic spectrum
- Traumatic conditions including violence, extreme poverty, immigration, refugee status
- Tension in culturally heterogeneous societies between what is taught at school and at home
Black and Hispanic parents are more likely to see kids’ successes and failures as a reflection of their parenting

% saying their children’s successes and failures mostly reflect ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The job they’re doing as parents</th>
<th>Their children’s own strengths and weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All parents</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Voluntary responses of “Both,” “Neither,” “Depends” and “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.


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Parents with higher and lower incomes don’t always share the same concerns

% saying they worry that each of these might happen to their child/any of their children at some point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$75,000+</th>
<th>$30,000-$74,999</th>
<th>&lt;$30,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be bullied</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle with anxiety or depression</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be kidnapped</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get beat up or attacked</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get pregnant/Get a girl pregnant as a teenager</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have problems with drugs or alcohol</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get shot</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get in trouble with the law</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Risk Factors for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Children

- Poor parenting
- Lack of warm and positive parent–child relationships
- Inadequate supervision
- Lack of parental involvement
One-in-five separated or divorced parents say they disagree with children’s other parent often

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All parents</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Divorced/Separated</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Never married</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living with partner</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Married</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Parenting is Key

- Research indicates: impact of positive parenting practices on children’s social, emotional, and intellectual development, (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2016)
  - Enhanced sense of security
  - Ability to focus attention
  - Behavioral health
Parent Education Strengthens Families

- Individuals vary with respect to parenting depending on a multitude of factors

- Parent education programs are designed:
  - To help parents and caregivers understand their children’s individual needs and development, as well as their own roles and responsibilities
  - Provide parents and caregivers with knowledge, resources and support to develop parenting skills to support child and family well-being
  - Assist parents and caregivers learn the strategies to create a positive and nurturing home environment that helps their children thrive
Parent Education Programs
Support Strong Families

- Enhanced social connections as parents exchange ideas, provide and obtain support, and share resources

- Improved child behavior, as children whose parents participate in these programs show greater prosocial behaviors and less negative externalizing behaviors

- Better quality parent-child interactions as a result of parents learning how to engage with their children (Wilder Research, 2016)
Parent Education Takes Many Forms

- Social Learning focus on encouraging positive behavior through building the parent-child connection.

- Skills-based interventions and family system approaches that address trauma and other challenges.

- Training and consultation that aim to help families better understand:
  - Children’s emotions and needs
  - Improve attachment between caregiver and child,
  - Reduce problem behaviors in children
  - Enhance placement stability
Effective Parent Education Programs

- Provide parents with an opportunity to network and receive support from other parents
- Engage fathers
- Treat parents as equal partners in determining services
- Tailor programs to specific needs of families
- Offer programs that are culturally relevant to meet the needs of diverse populations
Parent Education is Key to Promoting Strong Families

- Parenting programs promising in terms of strengthening family resources and providing mechanisms through which families not only can improve their parenting practices, but build on their own strengths and resources.

- Examples include:
  - Parenting interventions that target infant mental health through mother-infant relationship
  - Home visitor programs
  - Parenting programs as intervention for children with emotional and behavioral difficulties
  - Parental involvement in schools
  - Work of IFFD

- Race / ethnicity / gender / social marginalization / social class need to be accounted for
Thank you!!