

Additional Teaching and Learning Processes for Parenting Education

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In adult education, it is recognized that:

- People learn best when they are comfortable and relaxed
- People learn in many different ways
- People already have valuable experience and knowledge to contribute
- People learn from each other in addition to the instructor
- Educational materials and strategies should be adjusted to fit group characteristics

Parenting education is a special form of adult education:

- Parenting is an EMOTIONAL topic, full of controversies
- Parenting is an art:
 - ✓ there is no one right way to raise children
 - ✓ each child and each family is unique – personalities, strengths, values, challenges
- Participants have often already been parenting for many years, have various strengths and areas of expertise, and may have special challenges

Parenting education objectives:

- Enhance parental knowledge, skills, and behaviors in specific topic areas related to parenting.
- Increase access to family support (or social service) resources when needed.
- Strengthen parental confidence in themselves and in their children.
- Strengthen social ties, sources of social support for parents.
- When possible, involve more than one family member.

Parenting education strategies:

- Use a *transformative* or *empowerment* learning model for group process.
- Respect and bring out the experience and expertise parents already possess.
- Provide opportunities for parents to teach and learn from their peers when appropriate.
- In all printed materials, use simple and respectful language, graphics, & plenty of white space.
- Take participant needs, backgrounds and cultures into account, replacing or adjusting various aspects of the program to fit.
- Encourage social support between participants, e.g., telephone lists, buddy systems, parties.

Parenting educators are ACTIVE FACILITATORS:

1. *Be authoritative in guiding participants through the planned learning process*
 - a) Begin on time and end on time.
 - b) Check in with participants to solicit preferences, personal concerns.
 - c) Keep group process on track while being responsive to participant preferences/needs.
 - d) Sensitively balance negative ideas with more positive ones.
 - e) Actively manage participants who may be domineering, hostile, need more help.
 - f) Teach only the information you have time to *teach well*.
 - g) Remember and reinforce the bottom line – what is the one key idea participants should walk away with?

2. *Establish a group culture of mutual respect and safety*
 - a) Respect for diversity of parenting styles and values
 - b) Safety to divulge concerns, fears, joys, etc.
 - c) Playfulness to facilitate communication
 - d) Firm boundaries to keep participants safe
 - e) Extended and active listening to improve communication and nurture participants
 - f) Nurturing to strengthen self-confidence
 - g) Sharing of facilitator's own mistakes as well as successes
 - h) Defusing of judgmental comments from the group

3. *Be a peacemaker when needed*
 - a) Remind participants of the need for mutual respect.
"Everyone parents a little differently. We all have different perspectives, comfort levels, and values/approaches to parenting."
 - b) Help participants see what they have in common, and place their differences in a larger context.
"You are both very caring parents and concerned that your children learn to behave appropriately. We all have valuable ideas about how to go about doing that."
 - c) Invite the group to help move the discussion forward.
"Who has a different example for us to discuss?"
"Who hasn't had a chance to talk yet?"
"Shall we move on to the next agenda item?"

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