FAMILY MATTERS
(Family Wellness Education)
A Recovery Model

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With the help of:
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AND WITH GREAT APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE TO THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, PARTICULARLY TO THE INMATES AND STAFF OF THE INDIANA WOMEN’S PRISON AND THE INDIANAPOLIS RE-ENTRY EDUCATIONAL FACILITY.

1This course was originally created for use in prisons. It focuses on experiences in families, including children, parents and grandparents. It can stand on its own. It can also be used as an introduction to family issues – and followed by more specific courses on marriage or parenting. It is also useful as part a substance abuse sequence.

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This course is not copyrighted; material may be selected or adapted as needed. Free download of the Workbook & Leader’s Manual is available at: http://www.familymatterscourse.com.
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How are you feeling just now?
GETTING STARTED

CONFIDENTIALITY CONTRACT: IT’S VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE CLASS THAT WHAT PEOPLE SHARE HERE STAYS HERE. WE NEED TO KNOW THAT IF WE SHARE DIFFICULT INFORMATION, WE WON’T BE THE OBJECT OF GOSSIP. CAN EVERYONE AGREE TO THAT?

INTRODUCTIONS: Please introduce yourself by telling us something about your family – the family you grew up in and where things stand now. Which picture(s) on page 4 best describe how you’re feeling right now? Share only what you wish to share.

FIRST DAY QUESTIONNAIRE: Please complete the following questionnaire. Please ask for help if something is difficult to read or unclear. This questionnaire is for your information only!

1) During the past week, how well have you been managing day-to-day life?
   ___ Quite poorly
   ___ Fairly poorly
   ___ So-so
   ___ Fairly well
   ___ Quite well

2) How well have you been getting along emotionally these days? Please put an X next to the best answer for you.
   ___ Quite poorly; I am barely able to deal with things.
   ___ Fairly poorly; life is pretty tough for me at times.
   ___ So-so; I am able to keep going with some effort.
   ___ Fairly well; I have my ups and downs.
   ___ Quite well; I have no important problems.

3) How well does each of the following statements describe you?
   I can openly express my feelings.
   ___ Very true ___Mostly true ___Somewhat true ___Mostly not true ___Not at all true
   I can speak up for myself when the situation calls for it.
   ___ Very true ___Mostly true ___Somewhat true ___Mostly not true ___Not at all true
   I can be myself in every situation.
   ___ Very true ___Mostly true ___Somewhat true ___Mostly not true ___Not at all true
   I am comfortable with who I am.
   ___ Very true ___Mostly true ___Somewhat true ___Mostly not true ___Not at all true
When what I’m trying doesn’t work out, I can change my approach or my plans.

__ Very true  __Mostly true  __Somewhat true  __Mostly not true  __Not at all true

When I get upset, I find healthy ways to make myself feel better.

__ Very true  __Mostly true  __Somewhat true  __Mostly not true  __Not at all true

I don’t understand why I do the things I do.

__ Very true  __Mostly true  __Somewhat true  __Mostly not true  __Not at all true

It’s tough for me to know what I’m feeling.

__ Very true  __Mostly true  __Somewhat true  __Mostly not true  __Not at all true

4) **How would you describe relationships with your family members?**

People in my family respect each other’s feelings and thoughts.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all

I feel accepted for who I am by my family.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all

If there’s a problem, we can talk it through.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all

I know I am loved in my family.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all

I know my family is there for me.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all

If people in my family know what you’re feeling, they use it against you.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all

I feel like nobody in my family really understands me.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all

People in my family are honest with each other.

__ All of the time   __Often   __Sometimes   __Rarely   __Not at all
5) How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.

__ Strongly Disagree __ Moderately Disagree __ Slightly Disagree __ Slightly Agree __ Moderately Agree __ Strongly Agree

The demands of everyday life often get me down.

__ Strongly Disagree __ Moderately Disagree __ Slightly Disagree __ Slightly Agree __ Moderately Agree __ Strongly Agree

I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.

__ Strongly Disagree __ Moderately Disagree __ Slightly Disagree __ Slightly Agree __ Moderately Agree __ Strongly Agree

Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.

__ Strongly Disagree __ Moderately Disagree __ Slightly Disagree __ Slightly Agree __ Moderately Agree __ Strongly Agree

I live life one day at a time and don’t really think about the future.

__ Strongly Disagree __ Moderately Disagree __ Slightly Disagree __ Slightly Agree __ Moderately Agree __ Strongly Agree

In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.

__ Strongly Disagree __ Moderately Disagree __ Slightly Disagree __ Slightly Agree __ Moderately Agree __ Strongly Agree

6) In each of the lists below, check the statements that are most like you:

___ A. I am pessimistic about the future.
___ B. I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the future.
___ C. I feel somewhat optimistic about the future.
___ D. I feel quite optimistic about the future.
___ E. I feel extraordinarily optimistic about the future.

___ A. I am ashamed of myself.
___ B. I am not ashamed of myself.
___ C. I am proud of myself.
___ D. I am very proud of myself.
___ E. I am extraordinarily proud of myself.
A. I have sorrow in my life.
B. I have more sorrow than joy in my life.
C. I have neither sorrow nor joy in my life.
D. I have more joy than sorrow in my life.
E. I have much more joy than sorrow in my life.

7) Please think of a relationship in your family that you would like to see improve. Which relationship would that be?
   __ my friend __ my spouse __ my mother __ my father
   __ my son __ my daughter __ my grandmother __ my grandfather
   __ my child's parent __ someone else ( ____________________________ )

Please rate this relationship on the following scales. I would say that my relationship with this person can best be described as:

Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
Disrespectful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Respectful
Not Supportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Supportive
Hateful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Loving

Please say what kind of improvement you would hope for (even if you think it's not likely to happen).
Is there another relationship that you would like to see improve:
Which relationship is that?
   ___ my friend ___ my spouse ___ my mother ___ my father
   ___ my son ___ my daughter ___ my grandmother ___ my grandfather
   ___ my child’s parent ___ someone else ( _____________________________________)
Please rate this relationship on the following scales. I would say that my relationship with this person can best be described as:
Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
Disrespectful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Respectful
Not Supportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Supportive
Hateful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Loving
Please say what kind of improvement you would hope for (even if you think it’s not likely to happen).

Start thinking about which family relationship you would like to focus on improving as part of the work of this class. It doesn’t have to be the hardest to change, or the most important. In a family, it’s sometimes best to ‘start small.’ One small change in any relationship can affect other relationships, and little by little things can get better.
FAMILY SYSTEMS
Culture and Ethnicity: Strengths and Challenges

KEY IDEAS

- We are all influenced by our family’s culture and ethnicity.
- There are strengths and challenges to be found in every group.
- Understanding more about various cultures will lead to mutual respect.
- Mutual respect means we can create a strong community.

Ethnicity and Culture [please read aloud – each person read one paragraph; if you want to skip your turn to read just say so]:

Do you know who your great-grandparents were or what cultural heritages you carry? Many of us think of some family patterns as healthier than others. But sometimes we forget that what is healthy for a family in one cultural may be different from what is normal or healthy for a family with a different cultural heritage.

Culture often is tied to our ethnicity, but it also can include religion, social class, gender, prejudice given or received, and sexual orientation. Some people are proud of their cultural heritage; some are not. But there are strengths and challenges associated with any group.

For many years Americans of European heritage (particularly those with British or German roots) defined the ‘dominant culture’ in our country. Whites considered themselves ‘regular people.’ The others, African Americans, Latin Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans were thought of as the minorities. But soon we will be a nation of minorities. No one group will be over 50% of the population.

European Americans tend to emphasize the individual. They are autonomous, personally responsible, and in control of their own fate. Other cultures tend to be more family oriented. **WE ARE, THEREFORE I AM** is an African saying. In many cultures, people identify first as a part of a family or tribe. And whether we recognize it or not, we are deeply influenced by our family experiences – even if we disown them!

Our culture is part of who we are. Having a healthy view of our cultural heritage supports a healthy view of ourselves. And families have life-long effects on us, even if we move away from family members. We learned how to think about people and relationships in our early years and those patterns influence us throughout our lives.
**Group Discussion:** HERE’S A TABLE OF STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH VARIOUS FAMILY CULTURES. What do you think? Do you agree or disagree with these ideas? Do you think there are exceptions within groups?

BE SURE TO MAKE TIME FOR EVERYONE TO SHARE!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURE</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>CHALLENGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>Strong extended family</td>
<td>Dealing with racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Violence for young men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mates are Equals</td>
<td>Achieving higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involved grandmothers</td>
<td>Building self esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Strong extended family</td>
<td>Maintaining culture and language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Respect for elders</td>
<td>Achieving higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tribal support system</td>
<td>Staying cohesive and connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Integrating while keeping tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Family loyalty</td>
<td>Trusting outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Value education</td>
<td>Not working so hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well-behaved kids</td>
<td>It’s OK to seek help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong extended family</td>
<td>Relaxing overly high goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Personal freedom</td>
<td>Respect for other groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
<td>Overemphasis on winning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cope with stress</td>
<td>Work/Family balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal responsibility</td>
<td>Ability to depend on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Cohesive families</td>
<td>Maintaining traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Strong ethnic identity</td>
<td>Handling relocation issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive kin network</td>
<td>Learning English (for immigrants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family flexibility</td>
<td>Achieving higher education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from David Olson and John DeFrain: *Marriage and the Family: Diversity and Strengths.*

NOTE the most important ideas you heard during the group discussion:
EXERCISE: Below is a place for you to fill out what you know or believe about your own cultural background. Can you identify more than one culture in your heritage? Is one dominant? [Group sharing after each; or at the end.]

CULTURES THAT ARE PART OF MY HERITAGE:

MY CULTURAL AND PERSONAL STRENGTHS (you might start by circling strengths you identify with from the list above or in the culture chart on the previous page).

MY CULTURAL AND PERSONAL CHALLENGES. What do you see as the main ones right now? You might start by circling challenges you identify with in the chart on the previous page.

NAME ONE TRAIT YOU WOULD LIKE TO STRENGTHEN IN YOURSELF:

EXERCISE (in class or homework): Getting more information about family. Write a letter to an older family member. Ask them about their family growing up. What do they know about family traditions or about great grandparents? Make a first draft of your letter here. You may decide to make a phone call instead of sending a letter. You may, of course, choose not to do either.
Family History, Roles, and Rules

CHECK-IN: Please say your name and a couple of sentences about how you’re doing today. What’s the most important thing you’ve learned about your family so far – either from the class, or from information you’ve gathered since the last class?

KEY IDEAS

- FAMILY can include those we are close to even if not related to us.
- The past is very present in our life.
- Families have rules and patterns that they tend to repeat over and over – they can be healthy or unhealthy patterns.
- People in families usually take on different roles. Grandmother may be a mediator. Sometimes there’s a ‘good child’ and a ‘bad child.’
- Family patterns can become ingrained habits that make change difficult; but just being able to SEE a pattern is a first step toward changing it.
- Family patterns often repeat through generations.
- Understanding the past can help us be free to not repeat destructive patterns.

None of us grew up by ourselves. The environment we grow up in teaches us how to think about the world. Ways of thinking and being that we soak up as children pervade the rest of life. They filter how we see the world. They teach us about what is safe, what is good, what to pay attention to in our community. They guide us to look for and expect good in (some) people, or bad in (some) people. And what we expect often influences what actually happens.

Please read through FAMILY SYSTEMS in the Appendix (pp. 72 – 83). [Please read aloud – each person read one paragraph; if you want to skip your turn to read just say so].
EXERCISE: DESCRIBING YOUR FAMILY SYSTEM

(1) List the responsibilities that you have had in your family. (parent, son/daughter, grandparent, grandchild, mentor, friend)?

(2) What roles have you played in your family? What role(s) do you play now? (joker, star, bad child, etc.)

(3) What about other family members. Can you say who is the most nurturing person in your family? _____________________ How about a peacemaker – does your family have one? Write their name here: ____________________.

(4) What relationship in your family or in your life has been the most nurturing of you? Who made you feel safe and loved? __________________________________________

(5) What were some of the rules in your family? (if you talk you get hit; keep family business private, etc.)

(6) Share with the group something about your family rules and the roles you have played.

(7) What about Grandpa? If we understand history, it can help us understand family members. Did Mom’s mother die when mom was still very young? Did Dad’s father beat him? Was Grandpa in prison and separated from his kids while they were growing up? Was there plenty of money for food? Did Grandma favor one son over the other, or one grandchild over another? Share something you know about your family history that helps you understand your family today. Is there something in particular that can shed light on the relationship you’ve chosen to work on in this class? Discuss this with the group. Write notes here about what you’re thinking:
Drawing Your Family Map

CHECK-IN: Please say your name and a couple of sentences about how you’re doing today.

REVIEW KEY IDEAS FROM OUR LAST MEETING:
  o FAMILY can include those we are close to even if not related to us.
  o The past is very present in our life, at least until we make peace with it.
  o Families have rules and patterns that they tend to repeat over and over – they can be healthy or unhealthy patterns.
  o People in families usually take on different roles. Grandmother may be a mediator. Sometimes there’s a ‘good child’ and a ‘bad child.’
  o Family patterns can become ingrained habits that make change difficult; but just being able to SEE a pattern is the first step toward changing it.
  o Family patterns often repeat through generations.
  o Understanding the past can help us be free to not repeat destructive patterns.

DISCUSSION: Have you been thinking about a relationship you would like to improve as part of your work in this class. What do you think or understand about that relationship that you didn’t understand a few weeks ago? How would you like to see it improve?

EXERCISE: Drawing your family map.
This exercise will help you map your family and show the kind of relationships family members have or had with each other. It is a paper sculpting exercise. Pick a particular age, when you were a teenager, maybe – or in elementary school. Or pick a time when you remember your family being the happiest or the last time everyone was still at home. This map is about your perceptions of your family. There is no right or wrong way to make the map.
On the blank page opposite (My Family Map) please do the following:

FIRST draw a circle (or choose an animal) to represent each family member, and **anyone else** who may have been part of your family even if not related. You can also include pets.

SECOND, write a word or two about some or all of these people -- some characteristic or character trait they have. These are just some ideas.

THIRD, draw some lines between people to show their relationship. Here are some ideas:

**Draw smooth lines between family members who are similar or close:**

**Draw broken lines between family members who are different in some way:**

You might use a solid arrow to show closeness or affection

The affection could go both ways.

A ziz-zag line [\______/\______/\______/\______/\______/\______/\______] can be used to show conflict between two people.

Draw a boundary around people who have a special relationship, or an individual who keeps to themselves a lot

You can make up your own lines and symbols. Add any other notes or lines or colors or symbols that help you describe your family

Here is an example (more on page 18):

![Family Map Diagram](image-url)
MY FAMILY MAP
Dad and I just don’t get along. He lives in his shell, but when he comes out, we fight.

The silver is me and gold is my sister. I put her on the board a second time next to me... to show how close we are. The blue is the dog, he is close to everyone. And the green (on the top of the family boundary) is Grandpa. He lives with us and drinks all the time: he disturbs our boundary.

Each member of the group is invited to share their family map.
Healthy Families

CHECK-IN: Please say your name and a couple of sentences about how you’re doing today.

KEY IDEAS

- Remember, FAMILY can include those we are close to even if not related to us.
- Healthy families are remarkably similar across social class, cultures and ethnicities. Successful families are close and caring, respectful of individual autonomy, have clear, open, spontaneous communication, effective problem solving skills, and spiritual well-being.
- When two people are experiencing tension in a relationship, they will often pull in a third person – as a mediator, or a scapegoat (we can both be mad at him) – or one will pull in someone to be on their ‘side.’ This is called a triangle – two people pull in a third. When adults are at odds and they pull in a child to take sides, it can be hard on the child.

REVIEW: Families are SYSTEMS of interconnected and interdependent individuals. To understand an individual, we must understand the systems that individual is part of. If we try to understand people only as separate and independent, we don’t see the whole picture.

As members of a family system every member is connected to all of the others. Think about a mobile. When one piece moves, the whole mobile moves. Movement of one affects the whole system.

In a family, what’s happening to one person tends to affect the whole. For example if Mom loses her job, if Grandmother becomes ill or dies, if Dad’s job requires the family to move to a new town when the kids are in high school, everyone has to change in order to adapt to the new situation.

An alcoholic family member can upset others. The alcoholic’s unpredictability, violence, contempt, and self-focus can interfere with taking good care of the children. The whole family must adapt to these behaviors. Other family members might do things such as deny the effect of the alcoholic’s behavior, avoid him or her, or try to cover up the disease.

And what happens in one generation effects the next. If I saw my parents fight, I might decide not to fight with my mate. If my Dad hit me, I’m more likely to think it’s normal to hit my children. If Mom got depressed when her mother died, it may keep her from being able to really nurture her children. We’re all connected to our family history, even when we feel we’re all alone!
Triangles. Review the picture of triangles in FAMILY SYSTEMS (Appendix, Page 80). When there is tension between two people, one way to handle it is to ‘triangle’ a third party. We often see this in families when there is tension between parents. They may ‘scapegoat’ a child (the child develops problems and that distracts the parents from their disagreements). Or a parent may pull a child into a cross-generational coalition (be on Mom’s side against Dad). Or the child may act as a mediator or go-between for their parents. Triangled children are often not seen for who they truly are, but instead become who they need to be for the sake of the family. This is a very important concept, not only in families, but also in all human relationships. One person will want me to be on his or her side against another, for instance. We will talk later about how to avoid being caught in a triangle. **Give an example from your own experience of your being triangle, or your triangling someone else?** See if you can draw a picture of the triangle here, then share your story with others in the group.
Here are some healthy family patterns:

- Enjoy each other
- Feel safe and secure
- Are honest with each other
- Show empathy towards each other
- Support each other
- Listen to each other’s thoughts and feelings
- Can express wide range of feelings, even bad feelings
- Feel close and yet appreciate that each member is a separate individual
- Value the individual differences
- Can agree to disagree
- Take responsibility for themselves
- Solve problems together
- Resolve conflict without using violence or verbal abuse
- Respect the parents or parent figure as leader of the family.
- Relate easily to people outside the family

HOW ABOUT YOUR FAMILY (write a brief answer to each question)

1. How did it feel to be in your family?
2. Was it fun to be in your family?
3. Could you trust your family?
4. Could you talk about anything in your family?
5. Were family members often angry?
6. Did your family teach you right from wrong?
7. Did you feel loved?
8. Did family members blame each other?
9. Were your parent(s) the leaders of the family?
10. Were there a lot of rules in your family?
CHECK THOSE THINGS THAT YOUR FAMILY DOES WELL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoy each other</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel safe and secure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are honest with each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show empathy towards each other</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can agree to disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People take responsibility for themselves</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Solve problems together</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resolve conflict without using violence or verbal abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect the parents or parent figure as leader of the family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate easily to people outside the family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total check marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR FAMILY’S GREATEST STRENGTH?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR FAMILY’S GREATEST CHALLENGE?
DISCUSSION: Share one idea about your family with the group.

EXERCISE – POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP TO TRY TO CHANGE.

When you filled out the questionnaire on Day 1, you were asked to list some relationships you wish were different. Make a new list now. It can be the same, or it can be different. List relationships even if you think it’s impossible to make them better.

Choose one to focus on in this class. It’s often best to start with the easiest one! List one or two you are most willing or interested in working on:

Person ____________________ What I’d like to be different:

Person ____________________ What I’d like to be different:

DISCUSSION: Share with others in the group the relationship you chose and how you would like for it to be different. Don’t try to work on fixing any of the relationships now; don’t give advice! Just share. (Make some notes below):
EXERCISES: Thinking about relationships you would like to change.

**First Exercise:** Role-play what you would like to say and get ideas from others in the group. If it’s you and your Dad, for instance, let someone in the group pretend to be your dad. You ‘talk’ to him first – just let the other person sit there and listen. Then see if ‘dad’ has any response (SHORT response) – how did he feel listening to you. Then let someone else in the group take your place and pretend to be you. See how they would say what you are thinking and feeling. You might do that twice in order to get more ideas. Depending on time constraints, you may want for only a few people to do this – or you may break up into groups of 3-5 and each group work independently.

The goal here is to get a better idea of how you are coming across. How might you say it differently? Practicing ahead of time also makes it more likely that you’ll be able to go through with what you want to do.

NOTES/IDEAS:

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**Second Exercise:** One small step can open the way to healing. *A small step can lead to a big change* – especially over time. One step at a time is good. Write down the SMALLEST step you could take toward healing the relationship you are focusing on. Share your idea with others. See if someone can come up with another very small step.

The smallest step is:___________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________.

---
**Third Exercise (or Assignment):** Think more about the relationship you choose. Below, write a letter (but don’t send it) saying in your own words how you feel and what you wish were different. You can be as angry as you wish. That’s why we’re not mailing the letters!
Grief and Loss in the Family Life Cycle

CHECK-IN: How are you today?

KEY IDEAS

- The challenges to a family change through the life cycle.
- One of the biggest challenges comes when someone dies.
- Grief is natural and healing.

Life Cycle

Individuals and families go through many stages in life. **Young adults** leave home and accept financial responsibility for themselves. **Couples** make lifelong commitments to each other. **Children** are born and require a big shift in energy and attention in order to give them good care. **Teenagers** get caught up in difficult situations. They are more impulsive than adults and require good role models. Adults often **care for their elders** -- parents or grandparents. **Death**: people die and the family has to adapt. There is a FAMILY LIFE CYCLE chart included in the Appendix, page 92. It doesn’t fit perfectly for any family, especially single parent families, children being raised by grandparents, etc. But it may give you a general idea about how things progress.

Grief and Loss

One of the most difficult experiences is when we lose someone close to us, someone we loved, even if that relationship was hard. When someone dies it’s natural to feel **angry** and **sad**. It can be a good grief, remembering the good times and the hard times. If we go to a funeral, light a candle, visit a grave, even talk to them or write them a letter -- these are all rituals that can help us. **Grieving takes time**: sometimes years. It’s usually bumpy; we think it’s better, then we’re in the midst of it again. But things do get better gradually, with time.

Some Grief Experiences

1. **SHOCK**. Sometimes people become numb when they first experience a loss. This provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at once. It may last for a long time.

2. **PAIN**. As the shock wears off, it may be replaced with great suffering. It is important to experience this pain, and not hide it, avoid it or escape from it with alcohol or drugs.

3. **GUILT**. You may feel guilty about things you did or didn't do; things you said or didn’t say.

4. **ANGER**. It is natural to feel angry and to want to lash at others or blame someone. In this case it’s usually important to feel but not act, at least not act violently.

5. **SAD and LONELY**- This is very natural and may come and go over a long period of time, even years. It’s often good to share your feelings and memories with others. And just allow yourself to feel sad.

6. **ACCEPTANCE and HOPE**. If you let yourself feel your pain and sadness, you will come to a point where you can focus on your good memories more and more.

**Please remember others who are also grieving, especially children; they need your support.**
EXERCISE: Please think of someone you have lost. Write their name here and share that with the group:

EXERCISE: Write a ‘letter’ to this person who is no longer with you. Most of us have ‘unfinished business’ with someone who has died. Someone we loved and hurt. Someone who hurt us. Something we wish we’d been able to say to them before they died. The person who has passed will most likely not be able to read this letter! So let it out! Write whatever you feel. Say what you want to say. If you want to, share your letter with the group.

You can use the beginnings of sentences below to help – or ignore them and write your own letter:

Dear ______________________

I miss you. I remember some good times with you, especially ______________________

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________.

I’m still angry about __________________________________________________________.

I wish ________________________________________________________________________.

I wish ________________________________________________________________________.

______________________________________________________________________________.

EMPTY CHAIR EXERCISE. Sit across from an empty chair and imagine that your deceased loved one is in the chair. Tell them out loud what you want to say. Take your time. Let it be. This can be a very valuable exercise, so the group should be comfortable about taking the time to allow as many people do this as want to. Another way to do this kind of exercise is to go to the grave and talk to the deceased individual. Or talk to their picture.
CHECK-IN. Please say your first name and share any family connection since our last meeting. Anything different yet in the relationship you are focusing on in this course? Any new understanding about your family system? (make notes here)

Action or Reaction. Sometimes we think about what we want to do, make a decision, then **ACT**. Other times we are provoked and we **REACT** without thinking. The crying baby is driving us nuts and we shake it. We strike out physically when someone hurts or disrespects us. Reactions, usually based on fear or anger often get us into trouble. Why do we do it? Some people say ‘the devil made me do it.” Another possibility is to blame the brain!

Our brain works to protect us – FAST – when it senses danger. If I am threatened, I will probably run, or fight, or ‘freeze’ – before I even have time to think about it. Sometimes even before I’m conscious of danger. It’s an automatic response that can save my life. But it can also get me into trouble.

The brain has a thinking part (thinking brain) and a negative emotional part (which we are calling the feeling brain). The feeling brain is very powerful and leads to reaction. To counteract the feeling brain, we need to strengthen the thinking brain so we can have more control over our own behavior – do as we choose, not just react because something triggered our fear or rage. (Of course there are positive emotions, too, but they’re not usually the ones that get us into trouble.)

Look at the picture of how the brain influences behavior (next page). The line going from the feeling brain to the thinking brain is thicker. This is the way we’re born. It takes a lot of learning, skill, and willpower to develop the thinking brain and strengthen it’s influence on our behavior. But this is possible. If it weren’t, we’d be reacting all over the place.

Describe a situation in which your feeling brain won out over your thinking brain. What happened? Share, if you wish, with the group:

Describe a situation in which your thinking brain won out over your feeling brain. What happened? Share, if you wish, with the group:
Thinking Brain

Feeling Brain

CALM
- Be cool.
- Think!!
- Plan!!
- Consider the Results

FEAR
- Run !!
- Fight !!
- Freeze !!

RAGE

ACT

REACT
Strengthening the Ability to Act

CHECK-IN. Please say your first name and share any family connection since our last meeting. Anything different yet in the relationship you are focusing on in this course? Any new understanding about your family system?

Practice Mindfulness: BREATHE ----- Count to 10!

Mindfulness involves staying in the present, a “letting be.” Sometimes a willingness to simply “sit” with an experience can bring an awareness that allows one to survive even negative feelings and thus, doesn’t need to continue to fear or avoid them. If we just ‘sit’ with a feeling and hold it gently in our mind, we find that it may get stronger and stronger, but then it fades, or turns into something else – perhaps a feeling of peace or calm.

When we are mindful of others, we are giving them our full attention; listening calmly to understand; not interrupting or giving advice. We just focus, attend and listen.

There are lots of ways to practice mindfulness. A daily meditation practice, looking at a flower or a piece of fruit very carefully, seeing it as clearly as you can, walking slowly and carefully while paying attention to your breath going in and out of your body. There are others; you may have a practice already. If not, sit quietly and bring to mind a time and place where you felt safe and peaceful (or create an imaginary place); think about that experience when you first wake up in the morning. Or simply put a gentle smile on your face before you get out of bed.

EXERCISE: Here’s an exercise you can try as a group. Ask a person to read it aloud, slowly and softly (but loud enough to be heard), with a soothing, calm voice. Everyone else just listen and follow:

“Noticing the way you are sitting in the chair ---- (2 sec wait for each ----). Noticing where your body is touching the chair --- Now beginning to bring your attention to your breath --- Noticing how the air enters your body, where it travels, and how it leave your body --- Noticing the parts of your body that move as you are breathing --- Now, placing your hand on your abdomen and noticing whether it moves as you are breathing-----Gently deepening your breath so that you are breathing from your abdomen---Noticing your abdomen, chest, and shoulders expand as you inhale---Continuing to deepen and slow your breath---Paying attention to the sensations you experience---Just continuing to focus on your breath for the next several moments -------

There is another practice example in Mindfulness Meditation in the Appendix, p.86.
**Practice Willpower: STOP! THINK!**

Someone might tell you that he hit his girlfriend because she provoked him and he couldn’t help himself. But that same man, if disrespected by his boss, or a policeman, would probably be able to control himself.

**EXERCISE:** Think of a time when you were provoked and you did well. You handled it. You did not allow the other person to push your buttons:

What happened:

What did you do right:

Share with the group. Make a list of skills that people use to stay in control:
Manage Difference and Conflict: Think Smart

Check-in. Please say your first name and share any family connection since our last meeting. Anything different yet in the relationship you are focusing on in this course? Any new understanding about your family system?

Be Mindful: Mindful attention is extremely useful in stressful or conflictual situations. STOP -- BREATHE -- LISTEN! Practice with mindfulness, meditation, any contemplative practice strengthens your ability to act rather than just react without thinking first. When someone 'pushes your buttons' and you react from an emotional place before you've had time to consider -- then conflict is more likely to escalate.

Break the Demand-Withdraw Cycle: This couple pattern in which one person seeks more closeness [making the other feel 'invaded'], and the other seeks more personal space [making the other feel abandoned or pushed away and uncared for] is very common. Another name is Pursuer - Distancer (as the pursuer moves closer, the distancer retreats). Like all relationship patterns (some people call them 'dances'), this pattern can escalate until there is a feeling of hopelessness. The most important thing to remember about breaking cycles is that usually either party can change the pattern. [In an abusive situation, this advice might be less useful -- you need to focus on safety first.] The invaded person can stop withdrawing and give more attention, leading the partner to feel more safe and thus willing to move away and give more space. The demanding partner can pull back and focus on something else, leading the partner to feel safer and less pressured; eventually they will then focus attention (be attracted to) their partner, take down their wall and approach.

Speak to the adult: See (or imagine) that there is a reasonable adult somewhere within the person you are addressing. Speak to that adult -- calmly, rationally. Make I Statements -- I want, need, feel ... Avoid You Statements (you are, you think, I know you......, you really (hate me; don't want...).

Stay in contact; don't attack; don't withdraw; don't defend: when you're stressed and are having a hard time being constructive in any way, use this as your 'mantra.' Say it over and over in your mind. Breathe.

Metacommunicate: This is the way out of many difficult discussions. Talk about your communication process. "We don't seem to be hearing each other." "It looks like we're talking in circles." "It feels like we both feel hurt, misunderstood."

Time Out: When you recognize that you're caught in a repetitive cycle or dance; when you feel you're only hurting each other or you're exhausted or you simply don't know what else to do, take a time out. Hopefully this can be mutual -- you can use a time out sign or say 'let's take at time out and talk about this again in an hour (tomorrow) -- it's important to make a commitment to when you're going to address the issues again; not just avoid them.

THINGS TO AVOID: - STUFFING YOUR TRUE FEELINGS UNTIL THEY 'BOIL OVER'
- VERBAL ABUSE - THE SILENT TREATMENT
- PRETENDING YOU AGREE WHEN YOU REALLY DON'T.

Practice good listening and talking habits. Demonstrate respect and compassion. Praise. We'll discuss these issues more in our next section on healing relationships.

Please see the Appendix for more ideas: SIX STEPS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT, p. 88.
HEALING and HOPE
What Causes What

CHECK-IN. Please say your first name and share any family connection since our last meeting. Anything different yet in the relationship you are focusing on in this course? Any new understanding about your family system?

The brain is important for understanding human behavior, but so is our innate potential and our life experiences. Please look at the figure WHAT CAUSES WHAT in the Appendix, p. 84. It shows one way of thinking about behavior and personality. It’s not perfect. It’s a ‘map” to help us think about our behavior. You may prefer a different map. That’s OK. The most important thing about a map is whether or not it is USEFUL. Does it help you get where you want to go?

So many things determine who we are and who we become. First is our genetics. Some children are born hyper-sensitive to almost everything; others are disturbed by very little – and, of course, most of us fall somewhere in the middle. Family medical history is important, too. Some people are more likely to have heart disease – or alcoholism. And a family’s social history is important. A war, depression, alcoholism or other difficult experiences in one generation affects how the next generation functions. The community is important, too – is it safe and supportive; or is it dangerous? A strong family can help protect a child from a dangerous neighborhood. A strong community can help protect a child from an abusive family. There are a lot more arrows that could be drawn in this picture. Everything influences everything else!

Which two or three circles do you think are the most important? Why? Can you give an example from your own life?

What choices are you facing now?

What resources do you have to help you face your challenges?
Problem Focused Strategies  [focus on past success]

EXERCISE: For the following items, please respond by stating strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree:

(1) I can think about things that have made a positive difference for me.
   __ Strongly Agree   __Agree   __Neutral   __Disagree   __Strongly Disagree

(2) I am able to focus on times when my situation is not so overwhelming.
   __ Strongly Agree   __Agree   __Neutral   __Disagree   __Strongly Disagree

(3) There are times in my life when I am able to handle difficulties well.
   __ Strongly Agree   __Agree   __Neutral   __Disagree   __Strongly Disagree

(4) I am aware of small positive changes that I make.
   __ Strongly Agree   __Agree   __Neutral   __Disagree   __Strongly Disagree

(5) I have successfully overcome challenges in the past.
   __ Strongly Agree   __Agree   __Neutral   __Disagree   __Strongly Disagree

(6) I have made steps toward improving my life.
   __ Strongly Agree   __Agree   __Neutral   __Disagree   __Strongly Disagree

EXERCISE. Please share with the group one example of a strategy that has worked for you in the past.

PLEASE REMEMBER: One small change can have a big effect in any system. Everything is connected to everything else. Even a very small change can start a positive process.

No good thing is too small to try!
Destructive Patterns: Breaking the Cycle

CHECK-IN: Please share the letter you’ve written to your deceased loved-one. If you are willing, please read it to the group. Or just say to whom you wrote and if the experience of writing the letter was helpful to you in any way.

KEY IDEAS

- Almost all abusers were abused themselves. But most people who were abused as children break the cycle; they don’t abuse their own children.
- A SMALL change can have a BIG affect.
- Commitment to change can make the difference – particularly if you tell others what you plan to do.
- Every bump in the road, every challenge or crisis, brings the opportunity to grow stronger, learn new skills and find new meaning in life.
- Spirituality is often strengthened during times of struggle.

MORE IDEAS for HEALING

Personal Areas you’d like to change.

In the box below are some things that people often struggle with when they’ve been abused or neglected as children. Do any of them apply to you? What would you like to change? Share as much as you’d like with others in the group.

Some Characteristics often Associated with Abuse or Neglect

Low Self-Image – low opinion of self, think you’re no good, can’t do anything right
Don’t have friends – stay to self a lot, isolated from others, feel alone
Temper and/or Impatience -- have a ‘short fuse,” blow up easily, impatient with others
Stress – feel under pressure all of the time from job, kids, finances, or other reasons
Trust – can’t trust anyone, always being let down, look at people with suspicion
Depression – feel down or hopeless; have trouble getting stuff done, making decisions
MAKING GOLD OUT OF STRAW (please take turns reading):

Look at the Family Adaptation figure in the Appendix, p. 85. It tries to show how crises can unbalance a family or a relationship and how families then set out to make things right. The crisis can be a health crisis, a death, or someone going to prison – anything that challenges people.

All people, relationships and families have some demands and some capabilities. There are stresses and there are ways of coping with these stresses. One way families cope is by having an understanding of who they are; an idea of what the world is like (a world view). When the crisis hits, the individual, relationship or family becomes over-stressed. There are too many demands. Resources are stretched too thin. In order to re-balance, we need to develop new skills; talk about ways to solve problems; listen to each other; perhaps find new resources.

Oftentimes families and individuals ‘re-balance’ by finding meaning in adversity, focusing more on what’s really important in life – spirituality, loving relationships. Stress can be reduced through acceptance and calmness. After a crisis, some people will even say they’re glad it happened – because it made them appreciate life more, it brought them closer to family or friends – or closer to Jesus, the Buddha, God or Allah.

EXERCISE. PLEASE MAKE A LIST of resources and supports you have in your life. They can be personal, friends, family, teachers, role models, spirituality or religion.

What I have going for me:

What positive thing can come out of going to prison?

TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO SHARE ONE OR TWO OF YOUR RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS WITH OTHERS IN THE GROUP.
Relationship you’d like to change – some Ideas for improving relationships

• Before visiting or calling, make a plan. Have a specific goal in mind.

• Practice what you’re planning to say and get ideas from a friend. How are you coming across; how might you say it differently. Practicing ahead of time also makes it more likely you’ll be able to go through with what you want to do.

• REMEMBER, one small step can impact/change the system. A small step can lead to a big change. One step at a time is good. Start with the easiest person, or the easiest issue.

• Work on developing a one-to-one relationship with each family member. Learn to 'de-triangle.' Don't get caught in the middle. If someone says something negative or gossips to you about another family member say you don’t want to be in the middle; or just say something like “huh” and change the subject.

• Make 'I' statements (not 'you' statements): "I want, need, feel, think....." Not "You make me... or You think....."

• Speak to the ADULT in each person. Assume that somewhere in each of us is a reasonable adult. Try (or pretend) to see that part in the person you are addressing, no matter how 'childish' they are acting. Speak to the adult.

• Recognize that oftentimes the trait which we dislike most in others is something we also don't like about ourselves -- maybe we haven't even realized that we have such a trait. "If you spot it, you got it." is a phrase some people use to describe this phenomenon.

• Recognize when you're 'hooked.” Take anger, strong feelings, hurt as a sign that you’re hooked. Take a deep breath (or maybe 10 deep breaths) and back off.

• Use humor to 'unhook’ yourself.

• Say, over and over in your head "stay in contact; don't attack: don't defend; don't withdraw; stay in contact....."

MORE IDEAS and EXAMPLES.

Write a letter and say you’re sorry for the trouble you’ve caused. You hope things will be better in the future.

Go to church with your mom, grandmother.

Call or write a letter to someone you want to feel close to, or used to feel close to.

Send a THANK YOU card or note – for something you have received (“I remember when you took me to the park; it’s a great memory. Thank you so much”)

EXERCISE: Share with the group something about a relationship you are trying to make better. Ask for ideas of things to say or do. Write or call someone this week.
How to Listen Effectively

CHECK-IN: How good a listener are you?

KEY IDEAS
- Listening with mindful attention – the power of being fully aware in the present – is deeply rewarding to others.
- Active Listening is an important basic skill to keep practicing.
- Nod, commendate, validate

MINDFUL ATTENTION (review):
Mindfulness involves staying in the present, a “letting be.” Sometimes a willingness to simply “sit” with an experience can bring an awareness that allows one to survive even negative feelings and thus, doesn’t need to continue to fear or avoid them. If we just ‘sit’ with a feeling and hold it gently in our mind, we find that it may get stronger and stronger, but then it fades, or turns into something else – perhaps a feeling of peace or calm.

When we are mindful of others, we are giving them our full attention; listening calmly to understand; not interrupting or giving advice. We just focus, attend and listen.

EMPATHIC, ACTIVE LISTENING
Show that you are listening (Nod, smile, keep an ‘open’ posture – don’t cross your arms or legs, make small comments like “uh huh.”)

Tune in to the other person.

Reflect back their ideas and feelings (“So you're saying..." "You seem to be feeling....." "Is this what you mean?").

Don’t judge; don’t interrupt; allow the person speaking to finish.

When you give your own opinion, be respectful; treat the other person the way you would like to be treated.

When you give your own opinion, be respectful; treat the other person the way you would like to be treated.
EXERCISE. For each of these statements, complete the response “It sounds like you’re feeling ________________.” Share your response with the group:

**Yea, school’s out next week!**  It sounds like you’re feeling _____________________.

**Will you hold my hand when we go in?**  It sounds like you’re feeling ___________________; _______________________________________

**I don’t have anyone to play with.**  It sounds like you’re feeling ____________________.

**Go away. Leave me alone.**  It sounds like you’re feeling _____________________.

**If I have to listen to one more complaint today, I think I’ll scream!** It sounds like you’re feeling ________________.

**I never should have confided in Ryan. Now look what’s happening.** It sounds like you’re feeling _________________; _________________________________________.

**I really blew it today. I should have know better. Now what do I do?** It sounds like you’re feeling _________________; _________________________________________.

**This job sucks! My boss is a real bitch.** It sounds like you’re feeling ________________.

Now make up a few statements yourself. Go around the group, seeing how creative you can be at coming up with helpful active listening.

For more ideas, please see **COMMUNICATION ROADBLOCKS** (Appendix p. 96) and **LISTENING FROM THE HEART** in the Appendix, p. 98.
COMMENDATION AND VALIDATION – These are similar; they are great ways to respond to someone who is sharing an experience with you.

**Commentation** means noting the other’s strengths; their positive traits. *Example:*

- I can tell you cared a lot for her.
- It looks like you did your best.
- You’re really strong to have gotten through that.

**Validation** means telling the other person that you heard what they said; you see their point. You can validate someone even when you don’t agree with them. *Some examples:*

- I see what you’re saying even though it isn’t my way of thinking.
- I think you’re saying that what happened made you really angry.
- That must have been hard.

**What an experience!**

Someone who feels validated would say that the other person:

- Saw the ‘real’ me
- Was aware of what I was thinking and feeling
- Understood me
- Really listened to me
- Expressed liking and encouragement for me
- Valued my abilities and opinions
- Respected me
- Was responsive to my needs

**EXERCISE:** Break into groups of two. Take turns telling each other something that happened to you.

1. The speaker should share a story about a hard time. Talk for 5-10 minutes.
2. The listener should focus on empathic, active listening.
3. Don’t talk much, just focus, pay attention and nod.
4. When the speaker finishes his/her story, say one commendation and one validation (check the lists above if you need help).
5. Share with the group your Validation and Commentation (exact words).
6. Switch roles. The person who was listening now gets to be the speaker.
7. Repeat the process.

**EXERCISE:** What is the one, most important skill you can practice to become a better listener? Write it here. Share it with the group.
Finding the Right Words
(How I can say what I want to say without pushing someone’s buttons.)

CHECK-IN: How are you doing today?

KEY IDEA:
- Often it’s not WHAT you say, but HOW you say it that makes all the difference.

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES (read and be sure everyone knows what each means):
1) MINDFULNESS -- Be fully attentive and present in the moment
2) AUTHENTICITY -- Be true to yourself -- be honest
3) CARING – Show sincere positive feeling, affection, for the other.
4) RESPECT – You have a right to your opinion; they have a right to theirs.
5) EMPATHIC LISTENING -- Give signals that you are listening (verbal and non-verbal).
6) COMMENDATION -- Note the other’s strengths; say something positive.
7) VALIDATION -- Acknowledge the other; let the other know they are understood.
8) PERSIST – If you don’t succeed this time, try a different approach. Take a break, but don’t give up.
9) DE-TRIANGLE – Avoid or get yourself out of situations when someone is trying to get you to take their side against someone else.
10) ACTIVE LISTENING -- Reflect ideas and feelings (“So you’re saying..." ”You seem to be feeling.....")
11) HUMOR -- Humor can sap the tension.

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

What you communicate (either verbally or non-verbally) affects others and their response affects you. It goes round and round. Dad screams at son; son screams at his sister and avoids Dad at dinner.

Communication is sometimes direct. You have something to say to me, you tell me. But it’s sometimes indirect – I say something to Dad about our son that I want him to overhear (“Bobby’s doing great in school.” “I’m going to kill that kid if he doesn’t straighten up!”).

Communication can be in ‘code’ because some feelings are uncomfortable. A dad was raised in poverty with a fair amount of violence in the neighborhood. He never said “I love you.” Instead he’d say, “That dress looks OK.” Grandmother is banging dishes in the kitchen; it may be her way of saying she’s angry.

EXERCISE: Give an example of a negative communication pattern from your own family. Then give an example of a positive communication pattern. Share with the group.
**METACOMMUNICATION**

Metacommunication is a wonderful skill to practice. It means *communicating about the communication process*, kind of 'getting above and looking down' at what's happening. Here are some examples:

"We seem to be talking in circles."

"This is hard; we both seem have trouble getting our points across."

"We're talking louder and louder."

"I know you said to leave you alone, but it seems like you might need a hug or some company; I don't know what to do -- I'm afraid I'll be wrong no matter what I do."

Metacommunication often breaks up a log jam in the conversation -- or stops the discussion from escalating out of control.

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**I STATEMENTS (I think; I want; I feel; I believe; I like....).** These kinds of statements are more effective and less likely to get the other person upset than statements that start with *you*. *"You statements"* often make the other feel attacked. For instance:

"You're making me angry."

TRY instead:  "I'm starting to get angry; talking about this always upsets me."

"You're being bad." TRY instead:  "I'm upset because you're hitting your sister and you know better."

"Why do you have to play that music so loud?" TRY instead:  The loud music is bothering me; I'd appreciate it if you would turn it down a little."

"You're lying." TRY "I don't believe what you're saying."

"You make me worry when you do that." TRY "I worry when you do that."

"You should drink less." TRY "I'd like it if you were drinking less."
EXERCISE 1. Read each of the following and then change it to an “I statement.” After everyone has finished, share what you wrote. Some hints:

Avoid "oughts" and "shoulds." Criticisms like "You should be on time!" usually hide our own feelings about a situation beneath a veil of self-righteousness. Try saying something like, "I feel angry/insecure when…" This allows us to live in the moment with our feelings.

Avoid labels. Labels like "bastard," "crazy," "rigid," "racist," etc., tend to categorize people and blame them. Expressing our feelings directly works better than categorizing ourselves or others.

Avoid the phrases "I feel like…" and "I feel that…." The sentence "I feel that you are crazy," is a Disguised You-Statement, not an I-Statement. When we disguise our true meaning, we're still hedging and not letting our partner know who we are.

YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED.

YOU SHOULDN’T INTERRUPT ME WHEN I’M WORKING.

YOU ARE WRONG.

YOU HATE ME.

YOU DON’T DESERVE A TREAT!

YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.

YOU ARE CRAZY.

YOU MAKE ME ANGRY.
REWRITING. Here are some examples of rewrites.

You're not her parent. Just because I'm in jail doesn't mean you can go against what I want!

Rewrite: I really appreciate you looking after my kid(s) while I'm here. I just feel so bad that I'm not taking care of them myself. I wish I could be with them more. I understand you have to do what you can, and what you think is best. I've just always believed that she should have a regular bedtime (should go to school every day, etc.)

You've never loved me. You always favored James. I don't need you!

Rewrite: I suppose I'm jealous of James. It has always seemed to me that you favored him over me. I don't know if that's true – or if there's some reason for it that I don't understand. I'm your son (grandson, daughter), too. I need you. I want things to be better between us.

EXERCISE. Think of something you want to say. Write it out just as you feel it. Then rewrite it in a way that is more likely to get the response you want from the other person. Get suggestions for rewrites from others in the group.

EXERCISE: Women can often say “It hurts my feelings when you do (or say) that.” What do men say to convey the same idea? (write down ideas from your group):
EXERCISE: Look back at the letter you wrote earlier (Page 25). Pick one or two sentences that might be said better and rewrite it here. Rewrite it so that it says what you mean in a more respectful, caring way. Share with the group the wording you changed.

EXERCISE: Role-play what you would like to say and get ideas from others in the group. If it's you and your dad, for instance, let someone in the group pretend to be your dad. You 'talk' to him first – just let the other person sit there and listen. Then see if 'dad' has any response (SHORT response) – how did he feel listening to you. Then let someone else in the group take your place and pretend to be you. See how they would say what you are thinking and feeling. You might do that twice in order to get more ideas. If time is limited, you may want to break up into groups of 4 or 5 to do this so everyone can have a turn. Make some notes here, to help you remember what you learned:
Forgiveness (Self and Others) and Gratitude

CHECK-IN: How are you doing today?

KEY IDEAS
- Not hiding from or avoiding fear and pain can help us move through a grief process. MINDFUL ATTENTION may bring peace.
- Forgiving yourself is often the key to forgiving others
- Count your blessings; gratitude heals.

LET’S REVIEW MINDFUL ATTENTION -- BECAUSE IT CAN BE VERY IMPORTANT

Mindfulness involves staying in the present; “letting it be.” Sometimes a willingness to simply “sit” with experience can bring an awareness that we can survive painful, sad or angry feelings. We don’t have to fear or avoid them. Focus on the feeling itself -- not on whatever situation evoked the feeling. If we just ‘sit’ with a feeling and hold it gently in our mind, we find that it may get stronger and stronger, but then it fades, or turns into something else – sometimes it turns into a feeling of peace or calm.

SELF-FORGIVENESS:

Self-forgiveness is:
* Accepting yourself as a human who has faults and makes mistakes.
* Letting go of anger at yourself for your past failures, errors and mistakes.
* Feeling good about yourself after you have admitted your failure or mistake.
* The spiritual healing of your heart by calming self-rejection, quieting the sense of failure and lightening the burden of guilt.
* The act of letting go of the need to work so hard to make up for the past.

In the absence of self-forgiveness, you run the risk of:
* Chronically seeking revenge and paybacks toward yourself.
* Pessimism, negativity and non-growth oriented behavior.
* Fear over making new mistakes or of having the old mistakes revealed.
* Feeling overwhelmed by fear of failure or fear of rejection
* Feeling an emotional vacuum in which little or no emotions are shown or shared.
* Chronic hostility, sarcasm and cynicism.
* Self name-calling, belittling and self-demeaning behaviors.
Some ways you can practice forgiving yourself:

* Trust in your goodness.
* Trust in the goodness and mercy of your Higher Power.
* Let go and let your Higher Power lead you during a hurtful time.
* Take a risk. If you get hurt it won’t be the end of the world.
* When you fail, try again.
* Develop or strengthen a personal spirituality.
* Know that you can change. Trust yourself.

EXERCISE: SITTING MINDFULLY

STEP 1: Stretch. Reach high; touch the floor (it’s OK to bend your knees!); Twist very slowly from side to side.

STEP 2: Breathe. Put your hands on your stomach. Make it go out as you take a deep breath (you want your stomach to move – not just your chest). Take 10 very slow deep breaths.

STEP 3: Sit up straight. Be comfortable. Let your mind go to a peaceful place – maybe some memory you have – or even imagine. Gramma’s lap. The beach; the park.

STEP 4: Gently move to a difficult memory. Let it be gently in your mind. Think about forgiving yourself and/or the other person.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE GROUP (make notes of things you want to remember)

Sitting mindfully while thinking about a difficult experience can help us begin forgiving ourselves. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone does things they are ashamed of later. It’s best to forgive ourselves, seek forgiveness from others, and move on with purpose.
EXERCISE: SEEKING FORGIVENESS FROM THOSE WE'VE HURT [Humility is good. Be the better man! Or woman!]

STEP 1: Think of a person you have hurt -- someone you might want to apologize to.

Write their name here: _____________________________

STEP 2: What would you like to say? Some examples are given below. Circle the ones that might work for you. Write out what you’d like to say in your own words:

- I remember when things were better between us.
- I wish things were better now.
- I’m sorry that things I did hurt you.
- It’s not your fault what happened to me.
- I don’t blame you.
**ASSIGNMENT:** For the next 10 days, please keep a *gratitude journal*. List the names of the days below. Each day, write one or two things you are grateful for. It can be *anything*. (My knee’s not hurting today. I know my mother loves me. We had good weather.) When you’ve completed the journal make a note to yourself about what you experienced.

Day 1 (__________________):

Day 2 (__________________):

Day 3 (__________________):

Day 4 (__________________):

Day 5 (__________________):

Day 6 (__________________):

Day 7 (__________________):

Day 8 (__________________):

Day 9 (__________________):

Day 10 (__________________):

Summary notes:
**CHECK-IN:** Please say your name and how you’re doing today.

**KEY IDEAS:**
- What we know about trust and respect depends a lot on our very early childhood.
- Boys and girls are often treated differently. Boys are often told to be tough and to not get too close to people. Girls are more likely to be comforted.
- Our past influences, but does not control the present; we can change.
- We are not our history.

**RELATIONSHIP STYLES:** These are questions about your relationships with people in general. Read each paragraph. Then circle the number on the scale to show how well each of the paragraphs describes you.

**Style A.** It is hard for me to feel close to people. I want to be close to people, but I find it hard to trust them. I find it hard to ask people for help. I worry that if I get too close to people they will end up hurting me.

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**Style B.** It is easy for me to feel close to people. I feel okay asking people for help and I know that they will usually help me. When people ask me for help, they can count on me. I don’t worry about being alone and I don’t worry about others not liking me.

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**Style C.** I don’t care if I am close to people. It is very important for me not to ask for help, because I like to do things on my own. I don’t like it if people ask me for help.

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The paragraph that best describes me is (Circle one): A  B  C
PEOPLE NEED BOTH AFFECTION AND RESPECT (please take turns reading).

**Affection.** The child (or adult) who feels loved and cared for or the child who sees that they are **precious** to others is a lucky child. A child learns about safety and trust starting with the first few months of life. A child's ability to trust enhances his or her ability to get the help they need from nurturing relationships with others. This builds positive self esteem that can last a lifetime.

Neglect, rejection or abuse creates a cold, rejecting or hostile family climate, and hurts both self-esteem and the ability to trust. This experience leads to self-protection, defensiveness, and unwillingness to become vulnerable by exposing one’s needs to others.

**Respect.** When a child (or adult) states their ideas or opinions and they are respected, this helps them feel good about their ideas. It helps them learn that their opinions matter and that people can respect differences; we don’t have to agree.

Disrespect (“You’re wrong,” “That’s a stupid idea”) or mystification (“You don’t really feel (think) that”) is harmful. An example would be the family rule “If you disagree with me, you don’t love me.” When others don’t respect your opinions, you are less comfortable expressing them. It even makes it harder for you to know what you really think.

ATTACHMENT PATTERNS

Caregiving and attachment are basic for all humans. In the 1920s, many people thought that babies only needed food and physical care. But in the 1930s and ‘40s people started noticing that children separated from their families by the war, or children left alone in hospitals or orphanages, tended to become withdrawn and lose weight. The psychologist Harry Harlow showed that infant monkeys preferred ‘cloth’ pretend mothers – rather than wire mothers, even when the wire mothers provided the milk! Renee Spitz studied babies in hospitals and saw that those who were never touched lost weight and became sick.

**Secure attachment (Style B)**

A child who is securely attached will explore freely while his caregiver is present. And also engage with strangers without fear. For these children, the parent is a **safe haven**, providing **affection** and instilling in the child a sense of trust in others. As the child begins to crawl and walk, the parent becomes also a **secure base**. A 2-year-old playing in the sand box will, every so often, look back to see if Mom, Dad, or Gramma is watching. Children (and mates, and friends) want our **attention** and **respect**. Children need to see that we **see** them. Secure adults are able to trust other people, give and receive support and respect.

**Anxious attachment (Style A)**

A child (or adult) becomes anxious when they do not feel safe. Anxious people tend to worry that someone they love will leave them. It’s hard to trust when we’re anxious. This pattern probably develops because the child’s needs are met sometimes – but sometimes they are ignored.

**Avoidant attachment (Style C)**

A child (or adult) with an avoidant attachment pattern will avoid or even ignore a person who might take care of them. It’s as if a child has been ignored a lot, or forced to be too independent too soon. He or she comes not to trust others – others are not there when you need them. It’s better not to count on other people, but just stay to yourself.
These patterns, learned in childhood, can change. You can change.
The attachment patterns learned in childhood tend to follow us through life – unless we learn something different. Some people who grow up anxious or avoidant learn to be secure in relationships with others; they are said to have earned secure attachment. One of the biggest jobs for anxious or avoidant individuals is to learn how and when to trust others, how to recognize when others are trustworthy. Obviously there are some situations which are not safe, in which trust is not appropriate – when it’s smart to be anxious or avoidant. But there are others when it is OK to trust and it’s good to recognize those people, and those times, when trust is appropriate!

**EXERCISE:** Write briefly, then share with the group:

(1) How would you describe your attachment style? Can you give an example of this style?

(2) How has your way of relating to others changed over the last year or so?
**Healthy Relationships**

Research shows attachment is a universal, primary survival motivation in human beings across cultures. Relationships that are important and significant flourish when they are based on these ingredients.

- **Secure Dependence** - the more securely connected, the more autonomy and difference is tolerated. It’s OK to be oneself; it’s OK to be different.

- **Safe Haven** - comfort is found in the relationship. can turn to the other. trusting comfort will always be there.

- **Secure Base** - can take risks, explore, learn and grow as a confident person. Can deal with stress and conflict positively.

- **Emotionally Engaged** - experiences higher levels of intimacy, trust, and responsiveness -- not just physically present but emotionally present to self and others.
Male and Female

Another issue is gender. Traditionally, men in our culture are taught to be avoidant, to hide their feelings (“Boys don’t cry”), to protect their space and privacy. Historically, mothers have been taught that if they ‘coddled’ boys, they would become weak. Men (and boys) need to be tough, to separate from Mom -- even if Mom has to push them away. To call a boy a ‘sissy’ or a ‘momma’s boy’ was an insult. [But to call a girl a ‘tomboy’ or a ‘daddy’s girl’ was a compliment.] However, little boys need to be held and cuddled, to see that they are precious in their Mom’s, Dad’s and or Gramma’s, eyes – just like little girls.

EXERCISE: What do you think? What are the main differences between boys and girls? Which of the following statements is true? Can both be true? Share your ideas with the group.

A. Boys and girls are very different. A man has to be tough to survive. The woman usually takes responsibility for taking care of people.

B. Boys and girls need affection, love, protection. Girls and boys need respect, need to be encouraged to work hard, try new things and learn to take care of themselves.

Main Differences:

What Boys and Girls Need:

Adult partnerships

Attachment styles are very important in marriage. Two secure people have a fairly easy time; they trust each other. When one partner is anxious and the other one is avoidant, a typical pattern between a woman and a man, then the marriage can be a way to grow and heal – but it is not easy! She wants holding, attention. This scares him and he withdraws. He doesn’t know what to do when she cries. [Usually the thing to do is to just hold her and NOT try to FIX anything.]

As a relationship matures, people learn now to be both closer and more separate; more independent! When I feel safe in my relationship at home, I can be stronger, more independent at work. When I feel strong as an individual, I am more willing to risk getting close to others.
EXERCISE: In the relationship you are working on in the class – the one you want to make better, how would you describe the attachment patterns – your own and the other person? Can you identify a particular the pattern, or ‘dance’ that you do – like getting close then pushing away, then getting close again? Write your answer here and discuss it with the group.

*To grow mature is to separate more distinctly, to connect more closely.*

Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929)
Parenting Basics: Positive Attention and Modeling

CHECK-IN. How are you today? What do you think is hardest part of being a parent?

KEY IDEAS

- Your child needs affection; he/she needs to be able to trust you.
- Your child needs your quality attention – mindful listening; respect.
- It’s OK for a child to have different styles of parenting (more strict, or more soft, for instance) from different people.
- When two people (mom and grandmother; mother and dad) are parenting, they should try to support each other – even when they have different styles.
- Your child will model on you. This is the way children learn!

EXERCISE: What are your most important rules for parenting? Write some here then share with the group.

Please take turns reading the following paragraphs.

PARENTING BASICS

Well, we can’t do a whole parenting course here! But many of the things we’ve covered so far apply to raising children. They need respect and affection. They need to know you can protect them. They need for you to model the kind of behaviors you want them to have. It’s very true that they value spending time with you. But they will cherish memories of your relationship with them even if you have less time, but make it quality time. They’ll remember that you encouraged them. That you thought they were competent. That you saw them. That you believed them to be precious! It’s not what you do so much as how you do it.

COMMUNICATION BASICS

Mindful Attention, Active Listening and I Statements are particularly important. When a child seems worried, but can’t seem to say clearly what they fear …. If you just listen and listen and listen, and say “uh huh” and “I see” a lot, after a while, sometimes after a long while, it will come out what’s bothering them.

Emotional Support and Respect are VERY important!! Praise; validate; reflect; listen mindfully and actively.
FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE: WHAT YOU PUT YOUR ATTENTION ON GROWS.

Some children seem to only get attention when they do something wrong. And guess what? Negative attention is better than no attention. Scan for the positive; watch your child until you find something to praise him or her for, then PRAISE. WHEN YOU PRAISE CHILDREN THEY WILL TRY HARDER TO PLEASE YOU; TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL; TO BE KIND TO OTHERS. THEY WILL DO MORE OF WHAT YOU PRAISE THEM FOR! Please see 101 WAYS TO PRAISE A CHILD in the appendix, page 93.

EXERCISE: We’ve also included some guidelines in the appendix for developmental stages of children – what they need at various stages of development (GROWING UP: AGE SPECIFIC TASKS FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS, p. 94). If you’re a parent, please check out the ideas about what’s appropriate for children the ages of yours. What’s the most important idea, to your mind? Please share with the group.

YOU’RE THE MODEL

Kid’s brains are recording machines. They see what you do and they soak it up. Even very young children notice the difference between what you do and what you tell them to do. DO AS I SAY AND NOT AS I DO just doesn’t work. SHOW them how to treat others. They will model on you.

GROUP DISCUSSION: TO HIT OR NOT TO HIT

Please take turns reading paragraphs from the article ANGRY FATHERS in the appendix, page 90.

Child development specialists have found that reward and praise are very effective ways to guide children. They prefer ‘time-outs’ or removal of privileges for discipline. However, many parents (and cultures) believe in hitting, even denial of food, as a means of training children. And although most people believe that beating or terrifying a child is wrong, many parents believe in spanking. What do you think?
Parenting from Prison

CHECK-IN: How are you doing today?

KEY IDEAS

- The basics of parenting are the same when a parent is in prison: Children need to feel precious, loved, respected and safe.
- It’s important to stay connected to the people who are helping care for your child.

Despite the large number of families separated due to incarceration, the majority of parents who are incarcerated are able eventually to reunite with their children. Even though there are challenges in continuing your role as a parent, it is very important both for you and your children. Both mothers and fathers play very important roles in their children's development of a sense of identity, security, and belonging which will affect them throughout their lives.

The major concerns for most parents who are incarcerated are:

1) dealing with the emotions of being separated from their children,
2) making decisions regarding the placement and care of their children,
3) maintaining contact with their children during their incarceration, and
4) reuniting with their children once they are released from prison.

Parenting from prison isn’t easy. However, it is possible to play an active role in your children’s lives. Unfortunately, many parents in prison lose contact with their children. This does not have to happen. To avoid losing contact with your children, it will take effort on your part, the part of the children’s caregiver, and maybe even the court. You will probably get frustrated or feel overwhelmed at times. Communicating with state agencies, courts, your children, or their caregiver can be very difficult, especially from prison. Some family relationships may be strained. Transportation problems may prevent you from having regular visits with your children. Sometimes, it may feel like it is impossible to stay in touch with your children. All of these challenges are real and must be overcome. It will require patience, creativity, and persistence on your part.

Always remember that being a parent is the most challenging and rewarding job you’ll ever have. You, your children, and the person who is taking care of your children are all affected by your incarceration.
Here’s some things that children of incarcerated parents need to know:

• To know the parent’s incarceration is not their fault.
• To know what is happening to their parent.
• To know if they can have contact with their parent, and if so, when and how.
• To know where and with whom they will be living and going to school.
• To know what will stay the same and what will change while their parent is incarcerated.
• To know it is OK to still love their parent, and it is OK to be angry sometimes, too.
• To be encouraged to express, in safe and healthy ways, their feelings about their parent and their parent’s incarceration.
• To visit and maintain contact with the incarcerated parent as much as possible.
• To have stability and consistency in their living situations and daily routines.
• To feel safe.
• To have fun.
• To realize that people make choices in life that lead to different consequences. They won’t go to prison just because their mom or dad did.

STAYING CONNECTED

Sometimes it is very hard to stay connected. It depends a lot on how far away you are from your child, what kind of relationship you have with the child’s caretaker, and what kinds of opportunities are offered at your facility. Visits, calls, letters—they’re all very important to your child. They need to know you care about them and think they’re great. That you’re sorry you can’t be with them more; that you love them and always will love them.

Remember, children at different ages have different needs.

Children under 5 years of age are most concerned about where you are, when they will see you, and when you’re coming home. At this age, children don’t generally understand what a prison is, or why someone is sent to prison, or even what ‘time’ is. You want to answer your children’s questions, but you don’t have to give them details they won’t understand. As a general rule, you can tell that your children are ready for more detailed information when they start to ask you more complicated questions.

From about 7-8 years old, children are beginning to develop a sense of right and wrong. Children may begin to understand what a prison is and that people are sent to prison because they did something wrong. If your child asks you why are you in prison, you could tell them, “Mommy did something wrong and can’t come home for a while.” Children at this age are also starting to have an understanding of what time is, so if your child wants to know when you are coming home, you can answer that question more specifically, if you
know. It will help them understand how long you will be apart if you relate it to something in their lives. If you just say, “Daddy is coming home in ___ years,” they may not understand that as easily as if you said, “Daddy will be home when you are in ___ grade or when you will be ___ years old.”

Your children may be asked questions or teased by other children because you are in prison. Talking about this issue with your children in advance may help prepare them if they are faced with questions they may not know how to answer. You could ask your child, “Do people ever ask where your Daddy is?” If the child says, “yes,” you can ask them, “What did you say?” If your child says, “no,” you could ask them, “If someone asks you where your Daddy is, what would you say?” By asking some questions and finding out what’s going on in your children’s lives, you can help prepare your children so that they feel comfortable about what they say to other people or friends. It’s common in elementary school for teachers to schedule “parents day” events where children share information with other students about what their mother or father does for a living. Talking with your children ahead of time can help them prepare for these types of situations which otherwise might be awkward or uncomfortable for them. For example, one incarcerated father works in the kitchen at the prison. When his daughter is asked what kind of work her father does, she tells people that he is a cook.

Special Considerations in Parenting Teenagers While Incarcerated

Research shows that 40 percent of teenagers who have an incarcerated parent visit them less frequently during their teenage years. Although this can be understood as “normal” teenage behavior, it makes parenting a teenager from prison a little more challenging. During the teenage years, children are developing a sense of their own identity (separate from their parents) and becoming more independent. Although teenagers need parental guidance and structure, being more independent is normal and a part of healthy development. Even if you were living at home with your teenager, you would probably be seeing less of him or her because he or she wants to spend more time with friends. Looking at the situation this way may help you if your teenager seems less interested in having the same kind and level of contact with you when they were younger. As a parent, finding the balance between letting your teenager have enough freedom to mature but having enough rules to protect them is quite a challenge, especially since you are in prison. With teenagers, it is particularly important to let them know what your expectations of them are. For example, if it is important to you that your teenage graduate from high school - you need to let them know that and encourage them in this goal. If you have rules around curfew, drug or alcohol use, or sexual activity, you need to have a serious conversation with your teenager.

The challenge for all parents who have teenage children is to figure out how to enforce the rules. Since you are incarcerated, the rules will need to be enforced primarily by the children’s caregiver. You can play a very important role in supporting the caregiver so that the children are getting the same message from you and the caregiver. The teenage years can be a turbulent time. Creating a sense of identity, self-esteem, and preparing for adulthood can be very stressful, and teenagers can make mistakes or poor decisions that can affect the rest of their lives. Having significant attachments with adults in their life and having consistency in their living arrangement will be two major factors contributing to their successful adjustment.
Early teenage years (11-14 years old). During the early teenage years, teenagers are entering puberty and are developing a sense of their own identity. In doing so, they want more control of their lives and will start testing limits and boundaries. They are becoming more emotionally aware, are beginning to think about life goals and are starting to want to spend more time in group activities with their friends. Sometimes they will act very dependent on you (more like they did when they were younger) and sometimes they will try to be very independent of you and even seem like they are pushing you away. This is normal. The most important thing you can do at this time is to talk with them and make sure the lines of communication stay open. This will be a challenge. At this age, you can probably talk pretty straight with them in answering their questions. You'll know that they are ready to handle more details by the questions they ask. The most important thing is to let them know that they can ask you any question.

Throughout their teenage years, your children's friends will be very influential in their lives - sometimes even more influential than the adults in their lives. It's important to always know who their friends are and what they do when they are together.

Later teenage years (15-18 years old). During the later teenage years, children are developing a deeper sense of their own identity, want more independence, have more mature problem-solving abilities, are exploring sexuality and relationships with others, are more sensitive to being “different,” and are thinking more seriously about their future and life goals. It is a great time to encourage your teenager to be thinking about their future and what they hope to accomplish. It’s very important for teenagers to have goals that they help to create. Teenagers who don’t have a sense of a future or goals can easily feel lost. Teenagers who feel lost or feel that they don’t have a future can easily get into deep trouble in school, at home, or with the law.

Sadly, many teenagers today don’t have a sense of hope for their future. As their parent, there are two primary areas where you can have the greatest influence in their lives: Encourage them to have hope and self esteem; let them know they are important people to you, their family, and the wider community. Help guide and support them in developing goals and life skills they will need in their adult lives. Your teenager may be getting their first job and need guidance on how to spend and save the money they earn. They may be preparing to live on their own in the near future. Learning how to get a job, how to manage money and pay bills, how to find an apartment, how to be in a healthy relationship, how to solve problems—all of these are important life skills they need to learn as they prepare to live on their own. Staying in contact with your teenager is the most important thing you can do. As one mother in prison said, “Talk, ask questions, and listen, listen, listen to your teenagers.” If you think your teenager is having problems, don’t ignore them. Try to think of ways you can get extra support for them from other family members, the school, churches, or other community groups (like Big Brothers/Big Sisters). It is healthy for teenagers to pull away from their parents - it doesn’t mean that other adults can’t play important roles in their lives.

Being a teenager is a lot like being on a rollercoaster and their moods and attitudes can change a lot from month to month, week to week, day to day, or hour by hour. This is normal, even though it is probably one of the most frustrating and confusing things about trying to parent a teenager. One week they are angels - the next week they will test your last nerve. Try to be patient and understanding. It will help if you can stay grounded. Just because they are on a rollercoaster doesn’t mean you have to be on one, too. All children,
but especially teenagers, are particularly sensitive to criticism. Although it is important to talk to your teenagers about mistakes you think they are making, it is also very important that you be positive and encouraging with your teenagers. Tell them you love them and compliment them on their accomplishments. Even though you might think that your teenagers don’t care what you think - they do. They especially care about what you think of them.

Here are some suggestions for Making the Most of Visits

**Some general guidelines:** Answer their questions. Accept their feelings even if you don’t understand them. When you tell them something, ask what they heard you say – see if they understood. Pay attention to their behavior, not just their words. A child sometimes has difficulty around visits because when they leave, it’s a loss; children with divorced parents who visit have similar issues. Don’t prolong the departure. Say goodbye and give them a hug; walk away and let the caregiver handle it.

Check out 101 WAYS TO PRAISE A CHILD in the Appendix, p. 93. Read aloud taking turns after each word.

**Infants & Toddlers (0 - 3 Years Old) Daddy lives in a big house with lots of friends; he can’t visit us, but we can visit him.**

- Play Peek-a-boo, patty cake, talk; hold and cuddle them (if allowed)
- Draw pictures, count with them.
- Play the face game. Example: make a happy face, sad face, surprise, etc.
- Tell them a story.
- **Tell them you love them.**

**Preschoolers & Kindergarten (4 - 6 Years Old) Mommy’s in grown-up time out.**

- Draw pictures for your children to color.
- Make up short stories using their names as the main character.
- Recite poems and nursery rhymes.
- Have them practice their numbers and the alphabet.
- Read them a story.
- Talk about favorite things you’ve shared with them.
- **Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen.** Tell them you love them.

**School Age (7 - 10 Years Old) I’ll be home when you’re __ years old.**

- Make up word puzzles or develop ongoing games and stories for both of you to do.
- Play cards, dominoes, Legos, read books, use material available at the prison.
- Draw pictures, and encourage your children to do the same.
- Ask what they say about you; tell them what you do for work *(My daddy’s a cook, record keeper, gardener)*.
- **Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen.** Tell them you love them.
Early Teenage Years (11 - 14 Years Old) You can ask me any question.
• Talk with them. Communication is one of the most important things you have to offer.
• Ask them about what’s going on in their life. (School, friends, activities)
• Ask how they are feeling. (These are turbulent years; encourage them to take care of themselves.)
• Ask what you can do to help support them, especially if they help care for younger siblings.
• Participate in games, cards, whatever is furnished by your facility.
• *Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen.* *Tell them you love them.*

Later Teenage Years (15 - 18 Years Old) It’s natural to want to be more independent; but let’s stay in touch.
• Ask about how they are doing in school and any plans for after high school.
• Talk with them about their future plans for work, living on their own, and other “real life” issues, like drugs or alcohol and relationships.
• If possible, you might try and visit with your teenager alone so that you have some time to talk privately with them.
• *Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen.* *Tell them you love them.*

Some ideas for visits can be also be done with letters or by phone.

Write a story together with your child (you write part, send it home; your child writes part; and sends it back, repeat), or drawing a picture for your younger child to color. Here’s some more ideas for staying connected.

Make a bookmark for your child. Draw a picture or write a special message on the bookmark. Firm, stiff paper works well for this or, if possible, laminate your bookmark.

Send a note to be put in their lunch box or under their pillow or by their toothbrush. Just a small note that says “I love you. Have a great day! Love, Mom or Dad.”

Tell them stories about their childhood. Teens especially like to hear stories about themselves, such as when they learned to walk, what their first words were, or about their birth.

Encourage your child to read. Reading with children is something that helps them do well in school. You may want to try some creative ways to read with your child while you are incarcerated. One idea might include reading to your child when they come for a visit.

Ask the person who brings your children for a visit to bring their favorite book so that you can read with them while you are together.

Read to your child. There are some books (called RECORDABLE STORYBOOKS) that allow you to record yourself reading them. Then when the child opens the book, they will hear
you read each page as they go through the story.

**Write letters to your child.** Children love to get mail. Sending them a simple letter as often as you can is a great way to let them know you are thinking of them. In your first letter you may want to ask what they are learning in school or if they are playing soccer or football or doing gymnastics. Write to them about their interests.

**Favorite Television show.** You may be able to find out about favorite television shows. Maybe you can watch an episode and write about the show. Ask what part they liked best or what they thought about what happened on the show.

**TAKE SOME TIME TO SHARE IDEAS WITH OTHERS IN THE GROUP. WRITE DOWN THOSE THAT YOU THINK MIGHT BE USEFUL TO YOU:**
STAYING CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CARING FOR YOUR CHILD

This is sometimes very hard, especially if your ideas about what's good for the child are different from theirs. Of if they are angry with you for being in prison. Your child's caregiver needs your support. Talk or write to them as often as you can. If possible send birthday and holiday cards. Practice using the communication skills discussed earlier in this course. If there is conflict that the two of you can't resolve, try to focus only on issues concerning the child. If your child is in foster care, see if you can contact the social worker for help. It is very important for your child that you and the caregiver can communicate as well as possible. Your child may feel uncomfortable, feel it's their fault, or even feel caught in the middle if the two of you are negative toward one another. Maybe a mutual acquaintance can help if you two are at odds.

EXERCISE: Write the name of the person(s) caring for your child or children here:

What is it that you appreciate most about them?

What is your biggest concern?

SHARE YOUR RESPONSES WITH THE GROUP. SEE IF YOU CAN HELP EACH OTHER COME UP WITH GOOD IDEAS FOR YOUR CONCERNS.

EXERCISE: WRITE A THANKYOU NOTE TO YOUR CHILD'S CAREGIVER (here's a draft):

DEAR ________,

I appreciate ____________________________________________(your caring for Johnny).

I understand that _______________________ (it's hard. Things are not the best between us). I know we both want what's best for ___________. I would like it if ___________________________. Thank you again for all that you are doing.

_____________________________ (sign)
**Water the plant (love the child) and trust it to grow strong.**

**Teach social and survival skills.**

**Model the behavior you want your kids to learn.**

**Exercise:** Write down one parenting skill that you’d like to learn or get better at. Share your answers as a group.

The skill I most want to strengthen:

**Exercise: Write a letter to a child.** Pick a child (your own, a niece or nephew). OR you can write to yourself as a child – what you would like now, as an adult, to say to yourself as a child. Can you tell that child that he/she/you are precious?
**EXERCISE/ASSIGNMENT:** This is your last chance during the class to work on a relationship that you want to make better. Do you have questions? Could you use ideas from the group? Maybe you have a good idea that might help someone else. Share what has happened so far.

---

*We had problems like all families but we had a lot of love. I was extremely loved. We always felt we had each other.*

Jim Carrey, comedian/actor

*Families are about love overcoming emotional torture.*

Matt Groening, Creator of the Simpsons

*Mothers - especially single mothers - are heroic in their efforts to raise our nation's children, but men must also take responsibility for their children and recognize the impact they have on their families' well-being.*

Evan Bayh, politician, ex-Indiana Senator

*Heaven goes by favor. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in.*

Mark Twain, author
COURSE SUMMARY AND FUTURE PLANS

CHECK-IN: How are you feeling?

KEY IDEAS
- Focus on your goal; your purpose.
- Small steps turn the tide. Small steps can lead to big changes.
- Listen mindfully. Speak simply.
- Practice caring and respect.
- Start where you are. Look where you want to go. Take the first step.
- Stay connected.

GO BACK TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE YOU FILLED OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COURSE. Circle the scales to show where you are now. Or use a different color pen – some way for you to remember when each answer was made – at the beginning of the course or now.

Which relationship(s) did you focus on? What happened? What was your most effective behavior?

What is the most important thing you learned in this course?

Please share your answers with the group.
**EXERCISE:** Draw a picture of some specific future date. Choose a date, perhaps a year from now or 5-10 years from now. Draw a picture showing where you want to be, who you will be with, and what you plan to be doing……

Share your plans with the group.
CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING THIS COURSE!
BE WELL!
CHOOSE LIFE AND HEALTH!
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY!!
# APPENDICES

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All of us, in some way or another, are part of families. The family creates a primary reality for children and adolescents as they absorb their family's culture. Models, thought patterns, expectations and meanings absorbed in the family pervade the rest of life, both through the filtering of perceptions and through expectations of what is and what can be.
Healthy families contribute to a child’s well-being. While there are many variations, strength-based research finds remarkable similarities in strong resilient families across cultures and ethnicities. Successful families are described as close and caring, respectful of individual autonomy, exhibiting clear, open, spontaneous communication, effective problem solving skills, and spiritual well-being.
Therapists working with children in the 1950s began to notice that often if one child was helped, another became troubled. If all the children were OK, then the parents divorced. They started talking with parents and whole families, rather than just doing individual therapy with the child.
The result was Family Systems Theory, a way of looking at the individual in the context of the family – their role in the family, the family’s way of communicating, of expressing feelings. The family’s culture and rules for how to live together.
“System” means that all of the parts are interrelated. If one changes they all are affected. Like a mobile. Move one piece and the whole pattern changes.
What’s happening to one person, tends to affect the whole. If Mom looses her job, if Grandmother becomes ill or dies, if Dad’s job requires the family to move to a new town when the kids are in high school…. We’re all connected to family, even our very individualistic culture!
Individuals in families have **roles**. An example would be Mom or Dad – or Oldest Child. Other examples or roles are: Good Child, Scapegoat, Smart One, Mediator, Heart of the Family, Star, Baby. Different children in the family often take on different roles.

By **family rule**, we mean basically patterns that the family has – not all rules are conscious. A simple rule might be “If you disagree with me, it means you don’t love me.” or “If you talk back, you get hit.” Or, “In our family we always tell each other the truth.” Another example of a rule is “If the tension rises between Mom and Dad, Bobby picks a fight with Susie in order to distract them.” The family might not be aware that this is a ‘rule.’ But it happens over and over again.
One reason families have rules is in order to stay organized, know what’s happening, and to maintain the family ‘temperature’ within a comfortable range. Like a thermostat – if things get too hot, there’s a rule for how to cool them off (“If we get too angry and I’m afraid I’m going to hit you, I leave the room.”). If things get too cool, there’s a rule for how to warm them up (“We haven’t had any time together lately, let me give you a hug and you can tell me about your day.”)

Boundaries exist both with families (the marital subsystem usually excludes kids, or two siblings might be especially close) – And AROUND the family. Some families have a strong family boundary; they stay together and aren’t very connected with others outside the family. Their rule might be “What happens in the family stays in the family.” Or “We don’t wash out dirty laundry in public.”
When there is tension between two people, one way to handle it is to ‘triangle’ a third party.

We often see this in families when there is tension between parents. They may ‘scapegoat’ a child. A scapegoat child develops problems, is seen as a bad kid, or may become sickly. This allows adults to focus on the child rather than to address their own issues.

Parents may pull the child into a cross-generational coalition (be on Mom’s side against Dad). Or the child may be expected to mediate between the two parents, or keep the peace.

Triangled children are often not seen for who they truly are, but instead become who they need to be for the sake of the family.
Families also have their own communication patterns. And what you communicate (either verbally or non-verbally) effects others and their response effects you. It goes round and round.

Communication is sometimes direct. You have something to say to me, you tell me. But it’s sometimes indirect – I say something to Dad about our son that I want him to overhear (“Bobby’s doing great in school.” “I’m going to kill that kid if he doesn’t straighten up!” If Grandmother is banging dishes in the kitchen, it’s best to leave her alone.

Communication can be in ‘code’ because some feeling are uncomfortable. A dad was raised in poverty with a fair amount of violence in the neighborhood. He never said “I love you.” Instead he’d say, “That dress looks OK.”

Sometimes parents teach kids not to trust their own feelings. Maybe certain feelings aren’t acceptable in a family. A child who says “I hate Susie,” might be told “No you’re not; we don’t hate each other in this family. You’re just tired; you need a nap.”
One of the most important concepts in Family Systems Theory is the Family Life Cycle Stage, e.g. “early marriage,” or “family with adolescents,” or “family in later life.”

Families with different ethnic backgrounds have different patterns and rules, too. How much privacy is considered appropriate will usually vary – people of Italian heritage will tend to keep the doors open; people of Nordic heritage will keep the closed – and knock first. These are general differences, of course, and might not apply to a specific family, but usually if you learn more about the family’s ethnicity, you can understand them better.

You can also understand the family better if you understand their context. Are they struggling economically? Do they live in the country or the city? Are they living in a war zone? Did they grow up during the depression?
Understanding our family systems gives us very strong tools for change.

We can practice healing communication.

We can change old patterns of interaction.

The more we know, the better our chances of moving things in a constructive direction.

Usually this is somewhat difficult and may take a lot of persistence because families have a habit of trying to stay the same. Change can be scary.

But it CAN be done; lots of people have been able to make changes that surprise even them. Understanding and persistence are powerful tools.
WHAT CAUSES WHAT?

Genetics  
Family History  
Neighborhood school; church

FAMILY CLIMATE  
Peaceful, Safe; Conflict and Aggression  
Warm Supportive; Cold, Neglectful  
Respectful, Open; No Disagreement

Emotional Stability  
Social Competence  
STRESS

CHOICE

Risky Behaviors  
(Diet, Driving, Fighting,  
Substance Abuse,  
Breaking the Law, Sex)

Productive Behaviors  
(Study,  
Work, Compassion, Self Care and Self Control)

Social, Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Health
MEANINGS
situational family identity world view

DEMANDS
stressors strains daily hassles

CAPABILITIES
resources coping behaviors

FAMILY ADJUSTMENT

Adjustment Phase

ADJUSTMENT PHASE

DEMANDS
stressors strains daily hassles

CAPABILITIES
resources coping behaviors

FAMILY ADJUSTMENT

Adaptation Phase

ADAPTATION PHASE

CRISIS

MEANINGS
situational family identity world view

DEMANDS
stressors strains daily hassles

CAPABILITIES
resources coping behaviors

FAMILY ADJUSTMENT

CRISIS
For this short demonstration of a mindfulness meditation, sit erect in a chair or on the flow, then to gently focus on the experience of your breath moving in and out of your body. If at any time this becomes uncomfortable for you in any way, please simply open your eyes, or stand up, or walk around, whatever makes you return to a level of comfort. Practice for 10 minutes at a time, increasing to 20 min. as you are comfortable. Practice with an accepting, non-judgmental attitude towards yourself

- Sit quietly erect with your hands in your lap or on your knees.
- Gently close your eyes if that is comfortable. ...........................
- Become aware of your breath moving in and out of your body – you may notice expansion of your chest of stomach, or hear the breath in the back of your throat, or notice the air moving past your nostrils. ..........................
- Focus on the breath. .................................
- You will notice that your mind wanders. .................................
- When you notice that you are thinking, simply note it .... “thinking” ... and then return to the breath. .................................
- When your mind wanders again and again, simply return gently to the breath............................
- Now, gently return to the present moment, open your eyes, and set quietly for a few moments..........................
**Tasks Across the Life Span**

*Birth to 12 months*
Trust, bonding, attachment, security

*12 months to 36 months*
Motor skills, exploration, independence

*3 years to 6 years*
Language, social skills, imagination

*6 years to 12 years*
Peer relations, school, problem solving

*Adolescence (12 to 20 years)*
Self-identity, peer relations, independence

*Early adulthood (20 to 40 years)*
Intimacy, career, friendship, parenting

*Middle adulthood (40 to 65 years)*
Career, family, community

*Maturity (65 and beyond)*
Resolution, acceptance of life and death
**Six Steps for Resolving Conflict**

Company owner Mark Burnes dealt with conflict every day. If it wasn’t with vendors and clients, it was with his ex-wife or teen-aged son. Things started to change when Mark began using conflict resolution skills. “I used to add fuel to the fire by getting stuck in my position. Now I take a step back, breathe deep, and listen. The more I do that, the easier it is to solve problems.” Mark learned that conflicts don’t need to be volatile and negative. Conflicts can actually lead to increased understanding and creative thinking. It’s how we deal with conflict that determines the outcome. In this era of school and workplace shootings, road rage, airport rage, and even supermarket rage, knowing how to resolve conflicts can save a life. Beyond that, conflict resolution skills can improve relationships and deepen understanding.

A system for resolving conflicts used by families and educators around the country is called The Win/Win Guidelines. Based on methods from diplomacy and counseling, these guidelines were initially developed for use in public schools. The results were so good that teachers, parents, and school administrators began using them in their own lives. Now this system is being used internationally. Here’s how you can use the Win/Win Guidelines for any conflicts that may arise:

**Step 1: Cool off.** Conflicts can’t be solved in the face of hot emotions. Take a step back, breathe deep, and gain some emotional distance before trying to talk things out. As success coach Natalie Gahrmann says, “When I take the time to breathe and regain my focus I can create the opportunity to choose my response rather than just react. If I try to skip this step, my words are too emotionally loaded.” Take a moment to brainstorm ten things that make you feel better when you’re hot under the collar. Consider some of the following: breathing deeply while making a calming statement, looking at the sky, clearing your desk or straightening up, splashing cold water on the face, writing in a journal, or taking a quick walk and then coming back to talk about the problem. Some people need physical release, while others need something quiet and cerebral. Determine what works for you, then use it next time you get angry. Then you’ll be ready to go on to the next step.

**Step 2: Tell what’s bothering you using “I” messages.** “I messages” are a tool for expressing how we feel without attacking or blaming. By starting from “I” we take responsibility for the way we perceive the problem. This is in sharp contrast to “you messages” which put others on the defensive and close doors to communication. A statement like, “You’ve left the kitchen a mess again! Can’t you ever clean up after yourself?” will escalate the conflict. Now take a look at how differently an “I” message comes across: “I’m annoyed because I thought we agreed you’d clean up the kitchen after using it. What happened?” When making “I” statements it’s important to avoid put-downs, guilt-trips, sarcasm, or negative body language. We need to come from a place inside that’s non-combative and willing to compromise. A key credo in conflict resolution is, “It’s us against the problem, not us against each other.” “I messages” enable us to convey this.

**Step 3: Each person restates what they heard the other person say.** Reflective listening demonstrates that we care enough to hear the other person out, rather than just focusing on our own point of view. It actually fosters empathy. Mark Burnes describes how he used reflective listening the time he walked into the middle of a shouting match between his ex-wife and teen-aged son. “No sooner had I walked in the door to pick up Randy than he and his mother erupted into battle. In the past I might have shouted for them to stop, only to have been drawn into the fray. Instead I took a deep breath, gathered my thoughts, and chose my words carefully. I calmly asked them each if they could tell me what had happened. Then I reflected back what they said. My willingness to listen helped them listen too. They were actually able to come to a compromise, something I’d never before thought possible.”

**Step 4: Take responsibility.** In the majority of conflicts, both parties have some degree of responsibility. However, most of us tend blame rather than looking at our own role in the problem. When we take responsibility we shift the conflict into an entirely different gear, one where resolution is possible. Fifty-two year old Nancy Martin talked about how taking responsibility averted a major
falling-out with her husband. “We were getting ready to go to a family gathering, and as usual I was running late. When my husband Bill spotted me puttering around in the living room, he completely lost it. At the sound of his angry voice, I responded defensively, and then we were on our way to an ugly confrontation. But this time, instead of going into my defensive posture I walked away for a few minutes, took some deep breaths, and got my bearings. When I walked back into the room I was able to hear him out. Bill told me that he was so frustrated at having to wait for me whenever we went out. He also spoke about punctuality as something he highly valued. As I listened to his words a funny thing happened: I realized he was right. I did need to get a handle on my habitual lateness. It was then that I apologized. My husband ended up giving me a hug and thanking me. What might have become a full-blown fight actually turned into a moment of drawing closer.

Step 5: Brainstorm solutions and come up with one that satisfies both people. Resolving conflicts is a creative act. There are many solutions to a single problem. The key is a willingness to seek compromises. Kindergarten teacher Connie Long describes how her students started having fewer conflicts when they learned how to brainstorm solutions: “My kids were constantly getting into arguments over crayons, erasers, toys, you name it. After introducing peacemaking my students started finding ways to solve the problem instead of just getting stuck in their own positions. For example, when Ronnie and Jamie both grabbed the yellow truck, I took them aside and asked if they could come up with five ways to solve the problem. They thought about it and then suggested taking turns, sharing, getting another truck from the toy chest, doing a different activity, and building a truck together out of Legos. This is the kind of thinking I’m seeing more and more. Brainstorming has opened my children’s mind to new possibilities.

Step 6: Affirm, forgive, or thank. A handshake, hug, or kind word gives closure to the resolution of conflicts. Forgiveness is the highest form of closure. Minister Fredrick Buechner says, “When you forgive somebody . . . you’re spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each others’ presence.” What a legacy we can leave to our children as we teach and model this. Just saying thank you at the end of a conflict, or acknowledging the person for working things out sends a message of conciliation and gratitude. We preserve our relationships this way, strengthening our connections and working through problems that arise. Conflict resolution has applications in every walk of life. As a police officer described: “Knowing conflict resolution has helped me come from a base of understanding no matter who I’m dealing with. Instead of just reacting, I calm myself and listen to what people have to say. If people feel like you understand, they tend to become less volatile.” A graduate student dealing with room-mate difficulties: “I told my roommate what was on my mind and asked him to do the same. We listened to each others’ point of view. By talking it out we gained empathy toward one another. The resolution came as we began to understand each others feelings.” A teacher in conflict with a colleague over the use of space: “When I expressed my point of view through “I messages” without placing blame, we were able to come up with a fair solution, a compromise we could both live with. A mother of a three year-old: In the past, the fiery look in my son’s eyes would put me right over the edge. It would lead to a screaming match, marking the beginning of a very bad day. Now I breathe deeply, make a calming statement, and remind myself not to yell. I use “I messages” too. “You messages” tend to inflame him. For example, if he refuses to dress I might say, “I'll put your clothes right here. As soon as you’re dressed you can have breakfast with us.” It’s working; the power struggles are lessening. A ten year-old boy: My little brother started cutting off the ribbons on my helium balloons. I was furious! Instead of going after him, I went upstairs, cooled off, and came back when I felt calmer. I gave him an “I message: “I’m really upset about what you did to my balloons. You wouldn’t like it if I did that to something of yours!” I said it in a such respectful way my brother was shocked. He said, “I’m really sorry. Would you help me fix them?” Think of your own life. Who are you in conflict with? Imagine applying this system to work things out. Think of the impact on all your relationships. Peace starts with each of us and sometimes we need to take the first step. As Gandhi once said, “We must be the change we wish to see in others.”
'Daddy's going to be very angry about this,' my mother said. It was August 1938, at a Catskill Mountains boarding house. One hot Friday afternoon three of us — 9-year-old city boys — got to feeling listless. We'd done all the summer-country stuff, caught all the frogs, picked the blueberries and shivered in enough icy river water. What we needed, on this unbearably boring afternoon, was some action.

To consider the options, Artie, Eli and I holed up in the cool of the "casino," the little building in which the guests enjoyed their nightly bingo games and the occasional traveling magic act. Gradually, inspiration came: the casino was too new, the wood frame and white Sheetrock walls too perfect. We would do it some quiet damage. Leave our anonymous mark on the place, for all time. With, of course, no thought as to consequences.

We began by picking up a long, wooden bench, running with it like a battering ram, and bashing it into a wall. It left a wonderful hole. But small. So we did it again. And again.... Afterward the three of us, breathing hard, sweating of heroes, surveyed our first really big-time damage. The process had been so satisfying we'd gotten carried away; there was hardly a good square foot of Sheetrock left.

Suddenly, before even a tweak of remorse set in, the owner, Mr. Biolos, appeared in the doorway of the building. Furious. And craving justice: When they arrived from the city that night, he would...tell-our-fathers!

Meantime, he told our mothers. My mother felt that what I had done was so monstrous she would leave my punishment to my father. "And," she said, "Daddy's going to be very angry about this."

By 6 o'clock Mr. Biolos was stationed out at the driveway, grimly waiting for the fathers to start showing up. Behind him, the front porch was jammed, like a sold-out bleacher section, with indignant guests. They'd seen the damage to their bingo palace, knew they'd have to endure it in that condition for the rest of the summer. They, too, craved justice. As to Artie, Eli and me, we each found an inconspicuous spot on the porch, a careful distance from the other two but not too far from our respective mothers. And waited.

Artie's father arrived first. When Mr. Biolos told him the news and showed him the blighted casino, he carefully took off his belt and — with practiced style—, viciously whipped his screaming son. With the approbation, by the way, of an ugly crowd of once-gentle people.

Eli's father showed up next. He was told and shown and went raving mad, knocking his son off his feet with a slam to the head. As Eli lay crying on the grass, he kicked him on the legs, buttocks and back. When Eli tried to get up he kicked him again. The crowd muttered: Listen, they should have thought of this before they did the damage. They'll live, don't worry, and I bet they never do that again.

I wondered: What will my father do? He'd never laid a hand on me in my life. I knew about other kids, had seen bruises on certain school-mates and even heard screams in the evenings from certain houses on my street, but they were those kids, their families, and the why and how of their bruises were, to me, dark abstractions. Until now.

I looked over at my mother. She was upset. Earlier she'd made it clear to me that I had done some special kind of crime. Did it mean that beatings were now, suddenly, the new order of the day?
My own father suddenly pulled up in our Chevy, just in time to see Eli’s father dragging Eli up the porch steps and into the building. He got out of the car believing, I was sure, that whatever it was all about, Eli must have deserved it. I went dizzy with fear.

Mr. Biolos, on a roll, started talking. My father listened, his shirt soaked with perspiration, a damp handkerchief draped around his neck; he never did well in humid weather. I watched him follow Mr. Biolos into the casino. My dad — strong and principled, hot and bothered — what was he thinking about all this?

When they emerged, my father looked over at my mother. He mouthed a small "Hello." Then his eyes found me and stared for a long moment, without expression. I tried to read his eyes, but they left me and went to the crowd, from face to expectant face.

Then, amazingly, he got into his car and drove away! Nobody, not even my mother, could imagine where he was going. An hour later he came back. Tied onto the top of his car was a stack of huge Sheetrock boards. He got out holding a paper sack with a hammer sticking out of it. Without a word he untied the Sheetrock and one by one carried the boards into the casino. And didn't come out again that night.

All through my mother's and my silent dinner and for the rest of that Friday evening and long after we had gone to bed, I could hear — everyone could hear — the steady bang bang bang bang bang of my dad's hammer. I pictured him sweating, missing his dinner, missing my mother, getting madder and madder at me. Would tomorrow be the last day of my life? It was 3 A.M. before I finally fell asleep.

The next morning, my father didn't say a single word about the night before. Nor did he show any trace of anger or reproach of any kind. We had a regular day, he, my mother and I, and, in fact, our usual sweet family weekend. Was he mad at me? You bet he was. But in a time when many of his generation saw corporal punishment of their children as a God-given right, he knew "spanking" as beating, and beating as criminal. And that when kids were beaten, they always remembered the pain but often forgot the reason. And I also realized years later that, to him, humiliating me was just as unthinkable. Unlike the fathers of my buddies, he couldn't play into a conspiracy of revenge and spectacle.

But my father had made his point. I never forgot that my vandalism on that August afternoon was outrageous. And I'll never forget that it was also the day I first understood how deeply I could trust him.
# FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES

Examples of Issues that Families Can Face

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| Leaving home: single young adults    | Accepting emotional and financial responsibility for self | a. Differentiation of self in relation to family of origin  
  b. Development of intimate peer relationships  
  c. Establishment of self in respect to work and financial independence |
| The new couple                       | Commitment to new system                      | a. Formation of marital system  
  b. Realignment of relationships with extended families and friends to include spouse |
| Families with young children         | Accepting new members into the system         | a. Adjusting marital system to make space for children  
  b. Joining in child rearing, financial and household tasks  
  c. Realignment of relationship with extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles |
| Families with adolescents            | Increasing flexibility of family boundaries to permit children’s independence and grandparents’ frailties | a. Shifting of parent/child relationships to permit adolescent to move into and out of system  
  b. Refocus on midlife marital and career issues  
  c. Beginning shift toward caring for older generation |
| Launching children and moving on     | Accepting a multitude of exits from and entries into the family system | a. Renegotiation of marital system as a dyad  
  b. Development of adult-to-adult relationships between grown children and their parents  
  c. Realignment of relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren  
  d. Dealing with disabilities and death of parents (grandparents) |
| Families in later life               | Accepting the shifting generational roles     | a. Maintaining own and/or couple functioning and interests in face of physiological decline: exploration of new familial and social role options  
  b. Making room in the system for the wisdom and experience of the elderly, supporting the older generation.  
  c. Dealing with loss of spouse, siblings, and other peers and preparation for death |
101 Ways to Praise a Child

Wow… **WAY TO GO**…Super…

**You’re Special**…Outstanding…Excellent…**Great**…Good…Neat…

Well Done…Remarkable…I knew you could do it…I’M PROUD OF YOU…Fantastic…

Super Star…**Nice Work**…Looking Good…You’re on top of it…**Beautiful**…

You’re flying…**YOU’RE CATCHING ON**…Now you’ve got it…You’re incredible…Bravo…

Your fantastic…Hurray for you…**You’re on Target**…

**You’re on your way**…

How nice…How Smart…Good job… That’s incredible…

Hot Dog….Dynamite…**YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL**…You’re unique…

Nothing can stop you now…Good for you…I like you…

You’re a winner…Remarkable job…Beautiful work…Spectacular…

You’re Spectacular…You’re Darling…**You’re Precious**…

**Great Discovery**…You’ve discovered the secret…You figured it out…

Fantastic job…**HIP HIP HURRAY**…Good try…Magnificent…

Marvelous… Terrific…You’re Important…Phenomenal…

You’re sensational…**Super Work** Creative Job …Fantastic Job…

Exceptional Performance…You’re a Real Trooper…You are Responsible…

You are Exciting…**YOU LEARNED IT RIGHT**…What an Imagination…

What a Good Listener…You are Fun…**You are Growing Up**…You Tried Hard…

You Care…Beautiful Sharing…Outstanding Performance…**You’re a Good Friend**…

**I Trust You**…**You’re Important**…You Mean a Lot to Me…You Make Me Happy…

You Belong…You’ve Got a Friend…You Make Me Laugh…**YOU BRIGHTEN MY DAY**…

**I Respect You**…You Mean The World To Me…That’s Correct…You’re a Joy…

**You’re a Treasure**…You’re Wonderful…You’re Perfect…Awesome…A+ Job…

You’re A-OK…My Buddy… You Made My Day…That’s the Best…

**A Big Hug**…**A Big Kiss**…Say, “I Love YOU!

PS: Remember…..A Smile Is Worth A Thousand Words
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>CHILD'S TASKS</th>
<th>PARENT'S TASKS</th>
<th>PARENTING TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants 0-6 Months</td>
<td>Grow, bond, become aware of senses (touch, taste, sight, sound); become aware of surroundings.</td>
<td>Be dependable and responsive; provide love, safety, attention, stimulation, and care.</td>
<td>It's okay to respond quickly and often to infant's cries and sounds. Help infant explore senses by talking, touching, singing, humming. Place colorful toys or mobiles where the infant can see them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early toddler 6-18 Months</td>
<td>Continue to grow and bond; develop motor skills (grabbing, kicking, grasping and holding objects, crawling); explore surroundings and self (playing with fingers, toes, laughing, touching things).</td>
<td>Be dependable and responsive; provide a safe place for toddler to explore and allow child to safely explore things; provide encouragement and stimulation; interact by joining child in his explorations.</td>
<td>Toddlers are not being &quot;bad&quot; when their exploration leads to a mess or accident, they are being curious. Use redirection to head off problems. Redirect by gently removing the child from a problem activity and substituting a safer or more appropriate activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older toddler 18-36 months</td>
<td>Continue to explore and develop motor skills; become aware of thoughts and feelings; develop language skills; experience individuation (awareness of self as separate from parents).</td>
<td>Provide guidance and limit setting; use your authority as a parent fairly; be a role model for behaviors you want your child to develop; guide child in learning to solve problems.</td>
<td>Avoid power struggles by accepting that tantrums and stubbornness are not &quot;being bad&quot; but &quot;being normal.&quot; Set firm limits, but help your child understand that he can express his will and his intense feelings and still be loved and accepted by you. Help your child use words to express feelings and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early-childhood 3-6 years</td>
<td>Continue to develop language skills; begin to observe adults in order to learn about power and how people get what they want; learn to manage own wants and desires; learn social skills.</td>
<td>Provide guidance and limit setting; use your authority as a parent fairly; be a role model for behaviors you want your child to develop; guide child in learning to solve problems.</td>
<td>Guiding, molding, encouraging problem solving, and setting limits can be accomplished in many creative ways. See Parent's Bag of Tricks on following page for details on guidance ideas for this age group.</td>
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<td>Late childhood</td>
<td>Formulate educational plans; teach problem solving and how to get along with others; learn self-motivation, sense of purpose.</td>
<td>Offer guidance and support; teach problem solving skills; establish consistent, fair rules; provide feedback and praise; be available to talk and listen.</td>
<td>Help children with emotional concerns by listening and showing acceptance of their feelings. Develop an “open door” policy and make time to listen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>Refine social and coping skills; separate from parents and develop independence; adjust to the physical and emotional changes of puberty; explore sexuality.</td>
<td>Support, guidance, and a gradual surrender of decision-making responsibilities to teen; provide reassurance about physical changes and emotional concerns; be democratic; be open and flexible in setting rules but be consistent when enforcing them.</td>
<td>Strive to be a “democrat” rather than a “dictator.” Keep communication channels open and avoid roadblocks such as blaming, arguing, and put-downs. Consistency and limit setting are still important, but flexibility must be added to the mix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-18 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**PARENTING BAG OF TRICKS**

*Using Praise:* It is easier to mold behavior by rewarding good behavior rather than by punishing bad behavior. Praise works best when it is immediate, honest, enthusiastic, and affectionate.

*Explaining the rules:* Clearly explain rules and limits with simple words and short sentences. Long, complicated reasons and explanations don’t help. Be simple, clear, and fair. Younger children have short memories, so you will have to re-explain the rules on different occasions.

*Stating the consequences:* Establish consequences for misbehavior. Use simple words to explain the consequences of misbehavior. Consequences should be fair and should “fit the crime.” Remember, the purpose is to teach, not to punish the child. Threatening to spank is not an effective consequence. It’s more effective to remove privileges or limit the child’s activities for a fair amount of time.

*Following through:* When misbehavior happens, promptly follow-through with the established consequence. Follow-through every time! When a rule is broken, remind child of the rule. If misbehavior continues, remind child of consequences of breaking rule, then without delay or discussion, follow-through with applying the consequence.

*Ignore tantrums and pleas:* When a parent applies a consequence, children may whine, throw a tantrum, plead, and argue. Don’t give in or feel guilty. Applying consequences is an act of love (because it teaches). Children must learn early that behavior leads to consequences and that consequences can’t be whined or argued away. You are the best person to teach your child this important life lesson.
Communication Roadblocks
(Things that get in the way of listening)

**Giving orders** (Telling the child what to do)

"Get back in your own bed!"
"Eat those carrots right now."
"You stop talking about your teacher like that."

**Using threats** (Warning the child of consequences)

"If you don't stop whining, I'll ground you!"
"I better not catch you wearing makeup again."
"You'll sit there all night if you don't eat those carrots."

**Preaching** (Telling the child what he "should" or "ought" to do)

"You shouldn't talk about your teacher like that."
"You ought to be nicer to your sister."
"You shouldn't be so vain about your looks at your age."

**Lecturing** (Trying to influence the child with facts or logic)

"You need to respect your teachers in order to get ahead in school."
"Your sister is older and wants to spend time with her friends."
"A girl your age doesn't need to wear makeup."

**Giving advice** (Telling the child how to solve a problem)

"Try being nicer to your teacher and see what happens."
"If you turn on the night light you'll feel better in your room."
"Go play outside. It will help you forget about the movies."

**Blaming or criticizing** (Making negative comments)

"It's your own fault your sister never lets you tag along."
"If you weren't so mean, maybe your teacher would be nicer."
"You are driving me nuts with this carrot business!!"
**Ridiculing, shaming (Making fun of the child)**

"You're acting like a such a baby!"
"You never think of anyone but yourself, do you?!!"
"You look like a silly clown with all that paint on your face."

**Analyzing (Assuming you know the child's reasons or motives)**

"You're just mad at your teacher because you failed her test."
"I think you are jealous of your sister's friends."
"You want to wear makeup just to make me angry."

**Consoling, reassuring (Trying to make the child feel better)**

"Now, now. Mrs. Smith isn't all that bad of a teacher."
"Your sister doesn't mean to hurt your feelings."
"I felt the same way when my mother wouldn't let me wear makeup."

**Asking questions (Trying to find causes or motives)**

"Why is Mrs. Smith angry with you? What did you do?"
"Why is it so important for you to do what your sister does?"
"What's wrong with the carrots?"

**Humoring, placating (Trying to distract the child)**

"Yes, dear. I know. You'll feel better tomorrow."
"Try not to think about it."
"When you are older, you'll understand my reasons."
LISTENING FROM THE HEART

Neutral responses are simple responses that signal you are listening but don’t communicate judgments or opinions. For example:

- “I see.”
- “Oh.”
- “Really.”
- “How about that.”
- “You did, huh.”

Invitations to say more are phrases that encourage your child (or anyone else, for that matter) to keep talking. For example:

- “Tell me more.”
- “I’m interested in hearing all about it.”
- “Keep talking – this is fascinating.”
- “Would you like to talk about it?”
- “Sounds like you had a heck of a day.”

Active listening opens the door and helps keep it open. In active listening, the parent tries to understand what the child is feeling and trying to communicate. The parent then puts his understanding into words and repeats it back to the child. The parent avoids all “roadblock” responses. For example:

Johnny: “I’m bored. I don’t have anyone to play with.”
Dad: “You’re not happy about the fact that your friends are out of town.”
Johnny: “Yeah. I don’t know what to do around here for fun.”
Dad: “You’re having a hard time figuring out what you’d like to do this afternoon.”
Johnny: “Uh, Huh. Maybe I’ll go down to the gym and see if I can get in a basketball game.”
Dad: “Good idea. Want a ride down there?”
CITATIONS

GETTING STARTED and COURSE SUMMARY Questionnaire

The questionnaire includes items taken or adapted from the STIC (Systemic Therapy Inventory of Change), created at the Family Institute at Northwestern (http://www.family-institute.org), Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being scale, and the Authentic Happiness Inventory of The Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania (http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu).


FAMILY SYSTEMS


HEALING and HOPE


PRECIOUS CHILD


Things incarcerated parents need to know: adapted from http://nicic.gov/Library/017447.

Healthy Relationships: Based on the work of attachment theorist John Bowlby, and Sue Johnson’s Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy:


Final quotations taken from http://www.brainyquote.com
APPENDIX


