

PARENTING EDUCATION

The Problem

Babies don't come with instruction manuals. Yet one of the biggest jobs a person can ever face is raising a child. That job looms even larger to someone who has no network of experienced family members and friends who can give advice and support through the many minor crises of child rearing. It can prove an impossible task for someone who never had a model of good parenting, or who is, in many ways, still a child herself.

These are the problems facing many new parents today: a lack of support, knowledge, and maturity. The result is that many children in our society are in danger. In the short term, they face the possibility of abuse that damages them physically and emotionally—undoubtedly leaving permanent scars; in the long term, they are likely to become more unhappy and even less able to cope than their parents.

The Solution

To save the children of today, we must help rebuild their families. For parents in crisis, there must be support and education on how to be good parents.

A number of organizations have seen this need and responded with education programs that provide support and guidance over several months to several years. This also builds a network of mutual support among the members of the class. Studies indicate that these programs have a tremendous positive effect on the families: often ending abuse, improving communication, and contributing to the self-esteem and later academic success of the children.

Less intense programs that do not use a professional facilitator also have had a positive effect. Studies show that even some printed materials can affect the behavior of parents.

A club could develop its own parenting education program. A survey of parents and child-centered experts would produce a list of topics that should be covered. Various experts and more experienced parents could be asked to address the chosen topics and find printed resources for the “student” parents to read. The club could recruit parents through mailings or distribution of flyers.

Rather than start from scratch, clubs can investigate the programs described below that seem to best fit the community's needs and the club's resources.

Long-Term Parenting Education Programs

The programs described in this section are not likely to be funded and administered by one—or even several—Kiwanis clubs. They are designed to fit into a family services organization, and most clubs will want to work with one or more partners who have expertise, facilities, and a greater understanding of parents' needs.

What a Kiwanis club brings to the development of a long-term parenting education program will vary by community. It may function as the catalyst to draw the right people into a discussion on parenting education; from that discussion will emerge the commitment to start a program. The club may survey the need in the community and assemble an advisory group that chooses the best program. In many cases, it will make a financial commitment to purchase start-up materials or send a facilitator to a training seminar. The club may also bring other community leaders and business people into a supporting role.

The cost of materials for these programs ranges from several hundred dollars to more than \$1,000. In addition, some require travel to and registration for training. Partial funding for these programs can often be found through government grants that address abuse or family support. Foundations and businesses have also provided support for local implementation of these programs. The relative costs of the programs will certainly merit consideration, but a more important criterion will be which program best fits the community and helps parents.

EPIC

EPIC, or Effective Parenting Information for Children, provides parenting education through a series of work-shops. Parents share concerns, support one another, and learn skills to strengthen their parenting role. Materials are also supplied for teachers to work into their curriculums on positive self-concept, responsible behavior, and decision making.

To learn more about bringing EPIC to your community, contact:

*Elizabeth Lawrence, Director
E.P.I.C.*

*State University College
At Buffalo*

*1300 Elwood Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14222*

Phone: (716) 886-6396

www.tyc.sae.tx.us/prevention/epic/html

MELD: Programs to Strengthen Families

Meld's Mission: To enhance the capacity of those who parent to raise nurtured, competent children.

The MELD program brings together groups of parents who have similar parenting needs, provides them with pertinent information, and helps them to

develop into supportive peer groups. Experienced parents volunteer to facilitate MELD groups. After careful selection, they receive extensive training and support from a MELD-trained site coordinator.

Parents learn to respect and appreciate the uniqueness of each child, to be sensitive to each child's special needs and interests, and to develop appropriate expectations for their children.

MELD has six curriculums for new parents, young mothers, parents of growing families, Hispanic families, parents of disabled/ chronically ill children, and parents who are hearing impaired.

MELD programs operate in more than 100 locations in Australia, Canada, and the United States. To learn more about setting up a MELD program, contact:

MELD
Ste. 200
219 N 2nd Street
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Phone: (612) 332-7563
Fax: 612/344-1959
Email: info@meld.org
Web: www.meld.org

The Nurturing Programs

Based on the philosophy that parenting is learned, these programs are designed to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. The programs address the parents' need to be nurtured as they learn to nurture their children. There are six programs, for parents and children ages birth to five; four to 12; in adolescence; for teenage parents and their families; for parents with special learning needs; and for foster or adoptive families. Professional counselors need to run Nurturing Programs.

The Nurturing Parenting Programs® were created by Stephen J. Bavolek PhD. Dr. Bavolek is recognized for his work

in promoting nurturing parenting attitudes and skills for the prevention and treatment of child abuse.

The foundation of the Nurturing Parenting Programs® is that parenting is learned.

The programs are based on the following six assumptions:

- ☐ The family is a system.
- ☐ Empathy is the single most desirable quality in nurturing parenting.
- ☐ Parenting exists on a continuum.
- ☐ Learning is both cognitive and affective.
- ☐ Children who feel good about themselves are more likely to become nurturing parents.
- ☐ No one truly prefers abusive interactions.

The Nurturing Parenting Programs® are published by Family Development Resources, Inc. (FDR) which is headquartered in Asheville, North Carolina and has been promoting non-violent parenting practices since 1983.

Families from all over the world (including the US, England, Australia, Germany, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, and Canada) have had the opportunity to benefit from the Nurturing philosophy of parenting. To learn more about the Nurturing Parenting Programs® or to request a catalog, contact:

Family Development Resources Inc
3070 Rasmussen Road
Ste 190
Park City, Utah 84098
Phone: (800) 688-5822
Fax: (435) 649-9599
Web: www.nurturingparenting.com

Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an international early childhood

parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten, usually age 5. The program is designed to enhance child development and school achievement through parent education accessible to all families. It is a universal access model.

Recognizing that all families can benefit from support, Parents as Teachers families come in all configurations, from all socio-economic levels, and from rural, urban, and suburban communities. The program is adaptable to fit community needs. It is a national model, but a local program.

The Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. (PATNC) develops curricula, trains early childhood professionals, and certifies parent educators to work with parents to provide them with parenting support and information on their developing child. For more information, contact:

Parents as Teachers National Center Inc.
Attn: Public Information Specialist
2228 Ball Drive
St. Louis, MO 63146
Phone: (314) 432-4330
(314) 432-8963
1-866-Pat4you
Web: www.patnc.org

Short-Term Programs

There are a number of other parenting education programs of lesser length and intensity that could be considered. The smaller size of these programs reduces the training of the discussion leader, and holds down the cost of these programs. Unfortunately, this may also reduce their effectiveness or impact on parents.

The Center for Improvement of Child Caring (CICC) has developed three education programs. The *Confident Parent: Survival Skills Training Program* is designed for parents of children ages two through twelve and is designed for small groups of parents meeting in ten two-hour sessions. The *Effective Black Parenting Program* is designed as a 15-week program with weekly sessions of three hours each. There is a similar program for Hispanic parents titled *Los Ninos Bien Educados*. To learn more, contact:

CICC
11331 Ventura Blvd., Suite 103
Studio City, CA 91604
Phone: (818) 980-0903.
www.ciccparenting.org

Parent Effectiveness Training, or PET, teaches non-authoritarian methods for resolving problems with children and suggests strategies to prevent parent-child problems. PET is taught in eight three-hour sessions, and a variety of training methods are used. The course is available in Spanish and English, and the parents' text has been translated into several other languages. *The Center for Improvement of Child Caring* also offers training for PET instructors.

Videotapes

Active Parenting Publishers delivers quality education programs for parents, children, and teachers to schools, hospitals, social services organizations, churches, and the corporate market.

The most popular program is *Active Parenting Now*, for parents of children ages five to twelve. Active Parenting Publishers is recognized as an innovator in the educational market and is committed to the mission of developing human potential through their programs. For more information, please contact:

Active Parenting USA
Headquarters
1955 Vaughn Road NW, Ste. 108
Kennesaw, GA 30144-7808
Toll Free: 800/825-0060
800/235-7755
Phone: 770/429-0565
Fax: 770/429-0334
cservice@activeparenting.com
Web: www.activeparenting.com

Early Childhood STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting), for parents of children under age six, uses a videotape, leader's manual, and handbook for each participant. Its seven sessions address the stages of development, understanding behavior, self-esteem, communication, cooperation, effective discipline, and social and emotional development. Order materials from:

American Guidance Service,
Publisher's Building
P.O. Box 99
Circle Pines, MN 55014-9989.
Phone: (800) 328-2560
Fax: (651) 287-7220.

The *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen* kit has six sessions that address children's feelings, cooperation, alternatives to punishment, encouraging autonomy, praise, and the roles children play. To order materials, contact:

The Negotiation Institute, Inc.,
Empire State Bldg.
350 5th Avenue, Ste. 7415
New York, NY 10118.
Phone: (212) 904-1155
Fax: (212) 904-1221
E-mail: gerardn@negotiation.com
Web: www.negotiation.com

Raising America's Children is a series of 10 videotapes that describes the needs of children from birth to six. The tapes show children interacting with parents, peers, and other adults, and experts comment on what is observed. To

learn more about this program,
contact:

**Frank Porter Graham Child
Development Center**
University of North Carolina
CB #8180
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8180.
Phone: (919) 966-2622
Web: www.fpg.unc.edu

Printed Materials

*Child Behavior Management
Cards* on 30 subjects have been
developed by the Ohio Research
Institute on Child Abuse
Prevention. These cards cover
topics that range from crying and
bed wetting to report cards and
swearing. A display rack that holds
100 cards for each of 15 topics can
be placed in a medical clinic,
family services office, or other
high-traffic areas. Contact:

Research Institute
615 Copeland Mill Road, Suite 2E
Westerville, Ohio 43081.

*Cooperative Extension
Newsletters*—The Kiwanis Club of
Bruce, Wisconsin purchased copies
of Parenting the First Year for all
new parents in the county it serves.
The 12-issue newsletter is
publication 321 of the North
Central Region, and quantities can
be order from:

NCR
Educational Materials Project
B-10 Curtiss Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011.
Phone: (515) 294-8802.

There are a number of other
publications developed by other
regions or state offices of the
Extension Service, so clubs should
start by consulting with their local
Extension home economist.

Growing Child—This monthly
newsletter explains the
development of the child and
suggests appropriate activities. It
follows the child through the first
five years of life. For subscription
information, contact

Growing Child
22 N. Second St
P.O. Box 620
Lafayette, IN 47902-0620
Phone: (800) 388-2624

*Parent and Preschooler
Newsletter*—Designed for parents
of children ages one through six,
this monthly publication has both
regular features (recommending
books, suggesting kitchen
activities) and addresses one or
more specific problems in each
issue. Contact:

Preschool Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box 1851
Garden City, NY, 11530-0816.
Phone: (800)726-1708
www.preschoolpublications.com



Service Programs Department
Kiwaniis International
3636 Woodview Trace
Indianapolis, IN 46268-3196
317/875-8755 Worldwide
800/549-2647 U.S. and Canada
317/879-0204 Fax
Email: service@kiwanis.org
www.kiwanis.org