Fatherhood Course Manual

Authors
Stephen Sheehy             Fatherhood Support Worker
Fatherhood Support Program
Parenting Network
Children, Youth and Women’s Health Service
Jonathan Allan             Social Work Student on placement at Parenting Network

Consultancy and Editing
Raema Mahony             Program Co-ordinator Parenting Network
Parenting Network

Administrative Support
Helen Suridge             Snr Administration Parenting Network
Parenting Network

Consultation of Draft Manual
Darian Shepherd-Bayly:   Anglicare, Adelaide.
David Sly:               Family Reach Out Program (FROP), Adelaide.
Mathew Gohl:            The Queen Elizabeth Community Child Care Centre, Adelaide.
Andrew McCray:        Anglicare, Adelaide.

Artwork and layout
Stephen Sheehy             Fatherhood Support Worker
Fatherhood Support Program

Edited 2005
Stephen Sheehy             Fatherhood Support Program

Funding
Originally Funded by Fatherhood Support Project, an initiative of the Commonwealth Government Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

This work is copyright. Organisations have permission to reproduce parts or the whole of this publication, as long as the original is retained and proper credit given.

The views expressed in this manual are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth of Australia and or the Children, Youth & Women’s Health Service, Adelaide.

The Fatherhood Support Program is managed by Parenting Network, a program of the Children and Families Integration Service and auspiced by the Children, Youth & Women’s Health Service.

Funding
Originally Funded by Fatherhood Support Project, an initiative of the Commonwealth Government Stronger Families and Communities Strategy
Fatherhood Course Manual

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Week 1: Role of Fathers
   Week 1 Group running-notes

3. Week 2: Communicating with Children
   Week 2 Group running-notes

4. Week 3: Children and Confidence
   Week 3 Group running-notes

5. Week 4: Behaviour
   Week 4 Group running-notes

6. Week 5: Stress and Anger
   Week 5 Group running-notes

7. Week 6: Relationships and self development
   Week 6 Group running-notes
Welcome

Welcome to the Fatherhood Groupwork Course Manual. This manual is designed for those people who work with men within a parenting framework and are planning to establish a short course to help fathers gain confidence in parenting. The manual provides an outline for a six-week course covering topics such as the role of fathers, communicating with children, helping children develop confidence, understanding and responding to kid’s behaviour, stress, relationships and personal growth.

Men are increasingly questioning their role as a parent and in particular challenging the traditional concepts surrounding the role of Father. The manual offers a structured exploration into the unique role for those who identify themselves as Fathers. It focuses on the needs of children and the needs of men as they relate to each other. You will notice as you go through the manual that questioning is a strategy that is used throughout and that the types of questions asked draw on the experiences, ideas, and core beliefs that men have around their role as a parent. We believe that this maximises individual participation in a group setting and therefore personalises the group experience.

The role of Father is unique and is more than the daily tasks associated with caring for the physical needs of children. The emphasis presented in this manual is around the effect that men and children have on each other, particularly in terms of the emotional development of both parent and child. What we aim to explore is how the relationship between father/son/daughter is not only a valuable and fundamental part of a child’s life but also a major part of the development of masculinity.

We have designed the manual so as to be easily read and presented regardless of your level of experience. We have provided clear headings and relevant content for easy reference. Our aim in the development of the manual is to provide a resource that focuses specifically on Fatherhood so as to encourage agencies to offer a valuable service to men caring for children.

History

In 1999 workers in the Parenting Network Program identified that there was a lack of support for fathers in the community. While a range of valuable support groups and services have been developed for mothers, there has been little attention paid to fathers and their needs. In collaboration with other agencies, the idea of the Fatherhood Group emerged, which would cater for fathers at various stages in their parenting, including those expecting to become parents. As a result a six-week course on Fatherhood was devised. Over the past six years this has been refined and now forms the basis of this training manual.

Broadly, the groups aim to
- Provide support
- Education (learning)
- Promote self reflection and growth
- Inspire fathers to value their unique role
Course Aims
Provide Support
~ To provide a safe and comfortable environment for fathers to express their feelings, ideas, concerns and aspirations relating to their parenting experience.
~ To give an opportunity for dads to meet other dads with similar issues, and develop their support networks.

Education
~ To provide information and encourage interaction on a range of issues relating to fatherhood.
~ To address the way we communicate with our children and to explore ways in which we, as dads, can encourage physical, mental, social, and emotional development in our families.
~ To explore through open discussion, ideas relating to our role as Fathers.

Promote growth through self reflection
~ To actively encourage participants to personalise new ideas and understanding obtained from the group for use within their own families. We will suggest specific activities each week to foster that reflection.

Value Role
~ To emphasise the unique role that dads play in the lives of their children, and to assist fathers in developing their own parenting style.

Preparation for the course

Being well prepared is a critical factor that can determine how successful and helpful a group can be. Considering the following issues should help ensure that you are well prepared for the group.

Initial Planning
We recommend that 3 months of strategic planning and canvassing is needed to prepare yourself and other agencies for the group. In that time you will need to …

1. Clarify your target group
We found there were advantages in having groups open to fathers of all ages and situations, including stepfathers, male caregivers and expectant dads.

One young guy commented “initially, age was a bit of a problem for him, but as the group went on, being a dad became the common ground. I even felt I was able to contribute to the group as a whole”

Funding and agency priorities often will dictate the target group. It is important to talk this through with all agencies involved in providing the service to the community. Being flexible is important when working in collaboration with other agencies, finding ways of addressing the aims of all agencies involved can be time consuming as well as rewarding. Often the result of discussions is a broader delivery of service to the community.
Fatherhood Course Manual

2. Plan how the group will be promoted

- Fliers / posters / brochures in relevant agencies / services / schools / childcare centres.
- Have good working links been made with agencies that might refer clients to the group?
  - Have you promoted your group in local antenatal courses? The antenatal educator may be interested in you coming to speak to the men for 10 minutes in their last session, for example. If they have met you and heard you speak already then those men are more likely to attend a group run by someone that they have met.
  - You could attend / speak at staff meetings of other agencies and give out fliers and other information. Again, this personalises the group. It is important to show your face in as many relevant settings as possible.
- Identify key people who might promote the group and encourage others to make referrals.
- Follow up people interested in attending with a visit or phone contact to help personalize the group and reduce inhibitions.
- Advertise in local papers.
- Advertising regularly in the local schools’ newsletters can be a particularly effective way of spreading the word about your group. This may help provide a balance of fathers who have had contact with agencies, or have been referred to the group through the court system, and those who are taking an active interest in their role as a parent.
- Website: We encourage people in South Australia to register all groups they run on the following websites:
  - [www.parenting.sa.gov.au](http://www.parenting.sa.gov.au) and choose “Parenting Groups” from the index.

3. Plan to make the programme sustainable.

- The need for a supportive network
  In our discussions with other group workers, one of the major reasons why groups are abandoned is because of a lack of attendance. It is vital to be realistic about how much referral networking and other support you will need from other agencies and services to make your group a stayer. You can never have too much support.
- Is there an opportunity for inter-agency collaboration?
  This may be beneficial for attracting or increasing funding, reducing the financial impact on each agency, and increasing the number of referrals points from within those agencies and their referral networks. It is preferable to choose a co-leader from another agency for these reasons. This benefits the agency as the worker has the opportunity to develop group skills around working with men.
- Regular Groups
  If groups are irregular (eg once / year, or one offs), other agencies tend not to make referrals to the group. Regular groups at locations and times that are convenient for clients tend to be most sustainable. If agencies know that a group is running regularly then they are more likely to refer into that
group. Community members are more likely to self refer if they have seen the advertisements before.

- Location.
  It is worth considering whether the choice of venue influences whether men attend groups. In our opinion meeting in a community location (eg community centres, sports centres) is preferable to meeting at an agency, reasons for this are:
  - It is a neutral venue for joint agency work.
  - We believe men feel more comfortable in a community venue with other activities going on.
  - Community centres often won’t charge rent for parenting groups as the course may help them achieve outcomes in line with their own aims.

- Access to groups
  In poorer communities, it may be necessary to consider whether members may need transport to the group, if transport can be provided it is worth advertising this. Participants may be either picked up by workers or volunteers, or there may be funding made available for the provision of taxi vouchers. Obviously this can be time consuming so it is a good idea to look at how accessible the venue is via public transport.

- Slow starts
  In our experience, it takes time for a group to become established in the community, and for the group to gain credibility from the referring agencies. Try not to get too discouraged early on as we can underestimate the positive outcomes that small groups can achieve.
  You can be prepared for slow starts by:
    - Continuing to be enthusiastic
    - Being committed to running the group despite low numbers … and to continue to work hard at promoting the group.
    - Gaining your agency’s commitment to the group through the initial group establishment phase, this can be a year or more. 
      and then …
      - Other agencies are more likely to refer to your consistent and known group
    - Funding will be easier to attract to help maintain the group when the group has a history of consistent support and in particular if the support is inter agency.

4. Remembering the bigger picture
In whatever work we do, considering the big and small pictures is essential. Working in the small picture we may be considering and responding to the needs of the fathers who are attending our particular group.
Part of the bigger picture is for all the facilitators of fatherhood groups and particularly the supporting agencies to think about the broader impact that regular services have on the community around the issue of Fatherhood. It is also important to look at what other groups and events are occurring at the time we intend to run a fatherhood course so as not to have a negative impact on those events. Alternatively,
Groups: When and where?
We need to try to provide fathers with options, regarding group times.
- Due to work commitments, many men will only be able to attend an evening course. It is usually preferable if courses can be held in the evenings, which requires facilitators and their agencies to be flexible. Daytime groups have attracted fewer participants, but have been more viable in areas of higher unemployment.
- Every effort should be made to offer groups on different nights of the week from existing groups, to provide further options for dads.
- Stagger the starting weeks of different groups. In a recent survey conducted by the Fatherhood Project (2002), a number of workers in agencies indicated that groups are generally offered only in school terms, and are often scheduled to start on the same week of term as other groups. If 2 different groups could be staggered to start a month apart, then there is more chance that fathers could attend at their time of particular need.

Where ... 
Within the area network it is better to have groups in a variety of suburbs to assist those who have difficulty accessing transport.

Is there a target specific group?
Despite our comment about having a generic group for all fathers, some have seen the need for groups that are particularly for fathers who have experienced separation, or for young fathers (e.g. under 25’s). At an area wide networking / planning level, it is good to encourage the development of some of these more specialised groups though we need to keep in mind that this may narrow the potential for participants to attend the group.

Planning with Co-worker

How will you work together?
- **The style of the group**
  What style would you like to create in the group? In our experience, a sense of informality has been important as it helps to put people at ease. It is important all participants have the opportunity to express ideas and to have those ideas and experiences valued. The group leaders play a guiding role whereby participants are encouraged to discover for themselves new insights. Include some time for personal reflection.

- **Explore each leader’s role** (see page 6)
Consider having a discussion about the strengths of each facilitator to see how you as a team can get the most out of those strengths. Personalities have an effect on the way that the group is run.

- **Gender**
  Consider the gender of the leaders and how this will affect the group. Obviously, having at least one male leader is advantageous.
  Evaluations of the groups that we have run show a preference for male group facilitators though this should not deter agencies from running fatherhood groups if two male workers are not available.

- **Discuss**
  Talk about the individual sessions. What are the main points that we would like to draw attention to? Becoming familiar with the content is important to the flow of each session. Dividing the session into parts, deciding which facilitator presents the different sections. A discussion around how the facilitators will support each other is important.

### Planning the sessions

Over the four years that the fatherhood groups have been running, the content of each session has evolved, and we have concentrated on questions that seem to work with the men who come to the groups. Feel free to use the sessions as they are, or to adapt them as you see fit.

We recommend that you photocopy the weekly running sheets and laminate them for regular reference throughout the group. The folder has been made to allow easy access to photocopying relevant topics and to add additional information. In our experience it has been useful to debrief after each session with the other leader, particularly asking what worked well, and what was not so effective. This can form the basis of changes to the way the sessions are run.

### Some principles that should be considered when adapting the sessions or planning your own group

- **Start broad**
  This will help the less confident members to feel more confident about contributing at the beginning of the session. That confidence may lead to later contributions too. This approach is logical as it gives people a framework to understand more specific details of what may be covered later.

- **Keep it balanced**
  Try to provide a balance of experiences that will promote:
  1. Learning about parenting.
  2. Support for one another (hearing each other’s stories).
  3. Reflection, which may lead to personal growth.
  4. An appreciation of the variety of roles that dads can play.

- **Stick to your times**
  Concentration spans are only limited, and so it is important to start fairly promptly, and to have your break on time too. High levels of group involvement increase peoples’ attention spans, but even still, you shouldn’t push the break beyond 1 hour of starting the group. In some of the weekly sessions in the manual there is a lot of information to cover, assess what is manageable in your session. Some questions may need to be eliminated if you are running out of time.
Fatherhood Course Manual

Variety
Try to choose ways of varying the way content is delivered that might capture the imagination. The range of activities that can be used include:

- Discussions.
- Input from the leaders.
- The use of role-plays can be a good tool to promote empathy.
- Short videos on specific topics (5-10 minutes)
- The use of small groups.
  
  The group could divide into two groups with one leader facilitating each group. This can allow the group to discuss multiple issues in a more intimate and detailed way. Acknowledging the ideas developed in these groups is important when coming back to the main group, this values the contribution that participants have made.

- Brainstorming
  
  A Point to note:
  Observe the characteristics of the group members to determine whether they might find some of these exercises too uncomfortable. For this reason it might be good to make the first week less challenging to help the leaders get a feel for whether certain exercises might be too challenging. Usually by the third week men are more willing to try different ways of learning as the level of trust in the group has increased.

Roles of the leaders

1. Helping the group to achieve its purpose

Involving the group members ...

This includes giving opportunities for participants to express themselves.

Some appropriate self-disclosure by the facilitators, the use of our own experience to highlight specific points can help break the ice and this also role models sharing experiences and feelings within the group.

Responding to suggestions ...

The use of affirmations is essential in engaging men in discussion. Try writing up on butcher’s paper the suggestions that come up. Further questioning can help to engage participants eg. “That’s an interesting point, can you explain further”? This tells the group that their contributions are valued.

Processing the group’s communication

Linking participant responses back to the topic is important, even if the comment may be obscure or missing the point.

Sometimes the leader might suggest that the group limits the scope of their discussion. This all has to be achieved sensitively to maintain maximum group interaction.

Guiding group interactions

This is similar to the above point, but may include encouraging one member to speak about something, or blocking / responding to a participant’s behaviour which is not conducive to positive group dynamics.

In the last example, it is important to affirm the member’s participation in the group, and then to use strategies that help the group re-establish its focus, such as taking the opportunity to sum up, ask others how they are feeling, talk about time constraints, or referring back to the group norms.

Fatherhood Course Manual

Variety
Try to choose ways of varying the way content is delivered that might capture the imagination. The range of activities that can be used include:

- Discussions.
- Input from the leaders.
- The use of role-plays can be a good tool to promote empathy.
- Short videos on specific topics (5-10 minutes)
- The use of small groups.
  
  The group could divide into two groups with one leader facilitating each group. This can allow the group to discuss multiple issues in a more intimate and detailed way. Acknowledging the ideas developed in these groups is important when coming back to the main group, this values the contribution that participants have made.

- Brainstorming
  
  A Point to note:
  Observe the characteristics of the group members to determine whether they might find some of these exercises too uncomfortable. For this reason it might be good to make the first week less challenging to help the leaders get a feel for whether certain exercises might be too challenging. Usually by the third week men are more willing to try different ways of learning as the level of trust in the group has increased.

Roles of the leaders

1. Helping the group to achieve its purpose

Involving the group members ...

This includes giving opportunities for participants to express themselves.

Some appropriate self-disclosure by the facilitators, the use of our own experience to highlight specific points can help break the ice and this also role models sharing experiences and feelings within the group.

Responding to suggestions ...

The use of affirmations is essential in engaging men in discussion. Try writing up on butcher’s paper the suggestions that come up. Further questioning can help to engage participants eg. “That’s an interesting point, can you explain further”? This tells the group that their contributions are valued.

Processing the group’s communication

Linking participant responses back to the topic is important, even if the comment may be obscure or missing the point.

Sometimes the leader might suggest that the group limits the scope of their discussion. This all has to be achieved sensitively to maintain maximum group interaction.

Guiding group interactions

This is similar to the above point, but may include encouraging one member to speak about something, or blocking / responding to a participant’s behaviour which is not conducive to positive group dynamics.

In the last example, it is important to affirm the member’s participation in the group, and then to use strategies that help the group re-establish its focus, such as taking the opportunity to sum up, ask others how they are feeling, talk about time constraints, or referring back to the group norms.
2. Observing the Group Dynamics

This is the task of both leaders, but especially for the co-leader who is not directing the discussion or activities at that time.

Pay attention to who is and who isn’t contributing, look for general attentiveness, who dominates and who sits back.

It is helpful for the co-leader to make suggestions based on these observations, such as “It may be a good time for a break now”, or other suggestions about moving on in the discussion.

3. Responding to Group Dynamics

Supporting group participants

Group members need to feel they are supported when sharing with the group, particularly if they are shy, or if they rarely make contributions.

If a person’s comments are dismissed or over-ridden by another group member, it is important for the leader to affirm the person and their comments, and in so doing, reinforce the group norms.

Following up participants is a powerful means of offering your support. This can happen informally during the break, or before / after a session. Referral to other groups or services may be necessary. If the funding and time is available, positive outcomes can be promoted by offering individual counselling to some group members when a convenient time can be arranged. It is here that connections with other key agency workers becomes a valuable resource, they can often accept referrals from the group to offer additional support.

Helping link participant communications to one another

To help the participants receive support from one another, it is important that the communication is to the whole group, not just the leaders.

The facilitator can ask the group at times to respond to what someone has contributed. Eg: “What do other people think about that?”

Talking about how the group is working – giving feedback

It can be helpful to point out if the group is working well, and why. This encourages everyone to think about the collective experience and promotes group identity.

If something is not going so well, this can also be expressed to the group. Give the opportunity for participants to express criticisms during breaks.

Resolving conflicts

Although conflicts are usually minor with the style of groups we run, it is important to have a plan to respond to such situations.

Initially, referring back to the group norms is an effective way of refocusing. These become the basis for any moderating or mediating which may be required from the facilitators.

If conflict continues, the group participants could be spoken to individually. If they are still unable to accept the norms and work within them, then they may no longer be able to work with the group. This is a very rare occurrence. Referral to individual counselling can be offered as a way of supporting these men.
Preparation for each meeting

☆ Arrive early
  Open up, set up room, including coffee and tea etc…
☆ Be available to the group before and after the meeting
  Some of the most valuable exchanges can be in talking before and after the group, or during half time.
☆ Breaks
  Try to stick to your break time as concentration spans drop sharply with time. Have a shorter session after the break.
☆ Be mentally prepared
  Recognize the impact of other work. If it is an evening session, take time to relax and gather your thoughts too.
☆ Use notes / outline of session
  Have handouts or brochures ready. Read through the outline of the session to get an idea of the direction that the content is leading. This in effect can facilitate greater flexibility when issues arise. Being familiar with the material will allow spontaneity.
Fatherhood Course Manual

Week 1: The Role of Fathers

Beginnings

Welcome and introducing the leaders: Points to consider

It would be good to give a brief history about the group, you may mention how and why father’s groups began. Parenting groups have in many ways been designed to focus on the mother/child relationship. A number of services and support groups have been offered to mothers, to assist in supporting them to explore their role as mum. Until fairly recently, groups aimed at focussing on the father/child relationship were few and far between. It is a great opportunity through the Fatherhood groups to value the role of Fathers as unique for both men and children.

- It may be important to acknowledge to the group the anxiety that people feel when attending a group for the first time. Reassure the group that our purpose is not to lecture but to facilitate discussion around issues of concern. It is also important to make the point that the groups are not problem focused but are designed to explore thoroughly and to value each individuals parenting experience in their role as Dad.

Nuts and bolts

1. Discuss the requirements to receive a certificate of completion.
   We would suggest that this be given after 5 out of 6 sessions have been attended.
2. Mention the tea/coffee arrangements, breaks etc.
3. Encourage the group to feel free to chat to the leaders before or after the group, and during the break.
   ✪ You may choose to keep the group informed about resources and events over the course of the meetings, such as local father-friendly playgroups or activities for dad’s and kids and other family members, or other relevant groups in local area.
   ✪ The group could be asked if they have found a helpful service or agency / book / website etc that might interest others.
4. The facilitators may have other announcements

Norms / Guidelines

In recognition of the fact that men attending your group will come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of experiences, it is essential that there are guidelines for group interactions. These guidelines provide collective understanding and agreed rules and can be used as a framework for discussion in the group.

We generally base our group guidelines on the following issues:

1. Confidentiality
   Participants may have some anxiety around disclosing personal information. By stating explicitly the confidentiality commitment, this may help participants to be at ease. It is also important to state that as
Fatherhood Course Manual

You may choose to use other creative ways of introducing one another but be aware

Talk to the group about:

1. Introducing the group members
2. Show respect to group members: allow others to talk
   The realisation that other participants have had experiences and ideas
   that are a valuable contribution to the overall discussion.
3. Agree to disagree
   The understanding that others may think differently to ourselves and
   that this is ok. This supports listening without the obligation of
   accepting what others say as true. It also shows us that others have no
   obligation to accept what we say as true.
4. Show respect to other groups. No put downs on basis of gender, race,
   religion etc…
   Discussions can lead to areas of bias that can be unhelpful to the group
   aims. Having this as a guideline reminds the group that we have
   collective responsibility to other group participants and to the wider
   community. It also encourages us to remain positive towards others.
5. Try to keep swearing to a minimum.
   Offensive language does offend some people but the expectation needs
   to be realistic and not too stringent.
6. Other ….
   You may like to combine any suggestions that the group has with these
   guidelines.

Introducing the group members

Introduce the group participants to each other. This helps to break the ice, and can
help normalise the experience. It also provides the leaders with valuable information
about the individuals and their communication styles.

There are plenty of alternatives you could use here with varying levels of creativity.  
2 common examples are ~
1. Group Rounds: Members introduce themselves to the group, saying their
   name, how many kids, one thing for the group to know about them, or what
   they hope to get out of the group, etc…
2. Introduce a Partner: Members pair up and introduce themselves to their
   partner using the above categories. The partner then does the same. Later the
   members introduce their partner to the wider group.

You may choose to use other creative ways of introducing one another but be aware
that some men may be turned off early in a group if they feel threatened by particular
tasks.

Group goals and prioritising

Talk to the group about:

The leader’s goals for the group, such as

- To learn to value our role as fathers, and our needs as fathers.
- Explore our thoughts, feelings and ideas about being dads.
- To support one another as dads.

Week 1 2

Week 1 2

Fatherhood Course Manual

Introducing the group members

Introduce the group participants to each other. This helps to break the ice, and can
help normalise the experience. It also provides the leaders with valuable information
about the individuals and their communication styles.

There are plenty of alternatives you could use here with varying levels of creativity.  
2 common examples are ~
1. Group Rounds: Members introduce themselves to the group, saying their
   name, how many kids, one thing for the group to know about them, or what
   they hope to get out of the group, etc…
2. Introduce a Partner: Members pair up and introduce themselves to their
   partner using the above categories. The partner then does the same. Later the
   members introduce their partner to the wider group.

You may choose to use other creative ways of introducing one another but be aware
that some men may be turned off early in a group if they feel threatened by particular
tasks.

Group goals and prioritising

Talk to the group about:

The leader’s goals for the group, such as

- To learn to value our role as fathers, and our needs as fathers.
- Explore our thoughts, feelings and ideas about being dads.
- To support one another as dads.
Fatherhood Course Manual

To learn. We all (including the group’s leaders) learn as we listen to new ideas. Through reflection and discussion we can assess how we are going in our role as a parent.

To help us understand the needs of our children.

What do the participants want to get from the group?

The members could be asked to spend a few minutes to fill in the registration form that would help us prioritise the issues that will be addressed.

Briefly explain that the facilitators will sometimes answer questions that group participants have at a later stage in the course where they are addressed more fully.

Outline of the 6 week course

1. Role of Fathers
2. Communicating with children
3. Building confidence in children
4. Dealing with behaviour
5. Stress and anger and the effects on children
6. Relationships and self development

The role of Fathers

General introduction about The Importance of Fathering

As you are interested in running this course, you no doubt have some passion about the importance of being a father. We encourage you to let it show in this introduction, as you briefly talk about some of your ideas.

We tend to mention …

The historical perspective

The ability for fathers to have a positive influence on his children’s development has been understated in the past. In the past fatherhood may have been defined in very limited ways. Being a father is also extremely significant for us as men. This is a time when the role of the father is developing and therefore men are beginning to discuss their role.
Fatherhood Course Manual

☆ A father’s relationship with his children is unique.
Some of the distinctive things which father’s offer their children in their relationships are that:

We help boys learn to be men, and importantly, to be fathers. We are their role models for them particularly in how we model appropriate treatment of women.

We help girls to know how to relate to members of the opposite sex, for example, by demonstrating appropriate boundaries for physical contact, and providing them with exposure to how males can think and act.

See S. Bidulph, More Secrets to Happy Children

Some Interesting research that you might mention if appropriate ...

“Babies whose fathers participated in bathing, feeding, diapering and other routines of physical care were found to be more socially responsive and scored higher on the Bayley Scales of Infant Development than babies who did not receive this care from their dads” (Pruett 1997).

(Quoted in Gowen and Nebrig)

☆ We gain an enormous amount from our relationships with our children
Being a parent is not always easy, but it can be extremely rewarding. In some ways, it helps us to consider the bigger questions of life, and what really matters. Often priorities shift and lead us to question our past and what we want to achieve in the future. A new sense of responsibility can be a motivating factor for personal change. The new experience of parental love can be a liberating experience for men. Caring for someone unconditionally and seeing this reflected in our children can have a significant effect on a man’s self esteem. The male’s need to protect can be quite strong and can also act as a great motivator for lasting change.

Question: Why do YOU think dads are important?
This can be a good question to ask the participants in the group just prior to the break to get them thinking about their relationship with their children. It may also initiate some thinking for those who are not yet fathers, more specifically it can act as a catalyst for exploring what they want to develop in their own role as a Dad.

Write a list of the comments on the white board or butcher’s paper.

Coffee Break

Questions for discussion in rounds
Fatherhood Course Manual

1. What is a good dad?
This is a good broad opening question to draw out the dads' views (everyone will have an opinion) in a non-threatening way. It is very important to start the 1st question in session 1 in a manner that encourages participation from the whole group! Many of the suggestions may illustrate the reliance that we have on stereotypes, or concepts that have been assigned to males historically. To draw out further responses you might ask, “What’s lacking in this list?”

Brainstorm

2. Who was a man that we looked up to as a boy?
This question explores the origins of their views to question 1, and encourages reflection. Some participants may not have had positive experiences with their own fathers. We need to broaden the ‘male role model’ to include uncles, grandfathers, teachers, sporting icons. What we are trying to get at is what we learn about being a man, and perhaps, being a father, from these figures.
List the characteristics of the good role model as identified by the group.

Brainstorm

2.1 Why did we look up to them?
Looks at the importance of men as our role models, and the value of shared experiences and memories. It is important here to guide the group to look at this from a child’s point of view.
- To children men look big and powerful, it is important for children to feel safe when they are around adults.
- Children learn regardless. The things that they learn about adult males are those things that they experience consistently.
- Children aspire to be those ‘big’ ‘powerful’ people because they represent the world that they will grow to become a part of. They are the apprentices and they see us as the experts.

Brainstorm

3. How are expectations on fathers different now than they were when we were kids?
Here we look at the differences facing fathers today versus those of our own fathers. We also look at the expectations on fathers today to be more actively involved in the day-to-day care of children. We then look at whether or not we feel that we have the skills to live up to those expectations.
- Draw up a 2-column table and list the differences between Fatherhood today and Fatherhood for our Fathers.

Brainstorm

Some important themes include …
- Not sole bread winner / increasing flexibility in work
- Higher unemployment / more opportunity for some
- More involved in cooking / cleaning
- More involved with kids -
- More single fathers
- Historical events such as wars

Brainstorm

Some important themes include …
- Not sole bread winner / increasing flexibility in work
- Higher unemployment / more opportunity for some
- More involved in cooking / cleaning
- More involved with kids -
- More single fathers
- Historical events such as wars
4. What would we like our kids to think of us as dads in 20 years time?

- We ask these questions to encourage the idea that our children’s future has a lot to do with their childhood experience and in particular their relationship with their parents. We can have an enormous influence on the relationships that our children will encounter further down the track.

- This question also identifies the needs of fathers. Make a list of the responses from the group, is it enough that our children will describe us as ‘responsible’ or ‘hard working’ or ‘provided well for us!’ What we need to home in on here is the father’s need to know that his children love him, this alone will satisfy us as fathers. Such a response also tells us that we have been successful as a parent.

4.1 How does this happen? OR How do we enable that to happen?

What do we, as parents need to do to achieve success in parenting?

- We need to establish closeness.
- We need to create enough great memories with our children as possible.
- We need to be aware of the needs of our children.
- We need to be aware of ways to fulfill our children’s needs.

Brainstorm
Make a list of the suggestions that come out of the discussions and then emphasise the points above. These points frame the rest of the course.


The issue of emotional development may have already arisen by now but it is important to explore this point further. From previous brainstorming activities it may have become evident that an area where Fathers have not historically seen their role as one of influence is the emotional development of their children, particularly during the infancy stage.

6.1 How do you think that Fathers and their children can become close?

Brainstorm

- The use of practical examples would be useful here. For example; bathing the baby, play, changing nappies, spending time with their children, reading stories at bedtime, helping with homework, talking to their children about their day, asking questions about their child’s day or how etc
- The emphasis here should be on what is happening behind the activities for the child and the Father. The relationship and communication is more important than the activity itself.

Brainstorm

The use of practical examples would be useful here. For example; bathing the baby, play, changing nappies, spending time with their children, reading stories at bedtime, helping with homework, talking to their children about their day, asking questions about their child’s day or how etc
- The emphasis here should be on what is happening behind the activities for the child and the Father. The relationship and communication is more important than the activity itself.
Fatherhood Course Manual

Some barriers affecting Father involvement

Here are some discussion points that may be of value in running this session. It is likely that one or more of these issues have been raised by group participants. It may be beneficial to think of some questions that you could ask the group to facilitate greater discussion around these issues.

- Many men associate ‘bonding’ with breastfeeding and therefore see themselves as having a limited role in the ‘bonding’ process. This is one reason why men can seem task oriented when it comes to caring for the newborn. This is expressed in the Father seeing himself as needing to do more around the house or seeing the changing of a nappy as an indicator of an involved father. Many women talk about how involved their partner is with the baby and one of the first questions that appears in conversation is “does he change nappies”? This in itself shows that some women see the role of Dad as one of supporting the daily tasks associated with the physical needs of the child.

- Many men talk about feeling supervised in their attempts to address the physical needs of the child, particularly early on. A feeling of incompetence can arise through this and the Father may withdraw from the activity altogether. Having time and room to explore their own way of doing things is important for Dads. For Mum it may be a good strategy to avoid watching or coaching.

- Fathers develop confidence in their ability by being encouraged to do tasks with their child. Once competent, men quickly move toward enjoying the experiences with their child. Fathers find for themselves the emotional impact that they have on the child as well as the emotional influence that the child has on them.

- Many people talk about their experience of their Fathers as being somewhat distant, away a lot, working, busy or that they are disciplinarian. These roles and attitudes have been identified with Dad.

- Removing the distance between men and children in terms of the role is about learning and identifying that there is something unique about the ‘connection’ between Fathers and their children. Here the domain of emotional development becomes an integral part of the Father/Child experience; the beginnings of parental love take the man to unchartered territory, while the baby learns that the deep voice, the hairy face, the big hands and strong arms belong to someone who takes care of them.

- The belief that, as a Dad my role is to act as a support for the Mother/Child relationship is not enough for the involved Father. Such a perception can lead to isolation if the Father does not feel competent or important. Jealousy and alienation can occur within the couple’s relationship. The focus can become
the relationship that we had before the child came along leading to grief associated with the loss of intimacy. The benefit of the perception that the Father has a direct relationship with the child leads to the experience of parental love and the focus of the couple relationship is more in line with each other. In other words, the future as parents fits with the future as a couple.

In summary, the expectations of the Father about his role can have a significant effect on the family as a whole. The inclusion of emotional development as a fundamental part of the Father/Child relationship promotes secure attachment for the child as well as ongoing development for the man in the Father role. The expectations of the Mother around her perception of the Father’s role can also have a significant effect on the family as a whole. The perception of ante-natal and post-natal services around the Father’s role can also serve to communicate confusing messages to the Father when the emphasis is solely on his support for the Mother/Child relationship. It is therefore important to be aware of the language we use when encouraging Father involvement in the parenting process.

You may like to use this diagram to help reinforce the significance of being a dad, and how maintaining a two way supportive relationship with your partner, and developing a two way relationship with your child helps promote balance within a family.

**Closing Rounds**
One thing you've learned tonight?
Give each member an opportunity to contribute here.
Fatherhood Course Manual

* **Week 1: The Role of Fathers**

1. Welcome / Introducing the leaders:

2. Nuts and bolts
   - Certificates at the completion of the course (5 of 6 weeks attended).
   - Tea/coffee arrangements
   - Feel free to chat to the leaders during the breaks etc.
   - Other announcements

3. Norms / Guidelines
   We generally base our group guidelines on the following issues
   1. Confidentiality/mandatory notification obligations
   2. Show respect to group members: allow others to talk
   3. Agree to disagree
   4. Show respect to other groups. No put downs on the basis of gender, Race, religion etc...
   5. Try to keep swearing to a minimum
   6. Other ……………

4. Introducing the group members
   - Introduce yourself to group
   - Name
   - Number and age of children
   - Reason for attending group

5. Group goals and prioritising

6. General introduction about *The Importance of Fathering*
   - You may like to talk about some of the following ideas:
     * The historical perspective.
     * A father’s relationship with his children is quite unique.
     * We gain an enormous amount from our relationships with our children.
     * Your own thoughts.

* Coffee Break *
Fatherhood Course Manual

Questions for discussion in rounds

1. What is a good dad?
   - Brainstorm

2. Who was a man that you looked up to as a boy?
   - Brainstorm

2.1 Why did you look up to them?

3. How are expectations on fathers different now than they were when we were kids?
   - Brainstorm

4. What would we like our kids to think of us as dads in 20 years time?
   - Brainstorm

   a. How do we enable this to happen?

   6.1 How do you think that fathers and their children can become close?

7. Closing Rounds
Tell the rest of the group one thing that you have learned tonight?
Week 2: Communicating with Children

Welcome
Look for new participants and introduce them to the group. Briefly summarise last week.

Introduction to Communication
Points to make in your introduction could include

In this session we focus on the direct relationship between father and child. Often the role of Dad is not clear in terms of what he can do with the newborn. The emphasis is generally on the mother and child relationship and in particular bonding and breastfeeding. Often we see the words breastfeeding and bonding together and this can imply that fathers have little or no role when it comes to bonding. It is important here to look at the characteristics of the newborn as well as the developmental needs of the newborn to ascertain how fathers can have an active role from day 1 in the bonding process. We start here because bonding happens through communication and this communication between father and child begins from the moment that Dad and child meet.

1. What is communication?
Ask the group and list the responses on the white board or butcher’s paper.

 ++) We assume a lot when it comes to communicating, we take much for granted because we have learnt the skill of communication. Imagine then the baby who has to learn to communicate with the environment around him/her. Much is communicated to the child through consistent care and attention to his/her needs. Early communication with the baby is achieved through responding to cries, eye contact, smiling, touch and use of our voices. The parent’s expectation of a response from the baby is often animated on the parents face and the child responds to this through imitation.
Some negative styles of communication are:
- Nagging
- Criticising
- Lecturing
- Threatening
- Ridiculing / sarcasm
- ...

It may be of benefit to look closely at one or two of these with the group and analyse why these forms of communication tend to isolate us from others. One of the main reasons for this is that when we use these styles of communication the focus tends to be on our needs rather than the needs of the child, in other words we can lack empathy towards the needs of others.

These are all communication traps. We tend to put up barriers to these.

2.1 How do these styles of communication affect children?

Brainstorm
- A child exposed to these forms of communication consistently can lose the bond with the parent.
- The parent is unpredictable which leads to the child feeling insecure.
- The child can become isolated and they can behave in ways that are overtly attention seeking.
- Progressively the behaviours become more extreme and confused.

Often the parental response to this is more of the same and this only serves to perpetuate a downward spiralling of the relationship.

Some themes are we looking for:
- Communication is a bridge between people.
- Communication is a 2 way street, where messages are sent (via language and non verbal communication) and received (by listening and perceiving).
- Communication isn’t just words
- Communication, verbal, non-verbal, tone of voice…the overall message – the impression we give people over time (patterns of behaviour).
- Barriers in communication, or interference, can occur during sending or receiving messages so that what one person intends is not what the other hears and understands.
- Understanding non-verbals, body language, cues and reflexes is important when caring for the newborn.

2. What styles of communication don’t we like?

Ask the group and list the responses on the white board or butcher’s paper.

This question helps us to identify the things that don’t work in communication, the things that grate on our nerves, the types of communication that isolate us. It is an important question to ask as it can help us to empathise with children when we use these forms of communication when dealing with them.

Some negative styles of communication are:
- Nagging
- Criticising
- Lecturing
- Threatening
- Ridiculing / sarcasm
- ...

It may be of benefit to look closely at one or two of these with the group and analyse why these forms of communication tend to isolate us from others. One of the main reasons for this is that when we use these styles of communication the focus tends to be on our needs rather than the needs of the child, in other words we can lack empathy towards the needs of others.

These are all communication traps. We tend to put up barriers to these.

2.1 How do these styles of communication affect children?

Brainstorm
- A child exposed to these forms of communication consistently can lose the bond with the parent.
- The parent is unpredictable which leads to the child feeling insecure.
- The child can become isolated and they can behave in ways that are overtly attention seeking.
- Progressively the behaviours become more extreme and confused.

Often the parental response to this is more of the same and this only serves to perpetuate a downward spiralling of the relationship.
3. The child may withdraw from fear.
3. The child may withdraw due to lack of confidence; they may not contribute for fear of ridicule or due to low self-esteem.
3. The child may become aggressive toward others; they may imitate our behaviour and subject others to the same forms of communication.
3. The child may become depressed.
3. The child may have little or no awareness of others feelings if they have been exposed to criticism, threats, or aggression from their parents.
3. When children are exposed to verbal and emotional abuse they may exhibit violent or aggressive behaviours. They may begin to show such behaviours at a young age.
3. The child may exhibit a high level of arousal or hypersensitivity to their environment that is often expressed as nervousness, disruptiveness, and an inability to concentrate for extended periods of time.

5. What other barriers affect our communication?
- Timing (Preoccupied, tired, unreceptive to the child).
- Unclear message (eg: no non veritals on phone, misunderstanding).
- Not enough information (assuming someone will understand) or too much information (boring people).
- Unhelpful patterns of communicating (we’ll deal with this in reacting vs. responding (week 3).
- Emotions, if we are emotionally pre-occupied our own emotional needs can prevent us from seeing the needs of others. High levels of emotion or arousal can lead to reactive behaviours that prevent us from thinking things through in practical and effective ways. This can affect decision making, problem solving and our ability to arrive at fair outcomes and expectations for children.

4. Let’s discuss some things that can make communication more difficult for children?

   ⊲ Limited understanding of Language development
   We may assume that a child understands a concept that may be beyond their language and experience. It is important to be specific and to clarify whether or not the child follows what we are saying. Knowledge of language development is important for parent/child communication.
   The Child’s level of understanding
   Parents can often be speaking or expecting more than the child is able to understand. Parents need to be aware of the child’s limitations.
   Eg. If you want a 4 year old to clean up his/her room, the parent may need to clean up the room with the child. The parent may need to show them how to do it rather than expect that the child can do it.

   ⊲ Family and environmental influences
   Changing jobs, new baby, changing schools, poverty, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse in the family. All these issues place added pressure on the family members and have an effect on family priorities; this can mean that the amount of attention and time given to children is inadequate.

   ⊲ Limited understanding of Language development
   We may assume that a child understands a concept that may be beyond their language and experience. It is important to be specific and to clarify whether or not the child follows what we are saying. Knowledge of language development is important for parent/child communication.
   The Child’s level of understanding
   Parents can often be speaking or expecting more than the child is able to understand. Parents need to be aware of the child’s limitations.
   Eg. If you want a 4 year old to clean up his/her room, the parent may need to clean up the room with the child. The parent may need to show them how to do it rather than expect that the child can do it.

   ⊲ Family and environmental influences
   Changing jobs, new baby, changing schools, poverty, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse in the family. All these issues place added pressure on the family members and have an effect on family priorities; this can mean that the amount of attention and time given to children is inadequate.
Children learn more readily from the modelling that people around them display rather than the words that they are exposed to. In other words, children will learn quickly to do what we do and not necessarily what we say. Before language becomes proficient, children are learning from their environment through observation, imitation and interaction. Doing activities with children is a great way of role modelling skills and socially accepted behaviours.

For more information on the topic, please refer to the Fatherhood Course Manual.

Coffee Break

5. How can we encourage our kids to communicate with us? Tips.

- **Positivity and enthusiasm**
  Positivity rubs off; it is infectious and can become a normal part of growing up if role modelled by parents. Positivity expects a good outcome, it communicates hope and confidence, and it encourages children to look upon new pursuits as exploration. Being positive accepts mistakes as a part of life that provides us with learning opportunities.

- **Notice things**
  Take a close look at your child. See anything? Are there any new scrapes or bruises, a sad expression, nervousness, special energy or enthusiasm, a new project? Mention what you see and ask questions. Noticing things communicates interest, it requires attention and focus. Often it is easy to notice when things are not going so well because such times induce an emotional response. In order to notice when things are going well we need to actively look for things that are going well. Often there is no emotional cue for our attentiveness. Children are more often noticed for bad behaviours than for good behaviours so we must ask ourselves what behaviours we are reinforcing. Our focus as parents often will model what we value to our children.

- **Ask real questions**
  “How did you feel when it was your turn to read in the circle at school?” Ask questions that start a conversation. Be specific e.g. “How did you draw those clouds in your picture?” rather than “that’s a nice picture”. Encouraging children to talk about how they feel and what they do creates closeness and trust. Through questioning a child can discover what it is that they value, it is therefore important to model this questioning to them.

- **Listen actively**
  Give your full attention, put the newspaper down or turn off the T.V. Lean forward, give eye contact, get down on the floor to show your interest. Ask more questions and allow the child to finish the conversation.

- **Respond to feelings**
  When a child tells you how they are feeling this is a signal for your full attention. Help them to feel that their feelings are O.K. Give examples of when
you felt that way. In this way you are encouraging your child to express their feelings and to feel close to you.

6. Discuss the differences between praise and encouragement

- Children have tremendous a need for their parent’s affirmation and support as they constantly encounter new experiences and try to learn new skills. How we respond to them over time will often affect their level of confidence.
- Much of the praise we give focuses heavily on achievements/milestones, but doesn’t necessarily recognise the process that has occurred to get there. Often we use praise after an event, whereas encouragement occurs before and throughout the process of a child developing a skill.
- Encouragement searches for and identifies the positives at all times e.g. the courage to have a go, the child’s effort and persistence.
- Praise focuses on what the child does, but encouragement actually focuses on the child. A subtle but important difference. We learn about two different values here, firstly praise helps us to value our achievements and the achievements of others while encouragement helps us to value who we are, our inherent characteristics, our hopes and aspirations. Encouragement also helps us to see the good in others and to respect the hopes and aspirations of others.
- Sometimes we need to reassure children, this is recognising that there has been a setback and prepares the ground for further encouragement. Reassurance plays an important role in connecting with the child especially when they feel they have failed.

Tips and Traps – A summary

Tips
- Eye contact
Fatherhood Course Manual

- Posture
- Questioning
- Allowing time – letting them talk, and finish the conversation.
- Show you enjoy them talking to you / smiling.
- Role model good communication to them.

Traps
- Nagging
- Criticising
- Lecturing
- Threatening
- Ridiculing / sarcasm

7. Group Round: Tell us one way you could strengthen your communication with your child…
Week 2: Communicating with Children

Welcome

Look for new participants and introduce them to the group. Briefly summarise last week.

Introduction to Communication

1. What is communication?
  - Brainstorm
  - Communication is a bridge between people.
  - Communication is a 2 way street
  - Communication isn’t just words
  - There can be barriers in communication

2. What styles of communication don’t we like?
  - Brainstorm
    - Nagging
    - Criticising
    - Lecturing
    - Threatening
    - Ridiculing / sarcasm

2.1 How do these styles of communication affect children?
  - Brainstorm
    - When adults use their height and strength to intimidate them
    - When they are never considered when decisions are being made

3. What other barriers affect our communication?
  - Brainstorm
    - Timing
    - Unclear message
    - Not enough info / too much info
    - Unhelpful patterns of communicating
    - We are emotionally preoccupied

4. A discussion of the things that can make communication more difficult for children
  - Language development
  - The Child’s level of understanding
  - Developmental Changes
  - Family and environmental influences

Coffee Break

Week 2 Running sheet 1
5. How can we encourage our kids to communicate with us? Tips.

**Brainstorm**
- Notice things
- Ask real questions
- Listen actively
- Respond to feelings
- Respond appropriately to pain
- Include physical affection
- Share yourself
- Being positive and enthusiastic
- Allowing time to let the children talk

**Praise vs. Encouragement**

6. Discuss the differences between praise and encouragement.

You may need to ask:
- What is praise? AND What is encouragement?

**Brainstorm**
- Praise often focuses on achievements / milestones. It is usually given after the event.
- Encouragement searches for and identifies the positives at all times. It should occur throughout the process of a child developing a skill, etc.
- Children constantly encounter new experiences and are trying to learn new skills. Their parent’s support and affirmation is critical.
- Praise often focuses on what the child does, but encouragement actually focuses on the child.

**Summary**

Tips – Things to remember when communicating with your kids
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Questioning
- Allowing time – letting them talk, and finish the conversation.
- Show you enjoy them talking to you / smiling.
- Role model good communication to them.

7. Group Round:

Go around the group and suggest one way you could try to strengthen your communication with your children.

You could use this topic for the group round, or choose your own.

**Praise vs. Encouragement**

6. Discuss the differences between praise and encouragement.

You may need to ask:
- What is praise? AND What is encouragement?

**Brainstorm**
- Praise often focuses on achievements / milestones. It is usually given after the event.
- Encouragement searches for and identifies the positives at all times. It should occur throughout the process of a child developing a skill, etc.
- Children constantly encounter new experiences and are trying to learn new skills. Their parent’s support and affirmation is critical.
- Praise often focuses on what the child does, but encouragement actually focuses on the child.

**Summary**

Tips – Things to remember when communicating with your kids
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Questioning
- Allowing time – letting them talk, and finish the conversation.
- Show you enjoy them talking to you / smiling.
- Role model good communication to them.

7. Group Round:

Go around the group and suggest one way you could try to strengthen your communication with your children.

You could use this topic for the group round, or choose your own.
**Week 3 : Children and Confidence**

**Welcome**
Look for new participants and introduce them to the group.
Briefly summarise last week

**Introduction to Self Confidence in kids**
1. **When are we confident?**
   There are identifiable characteristics within us, within the environment and in others when we are confident. By analysing these we can identify the things a child may need in order to feel confident. It is important here that we can establish a reference point from which we can empathise with the child. That reference point is how we feel when we are confident.
   - **Brainstorm:** examples include
     - Well practiced, experienced, good at something
     - When we are encouraged
     - When we feel accepted
     - When we’ve had success at learning new things before.

2. **When do we lack confidence?**
   This question helps to identify our needs when we are faced with a situation where we do not feel comfortable. The point here is to help the participants to later switch to the child’s perspective. By analysing our own feelings when we are lacking confidence we can then imagine how the child might feel when placed in a similar situation.
   - **Brainstorm:** examples include
     - At times of change
     - When trying something new / learning
     - When we have too much responsibility
     - When criticised
     - Under physical / psychological threat etc..

3. **A Discussion of why confidence is important.**
   - **Brainstorm:** Some themes may include …
     - Allows people to be independent
     - Enhances capacity to learn new things
     - Helps people to fulfil their potential
     - Enables people to interact socially

4. **The beginnings of Confidence – ATTACHMENT**
   The facilitators are introducing the concept of attachment and the importance for their child’s later development. Some of the information is for the facilitators to enhance their own understanding.
4.1 What is bonding?
4.2 Has anyone heard of attachment?

One of the leaders could then give a simple explanation of attachment. We will need to gauge how detailed to make the presentation depending on their group.

The main points are:
- From 7-9 months children start responding differently to their parents, becoming anxious when their parents move away from them / leave rooms etc. This is a healthy process called attachment. The critical phase of attachment is between 7 months to 3 years old.

- The child uses their attachment figure (parent) as a secure base from which to explore the world (the parent supports the child’s exploration) and a safe haven to return to for reassurance (parent protects and comforts child).

- The type of attachment that a child develops (secure or insecure) affects the child’s patterns of relating, way of dealing with their emotions, and the development of confidence. Note that the level of security felt by the child will have a marked effect on their level of emotional security as an adult.

- It becomes harder to change things later in the child’s life, but it can be done, especially in non-crisis times. Some people in the group (whether they are voicing it or not) may be wondering whether they have missed the boat as their children are already older. But even when the children are older, the parent’s role is still to provide a safe haven for the child and a secure base from which they can discover the world. It is never too late to start!

- It is important for the child’s development that the attachment figure/s (usually parents) are responsible, stable and consistent in meeting the child’s needs, and being emotionally available to their child.

The following diagram represents the pattern of good, secure attachment and shows what the child needs from their parent at that time.
CIRCLE OF SECURITY
PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD’S NEEDS

Always:
- Protect me
- Comfort me
- Delight in me
- Organise my feelings

Whenever possible:
- Follow my child’s need

Whenever necessary:
- Take charge
- By being patient & encouraging

The next question is split into three, and considers how to apply what we have said about attachment to children of different ages.

4.3.1 So, what are babies learning emotionally when their nappies are changed or when mum or dad respond when they are crying?

Here the baby learns that when they have a need an adult comes and addresses that need. The child quickly learns that there are predictable patterns that they can rely on. This predictability represents stability and security to the child. The quality of the interaction between the attachment figure and the child determines whether or not the experience is pleasant or unpleasant.

Brainstorm:

4.3.2 What does the 7 year old learn when you comfort them after they have hurt themselves after a fall?

The child needs to know that the parent is around when things go amiss. They return to their base (parent) for reassurance and comfort. The parent in displaying understanding and comfort acknowledges the pain that the child feels. This parental behaviour demonstrates the importance of empathy in social relations and the child comes to know that empathy is a normal part of relating to others.

Brainstorm:

4.3.1 So, what are babies learning emotionally when their nappies are changed or when mum or dad respond when they are crying?

Here the baby learns that when they have a need an adult comes and addresses that need. The child quickly learns that there are predictable patterns that they can rely on. This predictability represents stability and security to the child. The quality of the interaction between the attachment figure and the child determines whether or not the experience is pleasant or unpleasant.

Brainstorm:

4.3.2 What does the 7 year old learn when you comfort them after they have hurt themselves after a fall?

The child needs to know that the parent is around when things go amiss. They return to their base (parent) for reassurance and comfort. The parent in displaying understanding and comfort acknowledges the pain that the child feels. This parental behaviour demonstrates the importance of empathy in social relations and the child comes to know that empathy is a normal part of relating to others.
4.3.3 What does the teenager learn when you are understanding and you comfort them after have had a break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend?

Among other things teenagers require of their parents trust and acknowledgement as individuals. Relationships with others become paramount and often the parents can feel unappreciated or secondary. The teenager can seem self-absorbed and unaware of the feelings of the parents due to the intensity of their own feelings. When circumstances develop where the teenager has to assess their own feelings as in a break up or disappointment of some sort, they can lash out or withdraw as an initial response. The parent who can weather the initial storm approaching their son or daughter with empathy can find a new richness and depth in the relationship. When the parent shows empathy and understanding the teenager learns that the parent acknowledges them as an individual in their own right and that the parent has experienced similar events in their life, the teen learns empathy for the parent. Through the parental care displayed in a supportive rather than a directive way the child’s autonomy is reinforced and their identity is validated.

Brainstorm: Some responses may include:
- They are valued.
- They are wanted.
- That someone is there to consistently recognise their needs.
- Their world is consistent. They can have confidence that their needs will be met.
- That their feelings are valid.
- They can feel safe and secure.
- They have someone to protect them.
- That their feelings are important to us.

Coffee Break

5. How We Can Help Children Develop Confidence? 2 questions…

5.1 What do children need to develop their confidence?

Brainstorm: Some responses may include:
- Support
- Patience/time to learn
- Unconditional Love
- Acceptance
- Stability
- Parental emotional availability/emotional attachment to the parent.
Children develop confidence initially through the consistent predictable way that parents attend to their needs. Often these start off as the survival needs like food, warmth, safety. As the child develops, their needs become more complex requiring more complex input such as the time spent in play and communication with others. The parent consistently responds to the complexities of the child’s developmental needs reinforcing the child’s affect on their environment. The child discovers power and the ability to manipulate the things around them. He or she also learns that through their emotional responses to their environment the parent in called into action and responds to their new discoveries, pains, excitement and frustration. All of these things tell the child that they are effective and significant. Confidence is growing.

5.2 How can parents help a child’s confidence grow?

Brainstorm: Some responses may include ....

- **Attitudes**
  - Be positive and enthusiastic: expect good outcomes
  - Encouraging, reinforcing effort and improvement, not just focusing on achievements.
  - Be determined to be fair and show understanding
  - Acceptance: Our children need to know that our love is not dependent upon them performing well.

- **Provide a stable, consistent environment**
  - Consistency in how we respond to their behaviour. Having clear boundaries such as night time routines and predictable responses.
  - Believe: If we show we believe in our kids, it helps them to believe in themselves.
  - Being reliable. Following through on what we say. This makes things predictable for the child.

- **Allow time for skill development / change / learning**
  - Exploration
  - Accept mistakes as part of learning. Keep it in context.
  - Demonstration, showing children how to do something is often more effective than telling them and expecting them to be able to achieve.
  - Repetition – giving children time to practice.
  - Encouraging them to continue to improve.

6. A Confidence Breaker … and an alternative

Give a concrete example of a time when you as a parent may easily lose your cool because of something that has happened. OR Ask for an example from the group.

I have often spoken of the time my 2 year old inserted a piece of toast and peanut butter into the brand new video recorder.

When that sort of thing happens we often have a KNEE JERK REACTION.
Fatherhood Course Manual

Week 3

a) What would some knee jerk reactions be to that situation?
   🌟 Brainstorm

b) Who is in control of the situation?
   🌟 Brainstorm

Often when we are reactive we are not in control of our own emotions. In other words we do things that we regret later or that we deem to have been bad judgment. We seek to control while we are out of control and this often ends with destructive consequences.

An optional point for discussion

“The parents who whale into (get stuck into) their children in the street or supermarket are clearly losing control of their children, not gaining it”.


This quote is in a section which discusses how our reactions to children’s behaviour, such as smacking, can actually create barriers between us and our children, which emotionally make them less likely to want to do what we want them to do. That’s what it means by losing control of their children. You could ask the group to discuss this.

c) Whose needs are being met?
   🌟 Brainstorm

When we react, we tend to do the first thing that comes to mind and not the rational well thought out thing. We end up regretting our actions or feeling guilt or shame. Clearly our needs are not met. In such situations we often forget the needs of our children and they end up hurt or scared. To address the needs of children often will take serious thought and problem solving strategies. When we just react, we don’t give ourselves the time to think and the needs of our children and ourselves can only be considered after the event.

d) What happens to
   a. the child’s confidence? AND
   b. to our relationship?
   🌟 Brainstorm

e) Another way of responding is what we call; “STOP, THINK, DO”.

This is self explanatory and we will be addressing this more thoroughly in weeks 4 and 5. It may be good to ask the group what they think it means and if they have any personal strategies that they use to avoid reactionary behaviour.

d) What happens to
   a. the child’s confidence? AND
   b. to our relationship?
   🌟 Brainstorm

e) Another way of responding is what we call; “STOP, THINK, DO”.

This is self explanatory and we will be addressing this more thoroughly in weeks 4 and 5. It may be good to ask the group what they think it means and if they have any personal strategies that they use to avoid reactionary behaviour.
Closing Reflections:

Go around the group saying one thing I liked about tonight …

Hand out the sheet with different strategies to help us use “STOP, THINK, Do” rather than Knee Jerk responses.
Welcome
Briefly summarise last week

Introduction to Self Confidence in kids

1. When are we confident?
   - Brainstorm
   - When we …
     - are encouraged
     - are well practiced, experienced, good at something
   - We’ve had success at learning new things before.
   - feel accepted

2. When do we lack confidence?
   - Brainstorm
   - When criticised
   - Under threat etc
   - At times of change
   - trying something new / learning
   - when we are faced with too much responsibility
   - When criticised
   - Under threat etc

3. Why is confidence important?
   - Brainstorm
   - Allows people to be independent
   - Enables people to interact socially
   - Helps people to fulfil their potential
   - Enhances capacity to learn new things

4. The beginnings of Confidence – ATTACHMENT
   - Brainstorm
   - What is bonding?
   - Has anyone heard of attachment?
   - Give a simple explanation of attachment to the group. See separate sheet with points and diagrams.
     a. So, what are babies learning emotionally when their nappies are changed or when mum or dad respond when they are crying?
     b. What does the 7 year old learn when you comfort them after they have hurt themselves after a fall?
     c. What does the teenager learn when you are understanding and “cut them some slack” after they have had a break-up with a boyfriend / girlfriend.
   - Some responses for these 3 questions may include …
     - They are wanted
     - They are valued
     - That someone is there to meet their needs
They can feel safe and secure.

**Coffee Break**

**How we can help children develop confidence?**

### 5.1 What do children need to develop their confidence?
- **Brainstorm**
- Acceptance
- Stability

### 5.2 How can parents help a child’s confidence grow?
- **Brainstorm**
- Attitudes

1. Provide a stable, consistent environment
2. Allow time for skill development/change/learning

### 6 A Confidence Breaker … and an alternative
- Give a concrete example of a time when you as a parent may easily lose your cool because of something that has happened. Or Ask for an example from the group. When that sort of thing happens we often have a KNEE JERK REACTION.

a) What would some knee jerk reactions be to that situation?
- **Brainstorm**

b) Who is in control of the situation?
- **Brainstorm**

c) Whose needs are being met?
- **Brainstorm**

d) What happens to the child’s confidence AND your relationship?
- **Brainstorm**

e) Another way of responding is what we call “STOP, THINK, DO!”

**Closing Reflections:**

Go around the group saying one thing I liked about tonight …

Hand out the sheet with different strategies to help us use “STOP, THINK, DO!” rather than Knee Jerk responses. We will talk about our thoughts on this in week 5.
1. **Attachment - The main points are**

- from 7-9 months children start responding differently to their parents, becoming anxious when their parents move away from them / leave rooms etc. This is a healthy process called attachment. The critical phase of attachment is between 7 months to 3 years old.

- The child uses their attachment figure (parent) as a **SECURE BASE** from which to explore the world (the parent supports the child’s exploration) and a **SAFE HAVEN** to return to for reassurance (parent protects and comforts child).

- The type of attachment that a child develops (secure or insecure) affects the child’s
  - patterns of relating
  - way of dealing with their emotions.
  - the development of confidence

  This can have an impact on the rest of their lives. The level of security felt by the child can have a marked effect on their emotional security as an adult.

- It becomes harder to change things later in the child’s life, but it certainly can be done. Even when the children are older, the parent’s role is still to be the SAFE HAVEN for the child and a SECURE BASE from which they can discover the world.

- Central to a parent’s responsibility, is the provision of a stable environment and consistent response to the child’s needs, a parent needs to be emotionally available for their child.

---

**CIRCLE OF SECURITY**

**PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD’S NEEDS**

- **SECURE BASE**
  - Always:
    - Be bigger, stronger, wiser and kind
  - Whenever possible:
    - Follow my child’s need
  - Whenever necessary:
    - Take charge
  - By being patient & encouraging

- **SAFE HAVEN**
  - Protect me
  - Comfort me
  - Delight in me
  - Organise my feelings

---

Adapted from ‘Circle of Security: Secure Base & Haven of Safety’. Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin & Powell, 2000
Remove
Taking the child away from the situation or removal of the stimulus.

Ignore
Ignore the behaviour, then after the inappropriate behaviour stops make a point of responding to your child’s need for attention.

Distract/Substitute
Giving a child a task to do can often distract him from inappropriate behaviour. When the child is upset the technique of distracting the child assists to enable the child to calm down.

Reward (positive reinforcement)
Rewards can be a powerful way to reinforce changes in behaviour. Given when child is behaving well, learning new skills, learning how to deal with difficult situations. Possible rewards: star charts, activities the kids love. Responding to children in a positive way by giving them positive feedback about what they are doing or about their qualities is a great way to increase positive behaviour.

Negative reinforcement
Negative reinforcement occurs when the consequences of a behaviour result in a reduction of that behaviour. For instance, if a child is asked to turn off the television because it is dinner time and the child refuses to do so, the parent may decide to reduce the child’s Television time the following day. The purpose being to reduce the behaviour of continuing to watch TV when asked to join the rest of the family for dinner. This is a kind of punishment aimed at minimizing a particular behaviour.

Natural consequences
If a child is hitting another child, a natural consequence may result. The other child refuses to play. He/she will have to play by herself until she is ready to play in a non-aggressive way.

Reason/Talking it through
Hear the child’s side of the story. Discuss whether there are any better ways to achieve what the child is trying to do. This style requires the parent to use clear explanations, questions and negotiation skills. It requires the parent to model to the child how to resolve conflict.

Exploring feelings
Ask questions! Find out exactly what has happened. Talk with child about how his actions have made him feel and how others feel. It is also important to talk to children about how we feel about their actions, eg. “I felt so happy when you”, “When you did…I felt sad”. This disclosure role models to the child that talking about feelings is normal. It helps the child learn that our actions affect others as well as ourselves and that consideration of others in the decisions that we make is an important social rule. We align ourselves with children when we relate stories that reflect the way that our children are feeling.

Role Modelling
Parent need to model to the child appropriate behaviours and ways to resolve conflict. Children learn more from the things that they experience, they imitate adult behaviour, they observe how to respond in situations based on their parents response. What we say has little effect if we are doing something different.

Time out/time in for both parent and child
This allows the parent and the child to calm down. It is essential to reconnect (time in) with the child after a period of time out.

Distract/Substitute
Giving a child a task to do can often distract him from inappropriate behaviour. When the child is upset the technique of distracting the child assists to enable the child to calm down.

Reward (positive reinforcement)
Rewards can be a powerful way to reinforce changes in behaviour. Given when child is behaving well, learning new skills, learning how to deal with difficult situations. Possible rewards: star charts, activities the kids love. Responding to children in a positive way by giving them positive feedback about what they are doing or about their qualities is a great way to increase positive behaviour.

Negative reinforcement
Negative reinforcement occurs when the consequences of a behaviour result in a reduction of that behaviour. For instance, if a child is asked to turn off the television because it is dinner time and the child refuses to do so, the parent may decide to reduce the child’s Television time the following day. The purpose being to reduce the behaviour of continuing to watch TV when asked to join the rest of the family for dinner. This is a kind of punishment aimed at minimizing a particular behaviour.

Natural consequences
If a child is hitting another child, a natural consequence may result. The other child refuses to play. He/she will have to play by herself until she is ready to play in a non-aggressive way.

Reason/Talking it through
Hear the child’s side of the story. Discuss whether there are any better ways to achieve what the child is trying to do. This style requires the parent to use clear explanations, questions and negotiation skills. It requires the parent to model to the child how to resolve conflict.

Exploring feelings
Ask questions! Find out exactly what has happened. Talk with child about how his actions have made him feel and how others feel. It is also important to talk to children about how we feel about their actions, eg. “I felt so happy when you”, “When you did…I felt sad”. This disclosure role models to the child that talking about feelings is normal. It helps the child learn that our actions affect others as well as ourselves and that consideration of others in the decisions that we make is an important social rule. We align ourselves with children when we relate stories that reflect the way that our children are feeling.

Role Modelling
Parent need to model to the child appropriate behaviours and ways to resolve conflict. Children learn more from the things that they experience, they imitate adult behaviour, they observe how to respond in situations based on their parents response. What we say has little effect if we are doing something different.

Time out/time in for both parent and child
This allows the parent and the child to calm down. It is essential to reconnect (time in) with the child after a period of time out.
Fatherhood Course Manual

**Week 4 : Behaviour**

NOTE: There is a great deal of material in this week’s notes. You will need to prioritise which questions are best to include, and some may like to cover this session over 2 weeks.

**Welcome**

Look for new participants and introduce them to the group.

Briefly summarise the first three sessions

1. The role of dads
2. Communicating with kids
3. Helping kids develop confidence

Briefly introduce tonight’s topic as one of the things people find most difficult about being a parent.

Introduce the idea that thinking through how we respond to challenging and difficult behaviour can reduce the stress of parenting considerably (and the stress on the children too). There is a tendency to focus on children’s behaviour at the expense of the parent/child relationship. Many behaviours result from problems within the relationship. By finding ways of get closer to our children we can reduce difficult behaviours. The more insecurity within the parent/child relationship the more extreme the behaviours of both parent and child. Focus on the relationship.

**Introduction to behaviour**

1. What is behaviour?
   - Brainstorm
     - Complex form of communication.
     - An expression of need or desire for something.
     - An act that reflects feelings and thoughts.
     - An attempt to relate with one’s environment.
   2. What things influence the way we behave?
      - Brainstorm
        - The way that we are brought up.
        - Past experiences affect the way we respond to certain situations.
        - Examples:
          - A negative influence: A person who experienced a great deal of frustration in their last visit to a Centrelink office is likely to be pessimistic and anxious on their next visit.
          - A positive influence: If a baby’s parents establish regular daily times of play, the baby will begin to expect to play, and their development will be enhanced as they learn quickly from the interaction and exploration of play.
          - Temperament and character traits.
          - Imitating what others have done (role models).
          - We are influenced by the stresses we are under.
          - Needs and desires.
          - Thoughts and feelings.

You may want to raise the following points leading on from the group’s discussion:

**Helping kids develop confidence**

**Communicating with kids**

**The role of dads**

NOTE: There is a great deal of material in this week’s notes. You will need to prioritise which questions are best to include, and some may like to cover this session over 2 weeks.

**Welcome**

Look for new participants and introduce them to the group.

Briefly summarise the first three sessions

1. The role of dads
2. Communicating with kids
3. Helping kids develop confidence

Briefly introduce tonight’s topic as one of the things people find most difficult about being a parent.

Introduce the idea that thinking through how we respond to challenging and difficult behaviour can reduce the stress of parenting considerably (and the stress on the children too). There is a tendency to focus on children’s behaviour at the expense of the parent/child relationship. Many behaviours result from problems within the relationship. By finding ways of get closer to our children we can reduce difficult behaviours. The more insecurity within the parent/child relationship the more extreme the behaviours of both parent and child. Focus on the relationship.

**Introduction to behaviour**

1. What is behaviour?
   - Brainstorm
     - Complex form of communication.
     - An expression of need or desire for something.
     - An act that reflects feelings and thoughts.
     - An attempt to relate with one’s environment.
   2. What things influence the way we behave?
      - Brainstorm
        - The way that we are brought up.
        - Past experiences affect the way we respond to certain situations.
        - Examples:
          - A negative influence: A person who experienced a great deal of frustration in their last visit to a Centrelink office is likely to be pessimistic and anxious on their next visit.
          - A positive influence: If a baby’s parents establish regular daily times of play, the baby will begin to expect to play, and their development will be enhanced as they learn quickly from the interaction and exploration of play.
          - Temperament and character traits.
          - Imitating what others have done (role models).
          - We are influenced by the stresses we are under.
          - Needs and desires.
          - Thoughts and feelings.

You may want to raise the following points leading on from the group’s discussion:
Some research on temperament.

☆ A number of researchers highlight that the child’s temperament is only usually considered problematic when there is a “poor fit” between the “expectations, temperament and needs of those in the child’s environment (parents, caregivers, siblings)” (Thoms and Chess, 1986). A ‘poor fit’ can become a problem for the child’s emotional development.

☆ Another study tried to see if there was a link between temperament (e.g., activity levels, quality of mood, attention span, persistence) and the development of preschool behaviour problems. They found that a caregiver’s perception of their child’s temperament was a better predictor of preschool behaviour problems than was the child’s temperament. So children whose caregivers thought they had a difficult temperament were twice as likely to develop behaviour problems, regardless of the objective assessment of the child’s temperament (Oberklaid, Sanson, Pedlow and Prior, 1993).

☆ One study found that the combination of a “difficult” child’s temperament with harsh and inconsistent child rearing form a poor fit that maintains and even increases the child’s irritable and conflict-ridden style. In contrast, when parents are positive and involved with their babies and establish happy and stable home life despite their children’s behaviour, infant difficulties decline” (Belsby, Fish and Isabella: 1991). In this style of parenting, “…parents make reasonable demands for maturity, and they enforce them by setting limits and insisting that the child obey. At the same time they express warmth and affection, listen patiently to their child’s point of view, and encourage participation in family decision making” (Belsby, Fish and Isabella: 1991).

From this we learn that …
☆ We need to avoid the common trap of blaming the child’s temperament on the family’s problems, or their problems faced at school. This represents a poor excuse.
☆ When children have more challenging temperaments, it can be important for caregivers not to become negative and resentful, which can carry the message to the child that they are expected to have behaviour problems, which in turn
can lead to problem behaviour. It is better to relate to the child in a positive manner, and where necessary make plans that allow for their temperament. For example, if a child is particularly anxious about going to unfamiliar settings, then parents can do what they can to make the new experience less frightening to the child, which may help the child overcome their fear eventually. If the parents had chosen to express their frustration at the child’s anxiety, it would only increase the anxiety, and perpetuate the child’s fear of unfamiliar places.

3. Parent behaviour: How might Our focus as parents affect children’s behaviour?

- Noticing when things are going well is important in the sense that we are sending positive messages to children. When we are focused on negative things, we make the point of mentioning this to children. To give an example, how many of us notice when the kid’s bedroom is clean? Do we make a point of communicating this to our children? It seems that it is much easier for us to notice when things are messy or when things are going wrong.

4. Why do you think that it is easier to notice when things are going wrong?

- Brainstorm: Some points to remember:
- Often we are geared up to keep control of circumstances while missing opportunities to reinforce good behaviour.
- When things are out of control they often initiate an emotional response in us as parents because we are vigilant about having things in their place. When things are out of place (control) we are spurred into action by the emotional trigger. To notice things when everything is going well often is more difficult because of the absence of an emotional trigger.
You may choose to ask the group the following 2 questions:

Dads need to be aware what stage their child is at and to know about how children develop.

1. Do you agree? 2. Why?

These questions help the fathers’ reflect on their attitudes to knowing about child development.

It is important for dads to know this information, as both Dad and Mum need to relate appropriately to their children. However, in the past this has often been seen as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to rely on what he knows based on his own childhood experience with his father. Society has tended to impart this information and associated skills to mothers but not fathers and this is all the more confusing when one considers that a central role of the father has been around discipline or behaviour management. Many dads need more exposure to knowledge about how kids develop. This knowledge can support more positive and empathetic responses to child behaviour. An understanding of child development for any parent can help them make informed choices around setting boundaries as well as extending their children’s experience to facilitate development.

We need to learn what is normal behaviour for children at particular stages of their development. For example, it is normal for a baby to cry, and for that noise to be irritating, so that we drop everything to attend to the cry. And yet it is not unreal expectations. For example, it is normal for a baby to cry, and for that noise to be irritating, so that we drop everything to attend to the cry. And yet it is not unreal expectations.

Society has tended to impart this information and associated skills to mothers but the father tends to rely on what he knows based on his own childhood experience with his father. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s responsibility. This knowledge imbalance can become a particular problem for men and their children when parents separate, and the father tends to see these as the mother’s respons...
uncommon to hear people say that the baby is being manipulative and by inference, naughty.

The facilitators may look for issues of particular concern for the group members.

The participants could be provided with a handout on childhood development. The group members could be encouraged to read this at home to see if they can identify where their children are at? Does it ring true for your kids? Could that knowledge help you deal with a particular behaviour?

As an aside, it has been shown that giving children attention in their early play experiences actually models to the children how to extend their play further, so that they later show more initiative and develop a greater capacity for autonomy (that is, being able to work and think independently). “Oh, what have you made with those two blocks.”
“IT’S a bridge”
“It’s a big bridge. How does it work?”
“Well, the cars go on the top like this”.
“Oh yes, I can see that. And what goes under the bridge?”
“Boats.”
“Shall we make some water for the boats?” etc…

Children who have this type of interaction during play tend to develop the ability to extend their attention span during play and problem solving experiences, as well as facilitate their ability to relate to others during play.

Introduction to discipline

1. What is discipline?
   - Brainstorm: Some themes we are expecting to be raised by the participants are:
     - The way we respond to children’s inappropriate behaviour.
     - Consequences
     - Smacking / punishment
     - Guidance / toward right or wrong
     - Training …etc...
     - The development of self discipline.

   - It is likely that the group will initially allude to punishment because that is the way the word is often used today. It is important to get the full picture, that discipline is not just about consequences for behaviour, but also influencing behaviour in positive ways, and the development of self-discipline.

   - For your interest’s sake …
     The word “discipline” comes from 2 Latin words disciplina – “teaching” (Collins English Dictionary). So discipline is about how children learn about behaviour, and really, how to live.
     disciplinus – “disciple”, and this relates to how that teaching happens. In those days, disciples often lived close by their teacher and practiced their teachings, and followed their example.
     So discipline in the family is to do with the idea of learning about life and appropriate behaviour;

Fatherhood Course Manual

uncommon to hear people say that the baby is being manipulative and by inference, naughty.

The facilitators may look for issues of particular concern for the group members.

The participants could be provided with a handout on childhood development. The group members could be encouraged to read this at home to see if they can identify where their children are at? Does it ring true for your kids? Could that knowledge help you deal with a particular behaviour?

As an aside, it has been shown that giving children attention in their early play experiences actually models to the children how to extend their play further, so that they later show more initiative and develop a greater capacity for autonomy (that is, being able to work and think independently). “Oh, what have you made with those two blocks.”
“IT’S a bridge”
“It’s a big bridge. How does it work?”
“Well, the cars go on the top like this”.
“Oh yes, I can see that. And what goes under the bridge?”
“Boats.”
“Shall we make some water for the boats?” etc…

Children who have this type of interaction during play tend to develop the ability to extend their attention span during play and problem solving experiences, as well as facilitate their ability to relate to others during play.

Introduction to discipline

1. What is discipline?
   - Brainstorm: Some themes we are expecting to be raised by the participants are:
     - The way we respond to children’s inappropriate behaviour.
     - Consequences
     - Smacking / punishment
     - Guidance / toward right or wrong
     - Training …etc...
     - The development of self discipline.

   - It is likely that the group will initially allude to punishment because that is the way the word is often used today. It is important to get the full picture, that discipline is not just about consequences for behaviour, but also influencing behaviour in positive ways, and the development of self-discipline.

   - For your interest’s sake …
     The word “discipline” comes from 2 Latin words disciplina – “teaching” (Collins English Dictionary). So discipline is about how children learn about behaviour, and really, how to live.
     disciplinus – “disciple”, and this relates to how that teaching happens. In those days, disciples often lived close by their teacher and practiced their teachings, and followed their example.
     So discipline in the family is to do with the idea of learning about life and appropriate behaviour;
We suggest that effective family discipline occurs within a loving relationship. In the past, society encouraged the idea that men were the "disciplinarians" in the home, which often created huge barriers between dads and their children. Often this involved the fathers smacking the kids. There is a common misperception that discipline is just what we do when the kids are behaving inappropriately. Discipline is about relationship to 'get along with one another' in the family.

Discipline is a continuous process
There is a common misperception that discipline is just what we do when the kids are behaving inappropriately. We need to see the development of discipline as a continuous process within the family, which is working just as much when the kids are behaving well as when they are acting up. When things are going well, it can be a sign the parents are assisting their children to learn to be disciplined. So for example, the parents and the children understand that there are clear and consistent boundaries, and the kids are motivated to 'get along with one another' in the family.

Discipline is about relationship
In the past, society encouraged the idea that men were the "disciplinarians" in the home, which often created huge barriers between dads and their children. Often this involved the fathers smacking the kids. We suggest that effective family discipline occurs within a loving relationship. The children should be able to understand your love for them, even when you are

3. Given these aims, what are the implications for our families…
We suggest that you talk to the list you have generated regarding the aims of discipline.

a) Helps children learn about life. We need to give kids opportunities to explore, make mistakes and to learn. Discipline teaches about the needs, rights and obligations of the self and others.
b) The development of self discipline ~ we need to help children to learn responsibility and encourage them to predict consequences of behaviour…self discipline implies a motivation that is regulated by one’s own desires or conscience. Discipline then goes beyond compliance to an external pressure of force and therefore becomes a life principle rather than a response to an authority.
c) Helps families to be fair and safe places for children and other family members. We can express our consequences for children in terms of safety and fairness quite often. And we can include them in discussions of what is fair. This team approach serves to model problem solving and self discipline.

3.1 Discipline – the big picture. Bringing it home for our families.

Discipline is a continuous process
There is a common misperception that discipline is just what we do when the kids are behaving inappropriately. We need to see the development of discipline as a continuous process within the family, which is working just as much when the kids are behaving well as when they are acting up. When things are going well, it can be a sign the parents are assisting their children to learn to be disciplined. So for example, the parents and the children understand that there are clear and consistent boundaries, and the kids are motivated to 'get along with one another' in the family.

Discipline is about relationship
In the past, society encouraged the idea that men were the "disciplinarians" in the home, which often created huge barriers between dads and their children. Often this involved the fathers smacking the kids. We suggest that effective family discipline occurs within a loving relationship. The children should be able to understand your love for them, even when you are
responding to their inappropriate behaviour. This means that even in times of difficulty and high arousal, parents more than ever need to reassure children of their love for them. The parent can ask themselves the question; “How can I strengthen my relationship with my child even in this difficult situation?” This helps us to problem solve on the basis of the relationship being the most important thing and not merely the behaviour.

You may like to encourage the participants to revisit those things that they would like to hear from their children in 20 years time. (Week 1). How can your approach to discipline help you meet those goals?

Relationships should be 2 way. Another misperception that we sometimes have is that when the kids are acting up, then the kids are the only ones that ever need to change. Sometimes children can feel neglected or bored. They can feel unsure about their relationship with their parents particularly if there has been punished for something. Involve them in what you are doing, plan to do exciting things on a regular basis. Sometimes the child’s “bad” behaviour is really telling us that we should be doing something different as parents. A change in our own behaviour as parents can often elicit a different response in our child.

4. So how do we respond to “bad” behaviour? OR:
To modify “bad” behaviour what tools do you need to have in the tool kit?
To introduce this question you might use the analogy of the tool kit for the way we can respond to difficult behaviour. For example you don’t use a hammer to fine tune your car’s engine, or a pair of pliers to drill a hole.
Remember the goal is to be able to stop the behaviour over the long term. Sometimes stopping it in the short term is also critical, but giving a child a lollypop to stop a supermarket tantrum is not establishing a good pattern for the long term.

Brainstorm the above question
Below are a number of “tools for the toolkit”, categorised under 12 headings. We wouldn’t expect to mention all of these points during the session. There is a limit to what people can take in…
We also suggest that to maintain the group’s involvement, it is best to use your input to build on the group’s suggestions where possible, and to restrain yourselves from having too much uninterrupted input. So try to intersperse your comments amongst the points the fathers raise.

Remove
Sometimes simply taking the child away from the situation, or vice versa, will mean that their behaviour stops.
Ignore
Sometimes children’s inappropriate behaviour is directed towards getting our attention. At such times it can be better to ignore the behaviour. Then, after the inappropriate behaviour stops you need to make a point of somehow responding to your child’s need for attention.
Another time when it is good to ignore behaviour is when children are trying to throw you off the scent! One educationalist spoke about behaviour problems in terms of primary behaviours and secondary behaviours. Sometimes you try to address a
primary behaviour, eg: a child hits another child, and the child may speak to you rudely “Oh, yeah, you big prat. You’re always sticking up for him, but you should see what he did to me”(the secondary behaviour). To deal with the rudeness then and there escalates the situation, “How dare you speak to me like that … + consequence”, and the primary behaviour is often not addressed. It is better to deal with the child hitting the other child, and then later (after the emotions have settled) to talk to them about their rudeness.

**Distract / Substitute**

We all know that sometimes it is appropriate to distract an upset child to stop them from dwelling too long on their emotions. We can also distract children to stop them behaving inappropriately by giving them a task to do. eg: if the kids are getting irritated with each other in the car, play a game that distracts them and occupies their attention.

**Reward (Positive Reinforcement)**

Rewards can be a powerful way to reinforce changes in behaviour. Given when child is behaving well, learning new skills, learning how to deal with difficult situations. Possible rewards: star charts, activities the kids love. Responding to children in a positive way by giving them positive feedback about what they are doing or about their qualities is a great way to increase positive behaviour.

Some examples of rewards are star charts People might use star charts (not the astrological or astronomical varieties!). When a certain number of stars are gained, the kids might have earned -A special treat , activity etc.. -Activities the kids love -Giving the kids a responsibility which they would like to do

✧ **Negative reinforcement …**

Negative reinforcement occurs when the consequences of a behaviour result in a reduction of that behaviour. For instance, if a child is asked to turn off the television because it is dinner time and the child refuses to do so, the parent may decide to reduce the child’s Television time the following day. The purpose being to reduce the behaviour of continuing to watch T.V. when asked to join the rest of the family for dinner. This is a kind of punishment aimed at minimizing a particular behaviour.

✧ **Natural consequences**

It is helpful for the consequences of a child’s behaviour to be related somehow to what has happened and to how they feel. So if a child is hitting another child, then a related consequence is that she will have to play by herself until she is ready to play in a non-violent way. If a child messes up their room because they are cross, then they may be unable to find their favourite toy. Another example might be; a child refuses to wear a jumper, while at school they feel cold, this may lead them to decide for themselves to wear a jumper next time. This becomes a learning opportunity for children to understand the feelings associated with the choices that they make. The child learns that things happen naturally when we do things and that the things we do have an effect on the relationship between ourselves and our environment.

✧ **Logical consequences**

Another example of providing natural consequences was when my child drew all over a walls in pencil. The consequence was for him to rub it out with a plastic rubber. After 10 minutes of him trying, he couldn’t remove the writing, and he asked me to help because his arm was getting sore. He chose to stay and watch me finish the job and decided never to do that again. The main characteristic of a logical consequence is that the parent makes a decision about what the consequence should be for a
conflict is a crucial strategy in itself. Another important aspect of role modelling can be used during those times when the parent realises that perhaps they have made a mistake in the way that they have responded to their kid’s behaviour. Rather than the parent “losing face” by admitting their mistake, it role models to children, that it is never too late to change your behaviour and to be adaptable. It is good to vocalise your thinking at such times so that they can see why and how you changed your mind. eg: If a parent had determined not to smack their child, but in the heat of the moment told their child they would get a smack, they can still restrain themselves from smacking and say, “I really felt like giving you a smack then, but I don’t really think that giving you a smack will help you learn not to kick your sister. Let’s talk about this. Let’s start by hearing both sides of the story.”
Fatherhood Course Manual

Problem solving together
Teaming up with the child addresses a number of issues that can arise from difficult behaviours.

Firstly, the child feels that we are still on their side and that the relationship has not been adversely affected by circumstances. In other words, the problem is separated from the child. This allows the parent and child to look at the problem with some objectivity. Secondly, blame is removed from the situation. Blame seeks to identify who is at fault and this focuses on the child rather than the problem behaviour.

Thirdly, the child learns that they can help to solve problems even if the problems are to do with their own behaviour. Fourthly, the child has power to modify their own behaviour with the support of the parent. Finally, in working together the relationship is strengthened and it demonstrates that the child can approach the parent when problems occur.

Time out / time in
There are situations where using “time out” is really important, to allow the parent or the child, or both to calm down. When you as a parent know that all of your buttons have been pushed and that you feel that you are going to do something that you might regret, it is best to let the child be in a safe place and for there to be some physical distance between the two of you. It can be important to have an arrangement with partner / friend / relative so that you can have some space yourself while they look after the kids for an hour or so.

Sometimes time out is criticized because it often doesn’t lead to changed behaviour for the child, although it does help the adult gain some perspective and cool down. It should be noted that it is essential to reconnect with the child after time out, as this provides the opportunity for father and child to talk with one another, and to reaffirm the relationship.

Time in: On occasions children behave inappropriately simply because they are craving attention. Children don’t need ‘time out’ here, but rather ‘time in’, as you spend time doing things together. Planning to give the kids attention on a regular basis throughout the day, with some fun activities is a great way to prevent problem behaviour from occurring, and it can also be the best response to the behaviour too.

eg: Dad is vacuuming and child keeps pulling the cord out from the socket and infuriating dad. A good response may be, “Would you like to help me with the vacuuming?” It will take longer, but the situation is defused. Or you might leave the vacuuming for a while and read a book or kick a ball together.

Some will mention punishment / smacking
See section 5. for a discussion of smacking.

Humour
Sometimes seeing the lighter side of the situation can help kids know you are not just there to catch them out when they are “naughty”, and can quickly defuse a potential problem. Just be careful that none of the kids involved think that they are the butt of the joke, which can hurt them deeply.

Also be careful that you do not use humour to reinforce an undesired behaviour. For example, however funny it may seem at the time, it is best not to laugh when a child swears, or when they are doing dangerous things.

Having numerous strategies provides us with options. Having only one or two strategies will in all probability be inadequate and create tension within the family.

Fatherhood Course Manual

Problem solving together
Teaming up with the child addresses a number of issues that can arise from difficult behaviours.

Firstly, the child feels that we are still on their side and that the relationship has not been adversely affected by circumstances. In other words, the problem is separated from the child. This allows the parent and child to look at the problem with some objectivity. Secondly, blame is removed from the situation. Blame seeks to identify who is at fault and this focuses on the child rather than the problem behaviour.

Thirdly, the child learns that they can help to solve problems even if the problems are to do with their own behaviour. Fourthly, the child has power to modify their own behaviour with the support of the parent. Finally, in working together the relationship is strengthened and it demonstrates that the child can approach the parent when problems occur.

Time out / time in
There are situations where using “time out” is really important, to allow the parent or the child, or both to calm down. When you as a parent know that all of your buttons have been pushed and that you feel that you are going to do something that you might regret, it is best to let the child be in a safe place and for there to be some physical distance between the two of you. It can be important to have an arrangement with partner / friend / relative so that you can have some space yourself while they look after the kids for an hour or so.

Sometimes time out is criticized because it often doesn’t lead to changed behaviour for the child, although it does help the adult gain some perspective and cool down. It should be noted that it is essential to reconnect with the child after time out, as this provides the opportunity for father and child to talk with one another, and to reaffirm the relationship.

Time in: On occasions children behave inappropriately simply because they are craving attention. Children don’t need ‘time out’ here, but rather ‘time in’, as you spend time doing things together. Planning to give the kids attention on a regular basis throughout the day, with some fun activities is a great way to prevent problem behaviour from occurring, and it can also be the best response to the behaviour too.

eg: Dad is vacuuming and child keeps pulling the cord out from the socket and infuriating dad. A good response may be, “Would you like to help me with the vacuuming?” It will take longer, but the situation is defused. Or you might leave the vacuuming for a while and read a book or kick a ball together.

Some will mention punishment / smacking
See section 5. for a discussion of smacking.

Humour
Sometimes seeing the lighter side of the situation can help kids know you are not just there to catch them out when they are “naughty”, and can quickly defuse a potential problem. Just be careful that none of the kids involved think that they are the butt of the joke, which can hurt them deeply.

Also be careful that you do not use humour to reinforce an undesired behaviour. For example, however funny it may seem at the time, it is best not to laugh when a child swears, or when they are doing dangerous things.

Having numerous strategies provides us with options. Having only one or two strategies will in all probability be inadequate and create tension within the family.
**Week 4: Understanding and responding to Kid's Behaviour**

**Behaviour:**

1. **What is behaviour?**
   - **Brainstorm**
     - Complex form of communication.
     - An expression of need or desire for something.
     - An act that reflects feelings and thoughts.
     - An attempt to relate with one’s environment.

2. **What things influence the way we behave?**
   - **Brainstorm**
     - The way they were brought up.
     - Past experiences.
     - Temperament.
     - Imitating what others have done.
     - Influenced by the stresses we are under.

1. **How might our focus as parents affect our children’s behaviour?**
   - Our focus as parents often dictates our own behaviour. Our behaviours represent our expectations, it is important to assess our own behaviours when dealing with those behaviours of our children that challenge us.
   - One important role in parenting is noticing when things are going well with our children and making a point of saying this to our children in order to encourage behaviours that we consider desirable.

**Which behaviour are we promoting?**

- **Bad Behaviour**
- **Good Behaviour**

- Our focus as parents often dictates our own behaviour. Our behaviours represent our expectations, it is important to assess our own behaviours when dealing with those behaviours of our children that challenge us.
- One important role in parenting is noticing when things are going well with our children and making a point of saying this to our children in order to encourage behaviours that we consider desirable.
2. Kid’s “difficult” behaviour: Is it normal or is it naughty?

Introduction to discipline
1. What is discipline?
   - Brainstorm
   - The way we respond to children’s inappropriate behaviour.
   - Consequences.
   - Smacking/punishment.
   - Guidance and moral judgment/ right or wrong.
   - Training.
   - The development of self discipline.

2. What are the aims of discipline?
   - Brainstorm
   - Helps children learn about life.
   - Development of self discipline.
   - Helps families be fair and safe places for all the family.
   - Teaches about needs, rights and obligations of self and others.

3. Given these aims, what are the implications for our families.
   Talk to the list you have generated in aims above.
   3.1 Discussion on development of discipline as a continuous process within a loving relationship.

Coffee Break

4. To fix “bad” behaviour what tools do you need to have in the tool kit?
   Analogy of the Tool Kit
   - Brainstorm
   - Remove
   - Ignore
   - Distract/Substitute
   - Reward (positive reinforcement)
   - Negative reinforcement
   - Natural consequences
   - Reason/talking it through
   - Exploring feelings
   - Role modeling
   - Time out/time in
5. The debate over smacking

Many of us have probably either been smacked as children or have smacked our own kids.

Why do parents smack?
☆ What is happening for the child?
☆ What do we achieve by smacking?
☆ What does the child learn?
☆ What are the consequences

For the parent?
☞ Might feel in control of child.
☞ Feelings guilty, low self esteem.
☞ Child will not feel close to parent.

For the child?
☞ Fearful, dispirited, angry, reactive.
☞ Lower self esteem.
☞ Feel unsafe.
☞ When they become adults they are more likely to smack their children.

For the relationship
☞ Barriers are formed.
☞ Trust is eroded.

6. In Closing

Hand out summary of tools in the tool box.

Ask group to underline what they use now.
* asterisk what they remember their parents used to discipline them as children

Circle what they would like to use in the future. Prioritise what techniques they would use first, second etc.
Week 5: Stress and Anger

Welcome
Recap last week’s session.
If you had asked the dads to reflect on some material from that session during the week or do an exercise during the week that arose from last week’s session, make sure you discuss this tonight. This may also refer to handouts that they may have had a chance to read since last session…

The flow of this week’s session

Coffee Break → An Introduction to Stress

1. What is stress?
   Brainstorm. Some responses may be …
   - Change
   - Pressure
   - Conflict
   - Frustrations
   - ‘Triggers’ & ‘Build ups’
   - Overwhelmed

After the group have given their responses you may wish to summarise and also focus the group on some of the following ideas.
   ✤ Stress is when pressure is placed on us which either taxes or exceeds our ability to cope (or adapt).

1.1 Is stress good or bad?
   ✤ Stress is not necessarily good or bad. Some researchers categorised stress in three ways (Lazarus and Lazarus, 1994).
   1. HARM
      (Something that has already occurred, in response to an event or experience)
   2. THREAT
      There is a potential for harm but it hasn’t happened yet. This affects us psychologically, often making us defensive and anxious. eg: You might feel anxious if your workplace announces that some staff will be laid off.
   3. CHALLENGE
      This is where events present opportunities, and rather than be defensive, we are more confident, proactive, and attempt to overcome the event in order to achieve something that we would like.

Steps towards managing and preventing stress

A. Locate the source of the stress
B. Other Strategies

Helping our children to learn to express their feelings

The Anger Iceberg / expressing our feelings

Symptoms of stress

(4 corners)

Fatherhood Course Manual

Week 5: Stress and Anger

Welcome
Recap last week’s session.
If you had asked the dads to reflect on some material from that session during the week or do an exercise during the week that arose from last week’s session, make sure you discuss this tonight. This may also refer to handouts that they may have had a chance to read since last session…

The flow of this week’s session

Coffee Break → An Introduction to Stress

1. What is stress?
   Brainstorm. Some responses may be …
   - Change
   - Pressure
   - Conflict
   - Frustrations
   - ‘Triggers’ & ‘Build ups’
   - Overwhelmed

After the group have given their responses you may wish to summarise and also focus the group on some of the following ideas.
   ✤ Stress is when pressure is placed on us which either taxes or exceeds our ability to cope (or adapt).

1.1 Is stress good or bad?
   ✤ Stress is not necessarily good or bad. Some researchers categorised stress in three ways (Lazarus and Lazarus, 1994).
   1. HARM
      (Something that has already occurred, in response to an event or experience)
   2. THREAT
      There is a potential for harm but it hasn’t happened yet. This affects us psychologically, often making us defensive and anxious. eg: You might feel anxious if your workplace announces that some staff will be laid off.
   3. CHALLENGE
      This is where events present opportunities, and rather than be defensive, we are more confident, proactive, and attempt to overcome the event in order to achieve something that we would like.
Consider the sporting coaches who have to pitch things at the right level (CHALLENGE) for their players to perform at their peak.

Too much pressure = threat
Not enough pressure = under-stimulation, lack of motivation.
Bell shaped curve.

Early study of stress showed that crises and losses are cumulative in effect, and so it is especially important to be aware of clusters of loss or crisis. Holmes and Rahe, (1967) assigned a point score for different stresses and it was noted that when a person ranked a high cumulative score within a year, they were much more likely to become sick (physically or psychologically).

Now it is thought that the daily hassles in life also contribute enormously to stress levels and our ability to cope, and can take a greater toll than relatively rare crises. These hassles are a bit like the stress fractures that athletes suffer, where regular irritation, although it appears minor, can create a very significant problem. This has big implications for us, as the process of bringing up children can contribute to the level of stress that we feel.

2. What are some of the signs (symptoms) of stress? FOUR CORNERS Exercise.

An example:
Set the scene first with an example of a stressful situation which is firmly in everyone’s mind. eg: the kids make a scene in the supermarket, or the kids break something that is precious to you.
This exercise involves dividing a sheet of butcher’s paper into quarters and brainstorming the physical, emotional, mental and social signs of stress on people.

Brainstorm Below is a list generated by one of our recent groups.
Four corners of stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low self esteem</td>
<td>frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inability to make good decisions</td>
<td>sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-occupied with stressful situation</td>
<td>apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of motivation</td>
<td>overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short fuse</td>
<td>anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficulty in concentrating</td>
<td>selfishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxiety</td>
<td>hyper-sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harder to learn new skills</td>
<td>bitterness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irrational</td>
<td>careness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confused</td>
<td>sadness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blaming others</td>
<td>changes in appetite (loss / gain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>withdrawal</td>
<td>weight loss / gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short fuse, irritable</td>
<td>high blood pressure / heart problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>tics / nervous reactions / clench teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not listening to others</td>
<td>hair loss / graying / premature ageing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selfish</td>
<td>skin problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broken relationships</td>
<td>illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>escapist behaviour: drinking, drugs, binges, other</td>
<td>ulcers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in arguments</td>
<td>headaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loss of friends</td>
<td>red face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-centred</td>
<td>sleep problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the list is being formed it can be pointed out that there is some overlap between areas (eg: short fuse in social and mental box).

When the list is finished, it is helpful to demonstrate how the various effects or signs of stress can trigger other ones. For example the person who is at risk of losing his job may become very anxious (mental) > headaches / migraine (physical) > withdrawal (social) > etc… Often the internal pressures are expressed externally in physical symptoms or in difficulties in relationships, and a cycle of stress can develop.

3. How can we prevent and manage stress? Return to the FOUR CORNERS Exercise.

Brainstorm

Make another chart, this time for things we can do to prevent and manage stress. Brainstorm: Some ideas may be:

- low self esteem
- inability to make good decisions
- pre-occupied with stressful situation
- lack of motivation
- short fuse
- difficulty in concentrating
- anxiety
- harder to learn new skills
- irrational
- confused

- frustration
- sadness
- apathy
- overwhelmed
- anger
- selfishness
- hyper-sensitive
- bitterness
- careness
- sadness

- changes in appetite (loss / gain)
- weight loss / gain
- high blood pressure / heart problems
- tics / nervous reactions / clench teeth
- hair loss / graying / premature ageing
- skin problems
- illness
- ulcers
- headaches
- red face
- sleep problems

- blaming others
- withdrawal
- short fuse, irritable
- violence
- not listening to others
- selfish
- broken relationships
- escapist behaviour: drinking, drugs, binges, other
- increase in arguments
- loss of friends
- self-centred

- changes in appetite (loss / gain)
- weight loss / gain
- high blood pressure / heart problems
- tics / nervous reactions / clench teeth
- hair loss / graying / premature ageing
- skin problems
- illness
- ulcers
- headaches
- red face
- sleep problems
Learning new skills meeting new people family and friends and other help. Developing a network of supportive having time basis Arranging to go out on a fairly regular basis. Spending time in peaceful surroundings. Vigorous exercise. Regular exercise, including some vigorous exercise. Writing about feelings, talking to friends. Crying. Being honest about needs and limitations and expressing these to others. Learning to say ‘no’. Making sure that you and your kids spend time in other environments than your own home. This can be stimulating and prevent boredom. 

### Physical
- Regular exercise, including some vigorous exercise.
- Spending time in peaceful surroundings.
- Making sure that you and your kids spend time in other environments than your own home. This can be stimulating and prevent boredom.

### Emotional
- Where stressful conditions are not easily changed we can work to change our emotional responses. Writing about feelings, talking to friends. Crying. Being honest about needs and limitations and expressing these to others. Learning to say ‘no’.

### Social
- Arranging to go out on a fairly regular basis.
- Having time.
- Developing a network of supportive family and friends and other help.
- Learning new skills meeting new people.

### Mental
- Spend time relaxing each day.
- Write lists of things to do. Small successes can improve self belief.
- Plan to be well prepared for events that prove to be stressful.
- Use techniques to make decision making easier.
- Keeping a diary.
- Be a person who makes plans and carries them out... if so, you are more likely to cope with stresses. Try to reduce stress by developing time management skills.

### Some theory you might find interesting as facilitators...

- **Particular strategies have been devised to develop people’s ability to cope with anger, social problems, addictions and anxieties. One is called stress inoculation** where people:
  - learn about their current patterns of responding to stressful situations
  - learn new skills in thinking and responding to the situation that tend to produce coping behaviour and the expectation that they can cope.
  - learn to put these into practice and use a journal to record their progress.

- This can be generally applied to all stressful events. And so it is helpful
  - to develop an AWARENESS of what stresses us and how we respond
  - to develop an ATTITUDE where you expect to cope, that is you learn thinking skills that produce coping behaviour
  - to put coping behaviours into practice ...

- **How we cope with stress is greatly influenced by how we reacted to previous stresses (and how our families have reacted too). Each of us has behavioural patterns of how we respond to pressure. It is helpful to be aware of these patterns and where they are unhelpful, adapt these behaviours (Golan 1978).**
Some characteristics of anger include:
- It acts to isolate or distance us from others.
- It hides other feelings that may be more painful to express.
- We often use it to protect us from a perceived threat.
- It can indicate an underlying vulnerability to circumstances.
- It is used to gain power.
- If anger is a dominant and regular part of our lives it is often paired with loneliness and isolation.

4. What are some of the things that make us angry?
We briefly look at anger generally. Later we will specifically address when we are angry as fathers.

Brainstorm Examples may include …
- When we are treated badly
- When we aren’t listened to

5. What are the signs of the anger?
Brainstorm Examples may include …
- raise voice
- go red in the face / increased blood pressure
- heart rate increases
- make threat

Some helpful patterns include:
- managing our time
- tackling the problem
- acknowledging feelings
- making decisions and carrying them through
- seeking support from others

Unhelpful patterns include:
- escapism (drinking, partying, bingeing, TV watching)
- procrastination
- denying that there is a problem
- neglecting other important matters and relationships (including children)

Coffee Break

A look at Anger and our feelings

Some characteristics of anger include:
- It acts to isolate or distance us from others.
- It hides other feelings that may be more painful to express.
- We often use it to protect us from a perceived threat.
- It can indicate an underlying vulnerability to circumstances.
- It is used to gain power.
- If anger is a dominant and regular part of our lives it is often paired with loneliness and isolation.

4. What are some of the things that make us angry?
We briefly look at anger generally. Later we will specifically address when we are angry as fathers.

Brainstorm Examples may include …
- When we are treated badly
- When we aren’t listened to

5. What are the signs of the anger?
Brainstorm Examples may include …
- raise voice
- go red in the face / increased blood pressure
- heart rate increases
- make threat

Some helpful patterns include:
- managing our time
- tackling the problem
- acknowledging feelings
- making decisions and carrying them through
- seeking support from others

Unhelpful patterns include:
- escapism (drinking, partying, bingeing, TV watching)
- procrastination
- denying that there is a problem
- neglecting other important matters and relationships (including children)
6. The iceberg explanation and questions

It would be good to draw a simple version of this on the board.

For some people, anger is the dominant emotion that is expressed when problems arise.

This is the sort of thing that you might see if you go into Centrelink and someone is going ballistic, because they didn’t receive their payment that fortnight....

Others may show some other emotions, but because their anger is loud and confronting, this is the thing that is remembered about them. It colours people’s general perception of them. It is important to bring the other emotions to the surface so that people can know us better, and so anger doesn’t dominate.

By repressing other emotions and relying on anger to solve problems we perpetuate the dependence on the angry response.

Acknowledgement of underlying emotions can reduce the intensity of our anger and allow us time to think.

ANGER

1. Anger can appear as the most overt response and often masks the cause of the problem.

2. Other feelings that may be the origins of anger can be hidden to the individual and to others around them.

3. Some feelings that may be at the core of angry outbursts
   - Shame
   - Grief
   - Powerlessness
   - Disappointment
   - Embarrassment
   - Humiliation
   - Sadness
   - Others

4. Identifying hidden feelings or ‘bringing them to the surface’ can help lessen the intensity of the angry response. Many other emotions such as sadness send messages that allow others to support us in our time of need.

☆ For some people, anger is the dominant emotion that is expressed when problems arise.
☆ This is the sort of thing that you might see if you go into Centrelink and someone is going ballistic, because they didn’t receive their payment that fortnight....
☆ Others may show some other emotions, but because their anger is loud and confronting, this is the thing that is remembered about them. It colours people’s general perception of them. It is important to bring the other emotions to the surface so that people can know us better, and so anger doesn’t dominate.
☆ By repressing other emotions and relying on anger to solve problems we perpetuate the dependence on the angry response.
☆ Acknowledgement of underlying emotions can reduce the intensity of our anger and allow us time to think.
It is important to take time after getting angry to think about any underlying feelings that may have been triggered by circumstances. Acknowledging other feelings and analysing what happened involves accepting responsibility for the reactions that we have in any situation.

It is important to realise that we have a choice in the way that we respond in any given circumstance. Being able to make a choice means that we have thought before acting and therefore presenting ourselves with power over the way we act.

Acknowledging feelings in the presence of others can put us in a vulnerable position and this is one reason why it is easier to react in an angry way. Dealing with vulnerability can require a strong determination to change the way we relate to others. Often the intensity of the anger response is an indicator of our ability to cope with vulnerability.

6.1 Why do you think some people mainly express anger, without showing their other emotions?

Brainstorm Examples may include …
- It may be too painful for them to reveal their underlying emotions.
- They may be too shy to reveal their other emotions.
- They may not be aware of what it is that they are feeling.

6.2 What happens when a person only expresses their anger and keeps other emotions bottled up.

Brainstorm Examples may include …
- They become controlled by their anger, which is expressed more frequently and more intensely.
- They become stuck in a rut of behaviour, a pattern of behaving, which makes change even more difficult.
- They may become violent, hurting those people close to them.
- Health problems may emerge.

Anger management groups and personal counselling are services available in the community.

6.3 If we only show our anger, how does that affect our relationships with other people?

Brainstorm Examples may include …
- We become isolated from the people around us.
- People don’t get to know us. People get on the receiving end of our anger, and gradually learn to distance themselves from us for their own protection (emotional or sometimes physical).
- We hide behind our anger preventing other people from getting close.
- Others may not ever understand what is behind the angry response.
- It also prevents us from solving relationship problems.
7. When are we angry as parents?

- **Brainstorm** Some responses may include …
  - When our children relate to us (cheeky, dismissive)
  - When our children aren’t being particularly truthful
  - If our child hurts someone else, particularly another of our children, and so we feel the urge to protect the hurt child
  - When the kids break things
  - The kids are too loud or rough
  - When our kids are wilful, and like to always get their own way
  - When the kids repeatedly disobey us
  - When a baby that won’t stop crying

To close this question, you may like to mention …
- These are all things that elicit an angry response in us. But we have a choice and a responsibility about how we respond. It is a choice about whether we are in automatic pilot or have the controls ourselves.
- In the heat of the moment, we have to make a ‘split-second’ choice. If we choose to be angry we hide ourselves and repel others. If we choose to explain our feelings instead, we reveal ourselves and attract our kids to us, which helps us to feel differently and helps children to feel safe. To help with the ‘split-second’ choices, we need to make a considered choice away from the heat of the moment about how we want to respond.

8. Recap on the STOP, THINK AND DO exercise from 2 weeks ago.

8.1 Did anyone try to use STOP, THINK AND DO during the week?

- **Brainstorm**

8.2 How did you find it? Did you notice changes in your kids or in the way you felt?

- **Brainstorm**

8.3 Do you think it helped you?

- **Brainstorm**

9. Helping our children to learn to express their feelings

We can do this in a number of ways.

- **Actively helping children to express their emotions**
  - This includes developing the expectation that they express their emotions often.
  - Ask questions like, “How are you feeling at the moment?” especially when there is a situation to resolve.
  - “Tell me what happened.”
  - Look for underlying feelings and acknowledge these.
  - Talk about a time when you experienced something similar and express how you felt at that time.

- **Role modeling:**
  - These are all things that elicit an angry response in us. But we have a choice and a responsibility about how we respond. It is a choice about whether we are in automatic pilot or have the controls ourselves.
  - In the heat of the moment, we have to make a ‘split-second’ choice. If we choose to be angry we hide ourselves and repel others. If we choose to explain our feelings instead, we reveal ourselves and attract our kids to us, which helps us to feel differently and helps children to feel safe. To help with the ‘split-second’ choices, we need to make a considered choice away from the heat of the moment about how we want to respond.

8. Recap on the STOP, THINK AND DO exercise from 2 weeks ago.

8.1 Did anyone try to use STOP, THINK AND DO during the week?

- **Brainstorm**

8.2 How did you find it? Did you notice changes in your kids or in the way you felt?

- **Brainstorm**

8.3 Do you think it helped you?

- **Brainstorm**

9. Helping our children to learn to express their feelings

We can do this in a number of ways.

- **Actively helping children to express their emotions**
  - This includes developing the expectation that they express their emotions often.
  - Ask questions like, “How are you feeling at the moment?” especially when there is a situation to resolve.
  - “Tell me what happened.”
  - Look for underlying feelings and acknowledge these.
  - Talk about a time when you experienced something similar and express how you felt at that time.

- **Role modeling:**
We should express a wide range of emotions with our children. This exposure will help them learn how to identify their feelings and how to express them openly.

Boys learn to be comfortable with expressing their emotions when they see their father or a male role model demonstrating this.

Team up with the child and approach problem solving with “How can we solve this together?” This helps the child to feel supported and demonstrates that we are on their side.

We should role model how to problem solve in relationships. For example, “So, he hurt you first, did he? And what did you do then? Could you have done something else that would have stopped you getting into a big fight? Would that have been fair?” etc...

This question also relates back to the ideas we mentioned in Communication, and in Self Confidence.

For example, why and how things happened, specifically ask how they feel, try to focus on understanding what has happened.

10. Summary
Talk to the person next to you and tell them one thing that you found helpful about tonight’s session, or something that you could try to deal with stress and how it impacts on you as a dad and your family with your kids.

Make announcements if there are any special arrangements for the last session, eg: gold coin donation for food, etc…
Week 5: Stress

Welcome

An Introduction to Stress

1. What is stress?
   - Brainstorm
   - Change
   - Pressure
   - Conflict
   - Frustrations
   - Triggers and build up

1.1 Is stress good or bad?

2. What are some of the signs (symptoms) of stress?
   FOUR CORNERS Exercise.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Physical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How can we prevent and manage stress? Return to the FOUR CORNERS Exercise.

Coffee Break

A look at Anger and our feelings

4. What are some of the things that make us angry?
   - Brainstorm
   - When we are treated badly
   - When we are not listened to

5. What are the signs of the anger?
   - Brainstorm

A look at Anger and our feelings

4. What are some of the things that make us angry?
   - Brainstorm
   - When we are treated badly
   - When we are not listened to

5. What are the signs of the anger?
   - Brainstorm
6. The iceberg explanation and questions

1. Anger can appear as the most overt response and often masks the cause of the problem.

2. Other feelings that may be the origins of anger can be hidden to the individual and to others around them.

3. Some feelings that may be at the core of angry outbursts:
   - Shame
   - Grief
   - Powerlessness
   - Disappointment
   - Embarrassment
   - Humiliation
   - Sadness
   - Others

4. Identifying hidden feelings or 'bringing them to the surface' can help lessen the intensity of the angry response. Many other emotions such as sadness send messages that allow others to support us in our time of need.
6.1 Why do you think some people mainly express anger, without showing their other emotions?
- Brainstorm
- Too painful.
- Too shy to reveal other emotions.
- Not aware of what they are feeling.
- Feel threatened.
- Used anger as a way of gaining power over others.

6.2 What happens when a person only expresses their anger and keeps other emotions bottled up?
- Brainstorm
- Become controlled by anger.
- Struck in a rut of behaviour.
- May become violent.
- Health problems emerge.

6.3 If we only show our anger, how does that affect our relationships with other people?
- Brainstorm
- Become isolated from others.
- People do not get to know us.
- Hide behind our anger.
- Prevents us from solving relationship problems.

7. There are some things that make us angry as parents. What are they?
- Brainstorm
- The way our children relate to us.
- When children are not being truthful.
- If our child hurts someone else.
- When kids break things.
- The kids are too loud or rough.
- When kids are willful. Lack of compliance.
- When kids repeatedly disobey.
- When a baby that will not stop crying.

8. Recap on the STOP, THINK and DO exercise from 2 weeks ago.

8.1 Did anyone try to use STOP, THINK and DO during the week?
8.2 How did you find it? Did you notice changes in your kids or in the way you felt?

8.3 Do you think it helped you?

9. Helping our children to learn to express their feelings.
   - Actively helping children express their emotions
   - Role modeling
   - Asking how the child feels

10. Summary
    Talk to person next to you and tell them one thing you found helpful about the session.
Week 6: Relationships & Personal Growth

Reminders
Give out certificates and refreshments after the break (sometimes we will order in some food for the last session).

Relationships
Relationships have the potential to cause us the greatest joy and the deepest pain. Often we can experience all of this within one relationship. It is often said that those closest to us are the most critical of us. Here are a few ideas that we have come up with and I’m sure that you can add to these.

- Where there is intimacy there is vulnerability, intimacy can be risky and is a state where we relinquish some emotional control to the other person. When that trust is damaged, we can refuse to place ourselves in a vulnerable position and so we can give up intimacy.

The Analogy of the Trees

- The trees represent individuals, the overlapping branches and leaves are depicting relationships with others.
- The air and sunlight are nutrients and they represent our hopes and aspirations for the future.
- Nutrients are obtained through the ground. The ground represents our values and interaction with our thoughts and feelings derived from past experiences.
We have used the analogy of the trees to explain the need for people to have times of togetherness, whilst supporting the individual’s need to be by themselves or with others. As children we were told stories about the ideal person (hero) that would come along and lead us to eternal happiness or that there is an ideal person waiting for us to be their hero. As children, these stories impress upon us an ideal that proves to be fantasy. In this analogy we seek to show that happiness and sadness are states that develop from how we respond to experiences and the many relationships that we encounter in our lives. Picture a couple of trees. They have things in common, and things that are different. Their branches and their roots overlap in places, but there are areas where they don’t overlap. This is like a couple. When kids come along, more interlocking branches develop. Draw a simple sketch of two trees overlapping so that participants can visualise the concept being developed.

:: Identity
It is important to maintain a balance between your sense of togetherness and of individuality. In other words we have an identity as a couple, as a parent, as an individual, as a friend, a work mate etc. These are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that come together to form our identity. As new experiences and relationships develop our concept of ourselves grows (we may have new shoots developing). This can be conceptualised as self-development. Often we hear ourselves saying “You’re not the person I knew when we first met” or “you’re not the person that I fell in love with years ago”, what we ought to be saying is “I don’t feel the same way as I did before”. There are two points here, firstly that I, my partner, my children change as they experience new things and secondly, we are responsible for the way we feel, we have a choice in the way that we approach and respond to circumstances.

:: The temptation to control
Problems occur when we try to exert control on one another’s sense of individuality. This can arise from the misconception that another individual or individuals are responsible for our happiness. In the analogy of the trees one can see that only some branches overlap, other branches overlap with other trees, hence the need for friends and associates. To encourage our partner and our children to engage in relationships with others is to be concerned about their happiness and their development as an individual. One of the benefits of other relationships is in recognising the importance that they have to those that we care about and the spin off for us is that a happy partner represents a more fulfilling relationship with us. Excessive control leads to emotional, financial, physical and mental abuse. This happens when one individual perceives the other as a possession that they have the right to control. In this situation no one’s needs are met and we are left with an unhealthy relationship based on fear, tyranny, sorrow and hopelessness.

We have used the analogy of the trees to explain the need for people to have times of togetherness, whilst supporting the individual’s need to be by themselves or with others. As children we were told stories about the ideal person (hero) that would come along and lead us to eternal happiness or that there is an ideal person waiting for us to be their hero. As children, these stories impress upon us an ideal that proves to be fantasy. In this analogy we seek to show that happiness and sadness are states that develop from how we respond to experiences and the many relationships that we encounter in our lives. Picture a couple of trees. They have things in common, and things that are different. Their branches and their roots overlap in places, but there are areas where they don’t overlap. This is like a couple. When kids come along, more interlocking branches develop. Draw a simple sketch of two trees overlapping so that participants can visualise the concept being developed.

:: Identity
It is important to maintain a balance between your sense of togetherness and of individuality. In other words we have an identity as a couple, as a parent, as an individual, as a friend, a work mate etc. These are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that come together to form our identity. As new experiences and relationships develop our concept of ourselves grows (we may have new shoots developing). This can be conceptualised as self-development. Often we hear ourselves saying “You’re not the person I knew when we first met” or “you’re not the person that I fell in love with years ago”, what we ought to be saying is “I don’t feel the same way as I did before”. There are two points here, firstly that I, my partner, my children change as they experience new things and secondly, we are responsible for the way we feel, we have a choice in the way that we approach and respond to circumstances.

:: The temptation to control
Problems occur when we try to exert control on one another’s sense of individuality. This can arise from the misconception that another individual or individuals are responsible for our happiness. In the analogy of the trees one can see that only some branches overlap, other branches overlap with other trees, hence the need for friends and associates. To encourage our partner and our children to engage in relationships with others is to be concerned about their happiness and their development as an individual. One of the benefits of other relationships is in recognising the importance that they have to those that we care about and the spin off for us is that a happy partner represents a more fulfilling relationship with us. Excessive control leads to emotional, financial, physical and mental abuse. This happens when one individual perceives the other as a possession that they have the right to control. In this situation no one’s needs are met and we are left with an unhealthy relationship based on fear, tyranny, sorrow and hopelessness.
How do we respond when our partner thinks or does things differently to the way we might?

Brainstorm: Some responses may include ...

- Surprise
- Gratitude
- Confusion
- Embarrassment
- Anger
- Frustration
- Disappointment
- Sarcasm
- Joy
- Relief
- Resentment

Notice how the list being generated focuses on emotions. It would be a good exercise to ask the group to give examples of the above.

The intensity of the response indicates how personally affected we are by the differing ideas of others; this can lead to angry outbursts or defensive behaviours.

What are the ingredients of a good relationship?

Brainstorm: Some responses may include ...

- Good communication (listening and expressing).
- Encouragement.
- Empathy-seeing from the others point of view.
- Intimacy-disclosure.
- Respect.
- Differences.
- Love.
- Balance- shared decision making.

What can you do to make the relationship function well?

Brainstorm: Some responses may include ...

- Communicate (listening and expressing).
- Encourage the other person to develop new interests and to explore their potential.
- See from the others point of view.
- Express needs, feelings, and aspirations.
- Respect opinions and needs.
- Expect differences.
- Give and receive graciously.
- Share decision making.
- Spend time together.
- In disagreements stick to the point.
- Avoid name calling and personal insults.
- Avoid “you” statements.
- Set goals together.
What are some things that we can do to fulfil our potential?

- Brainstorm
  - Expect change, invite change as an opportunity for growth, identity involves who we are where we have come from and what we can be.
  - Seek out new ways to explore our abilities, meet new people, look to learn from new and existing contexts, extend our expectations of ourselves.
  - Take time to reflect on our experiences, think about what this means, how has it changed me, how does this new understanding affect the ways that I will go forward.
  - See life as moving, a journey full of new opportunities.
  - Value our own contributions, learn to accept credit for what we do, this has an impact on self esteem.
  - Mistakes will be inevitable, learning from them is not. This is where the power of choice affects outcomes. We can choose to learn from any situation.

- Personal Growth
  - What are some things that we can do to fulfil our potential?
  - Brainstorm
    - Expect change, invite change as an opportunity for growth, identity involves who we are where we have come from and what we can be.
    - Seek out new ways to explore our abilities, meet new people, look to learn from new and existing contexts, extend our expectations of ourselves.
    - Take time to reflect on our experiences, think about what this means, how has it changed me, how does this new understanding affect the ways that I will go forward.
    - See life as moving, a journey full of new opportunities.
    - Value our own contributions, learn to accept credit for what we do, this has an impact on self esteem.
    - Mistakes will be inevitable, learning from them is not. This is where the power of choice affects outcomes. We can choose to learn from any situation.
Give others credit for what they do, take joy in the achievements of others. Communicate this to them.

The good thing about this group has been that we have had the chance to talk about being dads. It is good to find someone else that you can chat to about being a dad, maybe another dad in a similar situation. Or you could make comments in a journal. But the most important thing is to think about what is happening, how things are going, and to remember what a privilege it is to journey through parenthood.

Coffee Break
Review of Group Goals
Filling out the Feedback Sheets
Handouts –
   - The leader’s summary of the main points of the sessions
Presentation of Certificates
Break for celebrations…
Close and Farewells
Welcome and Nuts and bolts

1. Mention any special arrangements if a special supper has been organised for the last session.
2. Remind people that at the end of the session attendance certificates will be given out to those who finished the course.
   For our course, this is given after 5 out of 6 sessions are attended.

Relationships

1. The Analogy of the Trees
   Explain the need for families to have times of togetherness, whilst supporting the individuals needs to be by themselves or with others.

   Trees in a playground

   Togetherness and Individuality.
   Maintain a balance between your sense of togetherness and of individuality.

   The temptation to control
   Problems occur when we try to exert control on one another’s sense of individuality.

   The air and sunlight are nutrients and they represent our hopes and aspirations for the future.
   The trees represent individuals, the overlapping branches and leaves are depicting relationships with others.

   Nutrients are obtained through the ground. The ground represents our values and interaction with our thoughts and feelings derived from past experiences.
The pursuit of self fulfilment
For relationships to be strong, their needs to be a sense of dependence and independence also.

2. How do we respond when our partner thinks or does things differently to us?
   - Brainstorm
   - Gratitude
   - Embarrassment
   - Frustration
   - Sarcasm
   - Relief

3. What does a good relationship have? OR What sort of things happen in a good relationship?
   - Brainstorm
   - Some responses may include …
   - Good communication (listening and expressing).
   - Encouragement.
   - Empathy-seeing from the others point of view.
   - Intimacy-disclosure.
   - Respect.
   - Differences.
   - Love.
   - Balance- shared decision making.

4. What can you do to make the relationship better?
   - Brainstorm
   - Some responses may include …
   - Communicate (listening and expressing).
   - Encourage the other person to develop new interests and to explore their potential.
   - See from the others point of view.
   - Express needs, feelings, and aspirations.
   - Respect opinions and needs.
   - Expect differences.
   - Give and receive graciously.
   - Share decision making.
   - Spend time together.
   - In disagreements stick to the point.
   - Avoid name calling and personal insults.
   - Avoid “you” statements.
   - Set goals together.
Personal Growth

Expect change, invite change as an opportunity for growth, identity involves who we are where we have come from and what we can be.

Seek out new ways to explore our abilities, meet new people, look to learn from new and existing contexts, extend our expectations of ourselves.

Take time to reflect on our experiences, think about what this means, how has it changed me, how does this new understanding affect the ways that I will go forward.

See life as moving, a journey full of new opportunities.

Value our own contributions, learn to accept credit for what we do, this has an impact on self esteem.

Mistakes will be inevitable, learning from them is not. This is where the power of choice affects outcomes. We can choose to learn from any situation.

Give others credit for what they do, take joy in the achievements of others. Communicate this to them.

Coffee Break
5. Review of Group Goals
6. Filling out the Feedback Sheets
7. Handouts –
The leader’s summary of the main points of the sessions
8. Presentation of Certificates
9. Break for celebrations…
10.Close and Farewells
Bibliography


