



Break4Change Parenting Group, Sweden

For professionals working with families where young people are violent/abusive towards their parents/carers

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Group Session 1

- Getting to know each other and becoming a group. Changes in the family
- Key learning points

Group Session 1

Getting to know each other and becoming a group. Changes in the family

Aims:

- To provide a safe place where parents can get to know and begin to trust each other, and where they can decide and feel responsible for the type of information that will be shared.
- To understand what participants hope to achieve by taking part.
- To clarify for participants what they can expect from the group leaders.
- To ensure that the group members decide on the rules themselves.
- To start a process of change among the participants.

Welcome!

Introducing ourselves and the programme. Handout an overview of the programme and information on the purpose of the programme. Information on what the participants may expect from us. Informing participants that B4C is part of an EU project, and what this means.

Evaluation from University of Brighton. Structure within the group. Offering participants the option of being filmed using a film dialogue process with their child

The participants introduce themselves.

Group rules. Information about confidentiality and safeguarding issues

Handout: *The Power and Control Wheel* and discuss.

Coffee break

The group's expectations, fears and hopes. Brainstorming

Handout: *The Cycle of Change* and materials *about change*, participants fill these in and discuss.

Each participant writes in positive terms about their teenager and shares this with the group.

Participants fill in the evaluation form from University of Brighton.

Group Session 1

Key learning points

What we deleted

- Use of workers. As we are in contact with all participants in our therapy work, we are effectively their workers.
- Consent form for recording. We asked the parents if they were interested in recording their communications with their children on camera, but no one was interested. We believe that it would have been better if this was mandatory, and that contact with the young people through recording would have been very good (not least because we did not run a youth group).

What we added

- Training, motivational interviewing, training materials (see appendix). Participants were required to fill in the form by themselves. Those who so wished were able to share this with the rest of the group. This fitted in well at the start of the session to begin the process of change.
- Parents were involved at all stages. It became clear to the parents that their children were exercising power and control when we discussed these issues based on the Power and Control Wheel.
- Parents were clear about what they expected to gain from the group sessions. They all wanted tools to be able to deal with their children. They expressed the wish to become better at handling conflicts. What all parents had in common was that their children were often absent from school, and they wanted advice on how to get their children to increase their attendance.

Group Session 1

The Break4Change Programme

Group session 1

Getting to know each other and becoming a group. Changes in the family.

Group session 2

Communication.

The rights of parents and children.

Group session 3

Reasons for the behaviour of children and young people.

Group session 4

Conflicts and consequences.

Group session 5

Parenting style and parental responsibility.

Group session 6

Dealing with anger.

Group session 7

Being clear and assertive.

Group session 8

Self-esteem.

Group session 9

Taking care of yourself as a parent, Conclusion and evaluation

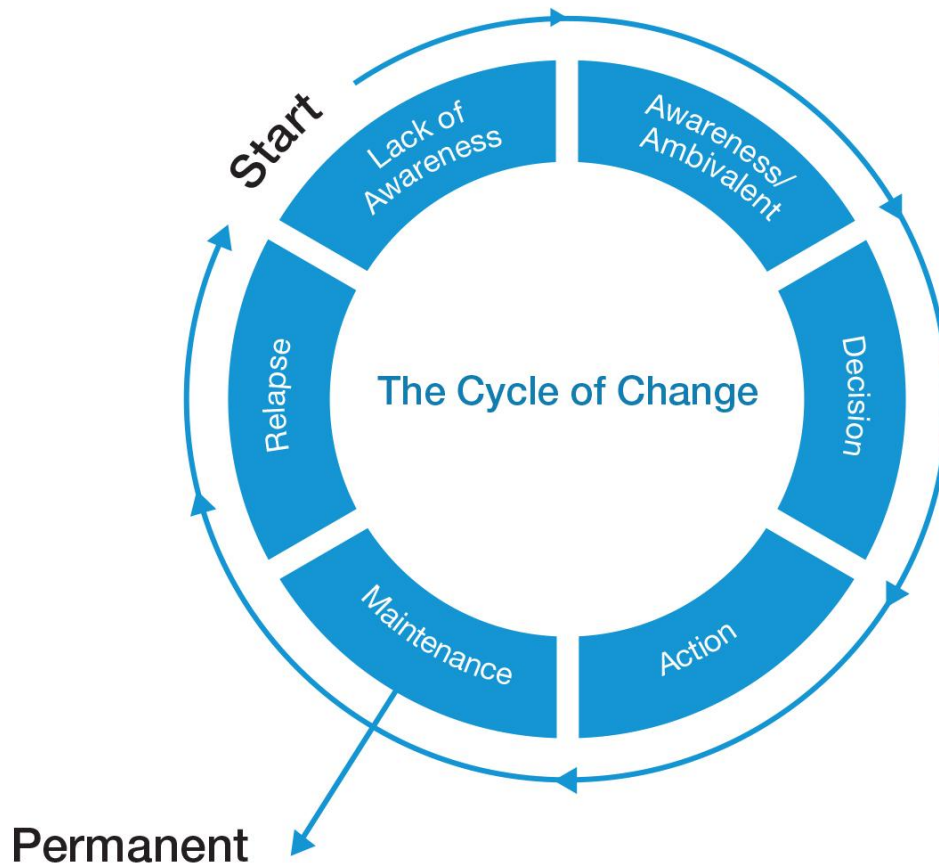
Group Session 1

The purpose of Break4Change

- To create a belief that change is possible, and to bring an end to offensive behaviour.
- To increase the well-being of parents and reduce their sense of isolation.
- To create clear boundaries for what is and what is not acceptable behaviour.
- To help parents hold their teenager responsible for his/her violence while maintaining their relationship.
- To explore new strategies for how we create meaningful and worthwhile consequences of unacceptable behaviour.
- To improve parents' ability to communicate, listen, negotiate and make decisions.
- To support progress and provide a forum for emotional support for parents while they try to become more assertive in the ways that they raise their children.
- "I'm much more confident now, much more assertive. It's been fantastic, my life has changed dramatically after attending this course, it's 100% better."
- "We don't ignore each other anymore, and instead of shouting and arguing, we talk to each other. She's calmer. She doesn't shout at me any more when I ask her to do something."

Group session 1

The Cycle of Change



The six stages of change

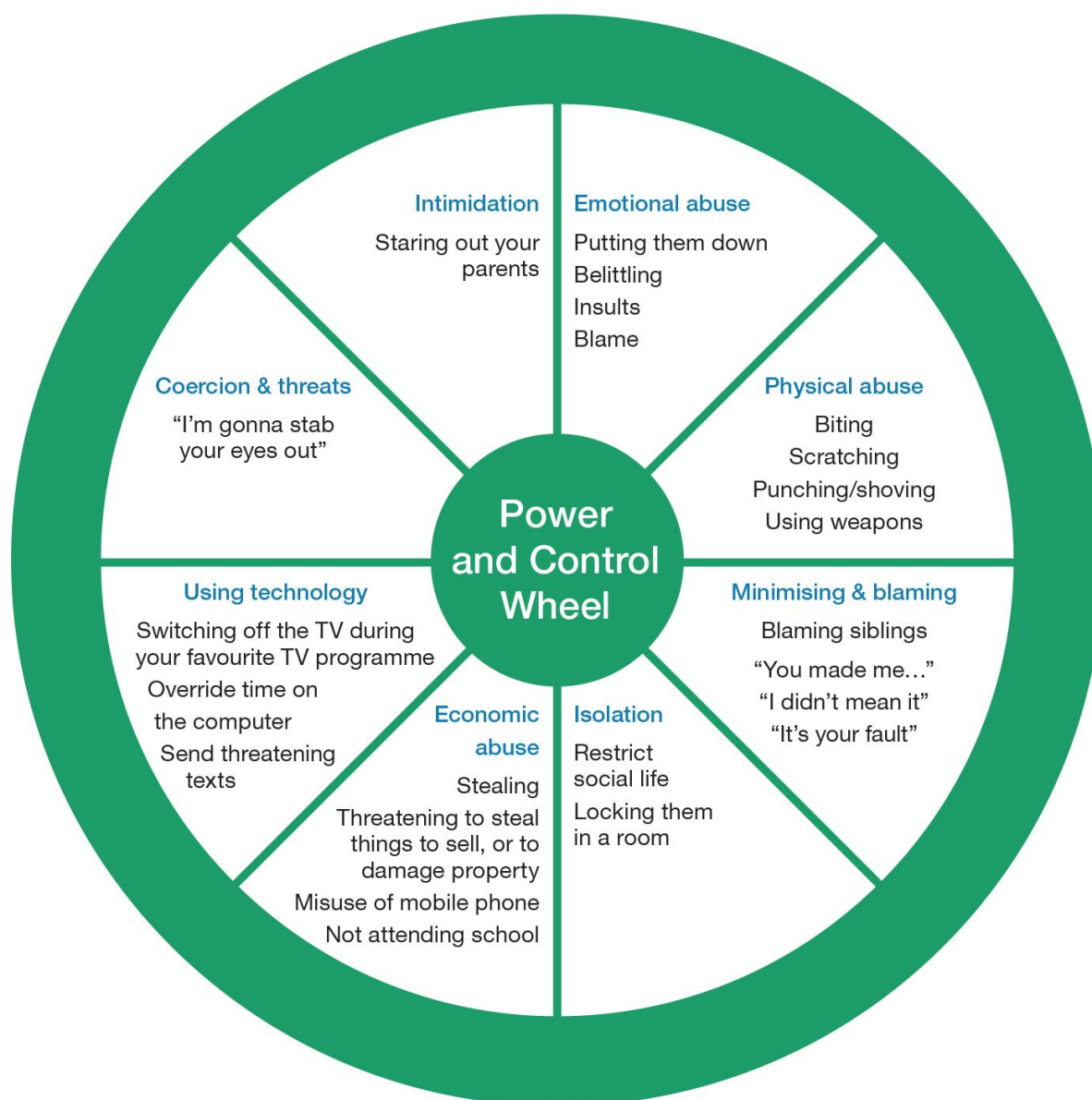
1. **Lack of awareness:** Where you cannot see that the family have a problem. You may have been told by friends and family that you should seek some support or advice, but remain in denial.
2. **Awareness/Ambivalent:** Where you recognise that there is a problem or things need to change and you look at the positive and negative of making changes.
3. **Decision:** You decide that making changes would benefit you and your family.
4. **Action:** Putting your decision into Action. You may start with the help of a worker to look at small steps that need to be put in place to change the situation. This may involve negotiation with other members of the family, school and friends, both yours and your teenager's.
5. **Maintenance:** Where, with help from workers, friends or family you identify coping strategies to maintain the changes and not slip back into old patterns of behaviour. This may involve working or talking to other agencies who can support you and maintain and expand on your problem solving skills.
6. **Relapse:** This is when you return to old patterns of behaviour. There will be times when you are not as consistent as others, we all have our off days, but you can learn from those times/days to reinforce the positives of the decision and action you have taken

Group Session 1

Advantages of not changing +	Disadvantages of not changing -	Disadvantages of changing -	Advantages of changing +
Change can apply to different habits or behaviour (exercise, eating, handling conflict, smoking etc.) or making decisions about something (saying no, implementing a plan etc.).			

Group Session 1

Break4Change Power and Control Wheel





Group Session 2

- Communication
- The rights of parents and children
- Key learning points

Group session 2

Communication

Aims:

- To have an open group discussion about communication and feelings, and how these affect the dynamics within the family.
- To think about different aspects of communication, and how important it is to communicate clearly.
- To deepen our understanding of coherence in our communication.
- To establish, through our discussions, a better way to behave by keeping calm during discussions with your teenager.

Welcome!

Go over the agenda for the day

Tell the others: Did something work well during the past week? – Everyone. Exceptions.

Filming. Have you thought about this? Asked the children?

Introduce the topic of communication

Why is good communication important? Group discussion

Communication can be difficult – in what way? Group discussion

Role play, Facilitators show the communication process.

In what ways do we communicate? (brainstorming)

Handout: The Communication Cake and discuss it.

Coffee break

Keeping calm. Group discussion

Active listening exercise

Homework: Practice keeping calm

Group session 2

Key learning points

What we deleted

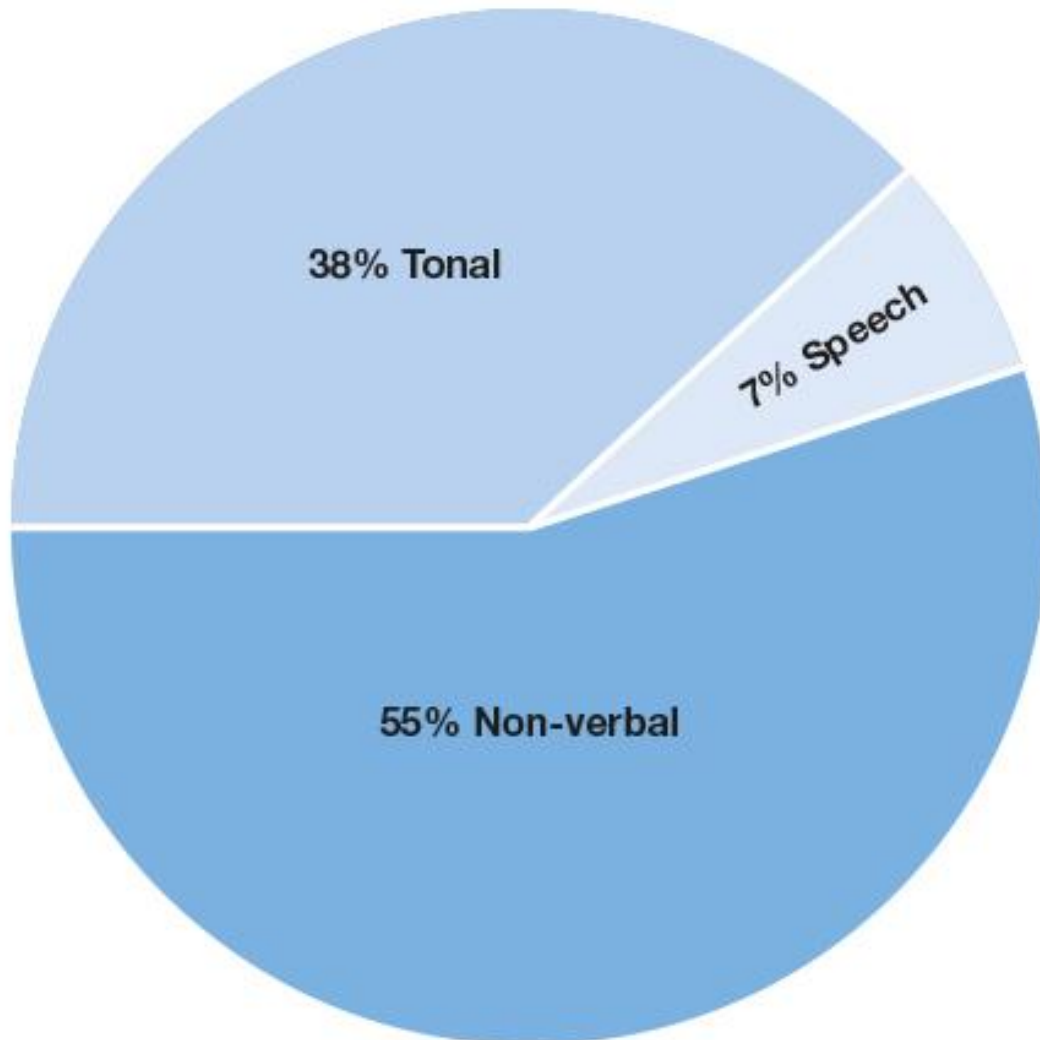
- The Drama Triangle
- Transactional Analysis (TA)
- The rights of parents and children

What we added

- Training, Keeping calm. Discussions.
- Role play – communication and body language
- We made great efforts to learn and understand TA theory. Having managed to get to grips with the theory, we decided that we would not have been able to properly convey this to parents, and that it was too theoretical. The current trend in Sweden is not to instruct parents, but to support them in making changes of their own accord.
- Because of this, we removed the TA material and the Drama Triangle. However, we had discussions based on the three states (parent, adult, child). We wanted to accommodate the parents' wishes about becoming better at handling conflicts, so we chose to discuss different strategies for how they can keep calm during conflicts. We also discussed different unsuccessful ways of communicating with your children, for example nagging and quarrelling. Parents were able to discuss this as a group. Due to the lengthy discussions in the parents' group, we did not have time for the active listening exercise.

Group session 2

The Communication Cake



Group session 2

The Communication Cake (continued.)

The following is a more common and over-simplified interpretation of Mehrabian's findings, which is quoted and applied by many people to cover all communications – often without reference to Mehrabian, although Mehrabian's work is the derivation.

It is understandable that many people prefer short concise statements, however if you must use the simplified form of the Mehrabian formula, you must explain the context of Mehrabian's findings. As a minimum you must state that the formula applies to communications of feelings and attitudes.

Here's the overly simplistic interpretation. Where you see or use it, qualify it, in proper context.

- 7% of meaning is in the words that are spoken
- 38% of meaning is paralinguistic (the way that words are said)
- 55% of meaning is in facial expression

Other important contextual and qualifying details are:

Mehrabian did not intend the statistic to be used or applied freely to all communications and meaning.

Mehrabian provides this useful explanatory note (from his own website www.kaaj.com/psych, retrieved 29 May 2009).

Group session 2

Active listening exercise

Sometimes the brain has difficulty in making sense of what you've heard.

It seems logical to think the communication process is like this:

I	SPEAK	LISTEN	SPEAK	LISTEN
YOU	LISTEN	SPEAK	LISTEN	SPEAK

Unfortunately for the quality of communication, real life can be rather different; instead of listening and speaking in turn we often only partially listen.

I	SPEAK						LISTEN	
You	Listen	React	Listen	Plan	Listen	Rehearse	Listen	Speak

From an early age your attention is focussed on reacting to what people say, to plan and work out your response.

The point to establish and reinforce is that the critical factor in good communication is active listening. It's not the natural way. If your response is what matters to you, you will interrupt. It takes discipline to be sure you have heard enough to make the appropriate response and not your early impression.

Eye contact and facial expression provide important social and emotional information. People, perhaps without consciously doing so, probe each other's eyes and faces for positive or negative mood signs.

Recent studies suggest that eye contact has a positive impact on the retention and recall of information and may promote more efficient learning.

Duration

Consider how long you look into someone's eyes when you speak. Most people can only look into someone's eyes for at most three seconds before either person glances away. This is because eye contact expresses intimacy, and as a direct glance becomes longer, the feelings become more intense.

Shyness

Because of the intimacy and openness involved in eye contact, shy people often have trouble with it. (If you find yourself nervous about looking people directly in the eye, start small). Just give someone a brief glance or look around their eyes instead of directly into their pupils. With practice, you will become more comfortable with giving people direct eye contact, and you will find your shyness starts to dissolve.



Group Session 3

- Reasons for the behaviour of children and young people
- Key learning points

Group session 3

Reasons for the behaviour of children and young people

Aims:

- To discuss what influences/causes young people to act in certain ways.
- To identify factors which affect young people's behaviour, and discuss how you can prevent these factors from occurring.
- To help parents distinguish between smaller and larger problems, and help them focus on the larger ones.
- To help parents choose their battles so as not to destroy the relationship with constant quarrelling.

Welcome!

How has your week been? Reflections and exceptions with regard to communication and keeping calm.

What affects young people's behaviour? Brainstorming (genetics, friends, media, computers, sleep, food, parents)

What can you do about this as a parent? Discussion

Handout materials: *Time out vs walk out*

Coffee break

Handout material: *Perfect Parents*. Read through this and discuss.

Handout material: *Rights as Parents*. Discussion.

How can you be a good role model for your child? Discussion.

Ignoring negative behaviour. Discussion.

Choosing your battles. Discussion.

Homework: Practise ignoring negative behaviour.

Group session 3

Key learning points

What we deleted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents goals for change• In our opinion, their personal goals did not fit into the theme and objective of the session, and we did not think that the group was ready to share their goals for change with the other parents.

What we added
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignoring negative behaviour.• We chose to add a discussion based on the parents' expectations regarding concrete strategies for improving their relationships with their children. The focus here is to explore how the parents may reduce negative behaviour by ignoring it and how to give attention as a reward for positive behaviour in order to reinforce this strategy. This applies to behaviour which may not be entirely unacceptable, but which can be ignored.• Choosing your battles• Continuous conflict breaks up relationships, and parents should choose what behaviour they think is unacceptable and then try to focus on solving these conflicts.• Rights as parents

Group session 3

Differences chart

This outline is designed to give you a clear idea of the difference between deciding to take time out during an argument and just walking away (leaving the room, house etc.).

TIME-OUT	WALKING AWAY
1. You can identify your feelings.	1. You are certain of your feelings.
2. You communicate with your partner about your feelings.	2. Your partner is confused about what's going on with you.
3. Is an agreed upon strategy between you and your partner and was discussed before conflict occurs.	3. Is often not an agreed upon strategy between you and your partner and happens spontaneously (reactive).
4. You take responsibility for your feelings, beliefs and actions during the conflict.	4. You blame your partner for making you angry and/or believe your partner is unreasonable.
5. The intent is conflict resolution	5. The intent is to avoid conflict resolution
6. Time away is spent focussing on self and working to solve issue.	6. Time away is spent blaming partner and behaviours that hurt the relationship (drinking, sulking and slamming doors).
7. You return with ideas for change that are focussed on ways you can do things differently.	7. You return either more angry and frustrated than you were before, or you want to avoid the issue. "I just hope it blows over".

Group session 3

Rights as Parents

Parents, like children, minorities and other citizens have rights that should be defined and agreed upon. You have:

A right to expect reasonable cooperation and courtesy in your home.

A right not to feel afraid in your own home.

A right not to be treated badly or inconsiderately by your child.

A right to a night's sleep without worrying where your teenager is.

A right to stop rescuing your teenager.

A right to expect reasonable behaviour from your children at school.

A right to occasionally relax and take care of yourself.

A right to live in a reasonably clean house

Group session 3

Perfect Parents?

- Although no one uses the phrase “perfect parent” seriously, the idea of being a perfect, ideal or optimal parent is quite a common one. In everyday life it is an idea that causes much guilt and disappointment for those who try, and of course fail, to be a perfect parent is implied because the author claims to know the best way to bring up a child.
- Here are a few of the problems with the idea of the Perfect Parent:
- We don’t know enough to be clear about what the perfect parent would be like. The history of advice to parents is full of ‘experts’ claiming that their theory or research tells us what is the best upbringing for the average child (or even for every child). Most of the past advice now looks quite silly and some of it is downright abusive. There have been no huge breakthroughs in psychology that suddenly enable any expert to tell us what the perfect environment is, for a child to grow up in.
- Looking at different cultures, it is obvious that human development is very flexible and there is no type of family or specific parental behaviour that is essential for normal development. Humans evolved with children being brought up in dangerous, stress-filled environments where most babies did not survive childhood and parents had plenty of other things to worry about. Mothers were never full time parents (only the rich could afford to be full-time parents but they had servants do most of the work). Whether fathers did little or a lot (far less than mothers in almost every society), parenting was also shared with, or even primarily the responsibility of, older children and other relatives – very different to our way of bringing up children. Isolated nuclear families rather than being “normal” are unique to modern society.
- It is impossible that the ideal upbringing for, say, intelligence will also be ideal for confidence, athleticism, popularity, happiness, spirituality, etc. Is the goal a successful and/or happy childhood or a successful and/or happy adulthood? There will always be compromises to make which must be based on value judgements about short and long term goals. So before anyone can say what optimal parenting is, they must define what outcomes we are aiming for. Different people, and different societies, value different things.
- Children differ greatly in personality and abilities from the word go. What is best for a highly active child won’t be best for a very sedate one; what is best for a nervous, over-sensitive child won’t work for a fearless little bruiser; ideal parenting for a very bright child is different to the ideal for a slow child, etc. So “perfect” parenting must differ depending on the child, which means it can never be a simple recipe. Of course every adult is different too and it is really the ‘fit’, or match, between child and parent that matters.
- Even if we could decide what was the perfect parent, would it be humanly possible for anyone to do this, or even come close?
- There is abundant evidence, from everyday life, and from research, that no parent actually comes close to being “perfect”. A research study in the USA found that 98% of parents had been “psychologically abusive” in some way to their children by the time they were six. Were the other 2% perfect or uninvolved... or lying?
- If there is such a thing as perfect parenting and we knew what it was and some saintly genius was capable of doing the job, would this actually prepare a child for the real world? It is unlikely that the perfect environment is stress free, just as the perfect environment for a child is not sterile and perfectly hygienic. Children need some exposure to germs and infections for their immune systems to develop properly. They may also need some stress and exposure to real human beings, who get emotional, make mistakes, fail and are not always predictable, to develop normally.

(Adapted from Gallagher, E, 2006)

Group session 3

- Even if parenting was “perfect” there are so many other factors involved that the outcome for any one child still could never be guaranteed. The idea that parents are practically the only influence on their children is not supported by any evidence. When researchers try to find relationships between parenting and child outcomes they find that only a small part of the child’s personality, abilities or behaviour is predicted by parenting (unless the parenting is actually abusive or neglectful, and even then outcomes are variable).
- It is not normal or healthy for anyone to be just a parent. Even a doting mother of a young child plays other roles such as daughter, sister, wife, friend, mother to an older child, citizen etc. and she may soon become a student or worker again without being any less of a parent. The idea that a child needs to be the centre of any adult’s universe is a historically very recent one. This is certainly not essential and may not be healthy. Similarly, the idea that a household needs to be child-focussed, rather than child-friendly, is also a new idea which may be producing some children who are psychologically at risk of behaviour problems, depression, addictive behaviours and even suicide. At least some children of parents who try to be perfect become perfect brats!

Good enough parenting

- Children need a sense of security and a reasonable amount of attention, stimulation and a healthy environment. Most importantly they need to feel loved and valued. If parenting is ‘good enough’ they will develop normally and how they turn out will have at least as much, and probably a lot more, to do with their own personality, their own choices and the rest of their world, as it does the behaviour of their parents.

Best parenting possible

- We have a responsibility to be the best parents we know how, but without sacrificing our own rights and happiness or our other relationships and responsibilities. Keep a sense of proportion, a sense of your own worth and sense of humour. Your kids won’t thank you for trying to be perfect. They probably won’t thank you at all, but they are a bit more likely to thank you for being relaxed, fun, and perfectly human.

(Adapted from Gallagher, E, 2006)



Group Session 4

- Conflicts and consequences
- Key learning points

Group session 4

Conflicts and consequences

Aims:

- To consider the connection between expectation and responsibility and how this can affect your teenager's behaviour. The participants learn how to apply natural/logical consequences when faced with problem behaviour.
- The participants discuss between themselves what they consider to be acceptable behaviour and what kinds of behaviour can be ignored.

Welcome!

How has your week been? Have you practised communication, how to ignore negative behaviour, how to keep calm?

Film, nagging and pestering

Discussion after the film:

- How did the mother handle the situation?
- Was the girl's behaviour unacceptable?
- What could the mother have done differently?

Coffee break

- Which types of behaviour are unacceptable, and what can be ignored?
- How do you feel when your child displays unacceptable behaviour?
- **Handout:** The FBT Triangle – talk about thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- **Handout** materials: Expectations/responsibility
- What do you think your children expect of you? Flip chart
- In what other ways would you like your child to accept more responsibility?
- **Handout:** "Consequences" – we'll read through this together and discuss
- Suggestions for consequences (rewards and punishments), discuss
- Discuss the advantages of a monthly allowance.
- **Homework: Handout:** "Pocket money" – should be read through for the next session.

Group session 4

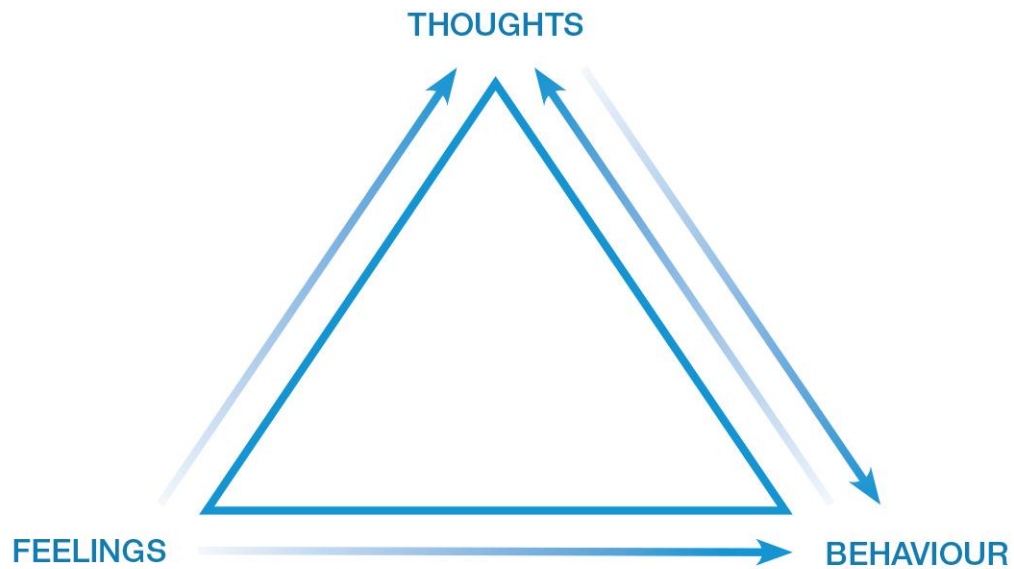
Key learning points

What we deleted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Respect Wheel and the Abuse Wheel.• Because the material was not translated, we found it difficult to properly convey the meaning using the English materials.

What we added
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The FBT Triangle• We added this to illustrate and discuss the connection between thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Group session 4

Thoughts, feelings, behaviour



Group session 4

Children's expectations versus responsibility

Parents have lowered their expectations of their children in recent years; they often feel that they have less authority and get less respect. Parents increasingly feel that they have lost control of their children.

Conflicts between children and parents are increasingly turning into a fight that leads to a winner/loser situation rather than a platform for healthy negotiations, where both sides are able to express their views without belittlement and be respected instead.

Parents demand respect from their teenagers, but find it difficult to give respect to their teenagers themselves.

It is a good thing that children are no longer expected to treat adults from a position of fear and total obedience; today, children are more confident and capable in many ways because we have a more child-centred, democratic parenting style. However, TV, magazines and the internet feed into children to be more demanding and materialistic. Consequently, some children have developed excessive expectations of their parents. Such children are not necessarily "spoiled" in the traditional sense of being bought everything they desire (though some are), but have a high sense of being entitled to their parents' attention and services. They think they have a fundamental right to a life that is easy, comfortable and exciting, and often they entirely disregard their parents' rights.

Children who have a low level of responsibility often become threatening towards their parents in an attempt to control them or out of frustration that their demands are not met. You might say that they treat their parents as servants and it is easy to be threatening towards servants.

Children can only begin to take responsibility when their parents stop taking all responsibility for them and when they are forced to face the consequences of their actions.

Over time, parents can reduce their children's expectations by not automatically meeting their demands. This leads to a more respectful relationship.

Changing the balance between responsibility and expectations can take a long time, but the benefits to the child/parent relationship is worth the hard work.

"We find ourselves slaving after children who laugh in the face of our weak attempts at discipline, demand to be amused all day, stay up late because we're too exhausted to put up the struggle it takes to get them to bed. These kids are fully in charge." Robert Shaw 2003, *The Epidemic*. Regan Books NY page 17

"lack of authority by the parent and the symmetrical feeling of physical prowess on the part of the adolescent can result in adolescents manifesting a grandiose sense of self along with an enormous sense of entitlement ... the violent teenager they describe in such terms as 'bully', 'little dictator' and 'bossy'.

Harpin & Maddin 1979, "Battered parents: a new syndrome". *American J of Psychiatry* 136

"We are a generation who put our energy into making teens happy and comfortable instead of responsible. We have attempted to change the role of the parent from authoritative disciplinarian to partners in a more equal relationship in which parents are 'friends' with their children. The result is that children develop images of parents as the people whose job it is to make them happy." Barbara Cottell 2001, *Parent Abuse: The Abuse of Parents by Their Teenage Children*. Ottawa, Family Violence Prevention Unit, Health Canada, page 25

Group session 4

Consequences

Rewards and punishments

Everyone uses rewards and punishments in raising children. However, these can sometimes appear arbitrary to the child and more about the parent's power (or emotions) than about the child's behaviour. Punishments can discourage children from taking responsibility if they are simply obeying orders rather than making choices. Rewards can also discourage taking responsibility if the child feels they are being paid, or bribed, to behave. But having said that, it is true that most children need rewards and punishments and difficult children may need them most of all. Although it is true that many "consequences" are really a form of reward or punishment it is still useful to use this term as it can help us change or focus to a more co-operative and logical way of influencing children's behaviour.

Natural consequences

The classic example of a "natural consequence" is the child who wants to go out in the rain without a coat. The natural consequence of this is that they get wet. Assuming they don't die of pneumonia, children learn efficiently by being allowed to make such mistakes and suffer the consequences. People learn best from such natural consequences rather than from more arbitrary punishments (or rewards) for the following reasons:

1. It is much easier to understand and easier to remember the connection between a natural consequence and the behaviour that led to it.
2. When punishment is imposed by someone else there are emotional complications which can greatly impair learning. If a child focuses more on your unfairness, or gets angry, or feels unloved, these emotions can overshadow the lesson they were meant to learn. This seldom happens with natural consequences.
3. By imposing a punishment (or giving a reward) we are taking some of the responsibility on ourselves and hence giving the child less responsibility.

However, there is a major problem with natural consequences, especially with younger children, which is often played down. Children tend to have very short time frames and a consequence that is not immediate, or at least following pretty quickly after the behaviour, may never produce learning. Immediate gratification will tend to outweigh long-term consequences. Actually, many adults are exactly the same and the horrible hangover that follows a night on the grog may never produce learning in some adults.

Very long-term consequences, such as future educational and career failure, are unlikely to motivate many children. In counselling children who steal I have often been struck by their belief that they will end up in prison or in a children's home in a few year's time. Their estimations of negative long-term consequences are greatly exaggerated but this has not had any effect on their behaviour. Generally punishments that are more than a week away are likely to be ineffectual in changing the behaviour of most pre-teen children and many adolescents.

Obviously children's mental time frame sets severe limits on the effectiveness of many natural consequences. Few pre-teen children will brush their teeth because of the long-term benefits (they may brush their teeth because it tastes good, it keeps parents happy, because they are proud of their skill). So letting such behaviours be solely determined by natural consequences may not be practical.

The problem with having no consequence for truly unacceptable behaviour (especially any form of abuse) is that the young person may lose more and more respect for their powerless parent. In some cases a punishment or reward (or combination of the two), even if it is not at all logically connected to the behaviour may be better than doing nothing. Sometimes such illogical consequences can be very effective; a common one is to apply a small fine for swearing. Try to find a way of making these consequences appear logically connected if you possibly can.

Group session 4

When to apply consequences

Any technique can be used. If we try to control every aspect of a child's behaviour using consequences we create a stressful, artificial environment in which children are likely to rebel. It is very important that we are clear about what we are trying to influence and why. We should not be making rules in order to show who is boss but only when necessary. Some behaviours (dangerous or abusive) are clearly unacceptable and some kind of consequence should be applied by responsible parents. Some things are clearly the kid's business and we should not interfere. In between are a lot of behaviours that are undesirable, annoying, inconvenient, inefficient or just stupid but whether or not a consequence should be applied may be arguable. If a child is behaving badly we may choose to ignore some of the undesirable behaviour and concentrate on the serious stuff. In two parent families it is crucially important that both parents are working together and it is often a good idea to write down what are the rules and what behaviours are to be discouraged or encouraged. Children can be involved in this process but listening to them and respecting them does not mean that they have an equal say to the adults.

If a child is showing a lot of behaviour problems or openly rebelling it is very important not to try to change too much all at once. Decide on your priorities and focus on behaviour that can be clearly defined, and is clearly unacceptable. Since having no consequences for serious misbehaviour can mean they escalate over time, some consequence should be applied, even if it seems not to be working in the short term. Applying consequences can also be important in the message it gives other children in the home. If they see an older brother or sister swearing at Mum (for example) and there is no consequence they are likely to lose respect and later copy the behaviour.

If the consequences are all negative i.e. punishments, then try very hard to find positives and use rewards for improvement or for trying. Even bribes (money or other payment for desired behaviour) can have their place if used sensibly and a short term solution to the problem, such as breaking a bad habit. If bribes are used as an on-going part of family life they discourage responsibility. Thus children should not be paid for brushing their teeth or making their own beds, or they continue to see this as their parents' responsibility, not theirs. They can be paid for doing jobs that are clearly not their responsibility (such as washing cars or mowing the lawn).

Working out clear consequences

If a child is highly uncooperative or beyond control, it can be hard to find useable consequences. Any privilege and almost anything that you do for a child can potentially be used as a consequence. It may be useful to make a list of these.

There are several important things to bear in mind:

How comfortable are you and your partner about using such a consequence? If you are going to be wracked with guilt or more inconvenienced than the child then it is not likely to work.

Does the child care about it? For many girls and teenage boys not doing their ironing would be a possible consequence and a logical one if they are not treating you as a parent. For most pre-teenage boys not doing their ironing would be completely irrelevant, or even quite cool. However, children don't necessarily have to care a lot about something for it to be a useful consequence.

Does it need cooperation from the child? If so, do you have enough cooperation to make it stick?

Sometimes you need to first give, in order to have the possibility of taking away. Giving regular pocket money allows you to make children pay for breakages or thefts and can be even be used as a fine for swearing. If you have already removed all privileges on an indefinite basis then give them back and start from scratch.

It is not possible to work out clear consequences for every possible misbehaviour, but the most worrying and annoying behaviour are usually ones that are repeated.

Group session 4

Give choices not orders

- If you can clearly define a child's behaviour and clearly define the consequence it becomes possible to give the child a choice rather than an order.
- Instead of "put your toys away! (usually shouted) you can say (preferably calmly, even cheerfully) "You've got 15 minutes till bed time, shouldn't you be putting those toys away? Otherwise they will disappear for a week".
- Instead of "don't you dare throw that" (which seems to some kids a challenge they can hardly resist) you can say "are you sure you want to throw that, you know it means no Simpsons if you do?"
- Instead of ordering "get on with your homework" you can say, "it's your choice, do your homework for 20 minutes and you can use the computer. It's entirely up to you."

Being clear about the child's behaviour is often very important. If you decide to give a consequence to a child for being 'cheeky' you will find that adults seldom agree on what exactly 'cheeky' is (one person's cheeky is another's 'funny' or 'cute') and the child will hardly ever agree. Thus the child may spend a lot of time feeling got at and angry, or may learn to avoid talking to adults. Children's "bad attitude" is often shown by their intensely annoying (to adults) tone of voice.

You don't have to decide on the spot how long a consequence will last. If it is logical for a child to lose the use of a bike then tell him this immediately but wait till you talk to the other parents, or till you calm down, before telling him how long. However, do give a definite time as soon as possible. Don't give indefinite sentences: these invite children to give up trying to behave. Once something has been stopped for more than a few months it is probably not having any effect whatsoever on their behaviour.

Most of the time "keep it simple, keep it short" also applies to what you need to say to the child. Long explanations about what the child has done wrong can delay the consequence and lead to arguments that confuse things. Lectures are usually a waste of time. Your kids probably look on them as an additional punishment (by boredom) and become very good at tuning out the sound of your voice.

There are several important things to bear in mind:

- How comfortable are you and your partner about using such a consequence? If you are going to be wracked with guilt or more inconvenienced than the child then it is not likely to work.
- Does the child care about it? For many girls and teenage boys not doing their ironing would be a possible consequence and a logical one if they are not treating you as a parent. For most pre-teenage boys not doing their ironing would be completely irrelevant, or even quite cool. However, children don't necessarily have to care a lot about something for it to be a useful consequence.
- Does it need cooperation from the child? If so, do you have enough cooperation to make it stick?
- Sometimes you need to first give, in order to have the possibility of taking away. Giving regular pocket money allows you to make children pay for breakages or thefts and can be even be used as a fine for swearing. If you have already removed all privileges on an indefinite basis then give them back and start from scratch.
- It is not possible to work out clear consequences for every possible misbehaviour, but the most worrying and annoying behaviour are usually ones that are repeated.

Group session 4

Uses of Pocket money (with difficult or beyond control children)

(Adapted from Eddie Gallagher, 2005)

Advantages of giving pocket-money

Although some children may take a loong time to learn the lesson, having some money of their own can teach children budgeting and the value of money.

Some children do eventually learn to save and can then buy themselves larger items.

Children take more responsibility for holidays, pets, hobbies etc. if they contribute even a small part of the cost from their own money.

Children who receive pocket money rather than intermittent treats are less likely to nag parents and may be less demanding

Should children deliberately damage property or steal, they can be made to repay part of the cost, making them take responsibility for their actions in a more direct way than arbitrary punishments do.

Parents can, if necessary, use fines to control behavior

Children can buy presents for other family members on special occasions.

But I can't afford to give pocket money..

Parents on low incomes sometimes claim they cannot afford to give their children any pocket money whatsoever. I have had such parents keep a record of all the non-essentials they buy for their children and money they give them. Often they are giving children far more money than those parents who give regular pocket money! Rather than buying lollies and ice creams and occasionally paying for treats such as small toys or cinema tickets you can give regular pocket money instead. For older children some of the money being spent on clothes, phones, transport, holidays, hobbies etc., can be given as an allowance.

I can't trust my child with cash..

If a child is spending most of their money on drugs, alcohol or gambling it may actually be irresponsible to give them cash. If you are unfortunate enough to have a child who is an addict don't give them any cash if you can help it! An allowance does not have to be in cash. Parents can, if necessary, regulate how money is spent. Don't listen to arguments that the child has a right to make their own decisions – if they choose to live with you they don't have a *right* to be self-destructive.

Some parents of children with an intellectual disability or autism claim that their child is not mature enough to handle money yet such children may be (roughly) similar to six to ten year olds in maturity, who are quite capable of handling small amounts of money. In fact many five-year olds are capable of understanding pocket-money and I've known some 5 year-olds who save for toys rather than waste their money on snacks. Consider giving a smaller amount twice a week or set clear rules about how many lollies they can buy.

A common example of parents keeping some control over an allowance is that some of a child's allowance is banked for the child to use for major purchases or holidays. Parents may also pay for club memberships, transport costs, clothes, phones, internet use, hobby materials, books, music, DVDs, etc. directly. Any of these can be allocated as a regular allowance with requirements for how the child earns and uses the money. But don't make life complicated unless there is a real need to so. He doesn't do so.

He doesn't deserve any pocket money!

Some parents are too angry at their child to consider giving them pocket money. You may have to swallow your pride. If you have really given up all hope of influencing your child's behaviour you should seriously ask yourself why they are still living at home. If you are trying to have some influence over behaviour problems then you may have to give to be able to take away.

Group session 4

Some parents say children have to earn their pocket-money by doing chores but as they don't cooperate they don't get any. If you are trying to change serious behaviour problems then doing chores can probably wait until these are under control. If you feel strongly that you want to use pocket-money to encourage chores my suggestion is that half of their pocket money is unearned and half depends on chores.

Pocket money as payment for chores

There is a serious problem with giving pocket-money as payment for chores. At the extreme consider a child who is paid for doing his homework and for making his bed. What is likely to happen if the payment eventually stops? He stops. Studies have found that children directly rewarded for doing something, even something they enjoy, will do it less than they otherwise would have when rewards are stopped. If a child is always paid for his contribution to the housework then he will never see this as his responsibility. Getting children to eventually take responsibility for their homework, belongings, hygiene, room etc is a crucially important part of maturation.. and sometimes quite a struggle.

Paying children for doing jobs that are not their responsibility is quite different. Thus many children earn extra pocket money washing cars or mowing the lawn. If these are clearly not their responsibility this is fine and quite different to giving pocket money for doing their chores. If encouraging a child to do routine chores is really important to you it may be psychologically better to fine them for not doing them, rather than pay them for doing them. This reinforces that it is an expectation not an optional extra. If a teenager neglects his or her room until it becomes a health hazard you can charge them for your labour, or pay a cleaner or even a brother or sister to clean it. This makes it clear that it is their responsibility not yours.

Generally if you want to use pocket-money as a consequence for behaviour change (fines or rewards) it is confusing to also use it as a payment for doing chores. It is better if pocket-money is a privilege not a right. If a child feels they have earned their pocket-money they may be very resentful at it then being taken away because of misdemeanours. If your child is beyond control or has severe behaviour problems then controlling this is probably more important in the short term than whether they do chores or not.

Never stop all pocket-money or give impulsive fines

In counselling young people I've found they will sometimes deny getting any pocket money when from the parent's point of view it has been temporarily suspended, either as a punishment or to pay damages. The child has quickly forgotten about it and it is usually having no influence whatsoever on their behaviour. It seems to have far more impact to receive a part, even a small part, of their pocket-money allowance rather than zero. Children who have lost all privileges may just give up. Their attitude is similar to a prisoner on a life sentence who feels he has nothing left to lose. So resist the urge to say "no pocket money for you" and the urge to stop arbitrary amounts. Use fines only as planned or after careful consideration. Don't let your anger guide you.

You can make cut-off point where no more fines are imposed but some other consequence comes into play. E.g. it may be when pocket-money reaches £2 in any week you stop imposing further fines but instead stop other privileges.

Using fines

Fines are not something we should use unless there are real problems and other methods are not working. A common use of fines in the families I have worked with has been to stamp out swearing. Although some people think swearing is trivial, it is often linked to verbal abuse and feeds anger. Even if you don't care about swearing, swearing at you is abusive and should not be tolerated or the child will lose more and more respect. Using fines for behaviour such as swearing is often very effective but does not work for all children (nothing does). A few really stubborn kids may get worse for a while and try to break your resolve.

I'll give some points about using fines for swearing but virtually all apply to fines for any other clearly definable behaviour and a "fine" could be anything measurable that you can control, not just money, such as time on the computer or credits for phones or activities.

Group session 4

Define the behaviour

Swearing is what you decide it is. It is your home, your child, and your money that you are choosing not to give. You need to clearly define what you mean by swearing. Simplest is to ban a few serious swear words. You may even start with just the worst, usually the F word. You may choose to include rude gestures (the finger) or certain insults, e.g. banning calling people “retard” or “gay”. Better not to be too strict. You may wish that your children did not use slang or say “whatever” ten times a day, but these are not “crimes” in the same way as verbal abuse or swearing.

Make a clear contract

Be very clear about what is being fined and how much the fine will be. If you have a partner then make sure they are 100% behind you and compromise about any details necessary to get their co-operation. If you don't have a partner find someone else to discuss the details with. You can consult your children and you may be influenced by their ideas but they do not have a veto and they don't have to like it! Don't make it too complicated for your child to understand or so complicated that they can play barrack-room lawyer and argue about interpretations of the rules. It is best if the rules are written down. However, do not get caught in an unchangeable contract either. Try out any new rules for a week or two then change them if necessary. If you are making progress and a child is swearing much less than you can increase the size of the fine or even less serious swear-words or insults.

Keep it fair

Fines for swearing should apply to everyone in the family. If parents are not willing to give up or reduce their own swearing then they are unlikely to ever get their children to stop. It can actually be an advantage if one or both parents occasionally swears if they are willing to be fined as children will cooperate better. My suggestion is that the fine for an adult is far larger (5 to 10 times) than the fine for a child. Children will see this as fair and be more willing to cooperate.

Keep fines small

Any regular fines must be small fines. The aim is that the child will still have some pocket-money left even on their worst week. You may need to keep a record for a week of how often your child swears before you decide how large the fine should be. If a child getting a £5 a week pocket money swears 50 times in a week, then a fine of 5 pence would be appropriate as they would then lose £2.50 in a typical week. This gives a good incentive to improve. If the fine was 20pence the child will have no pocket money left after 3 or 4 days, little or no incentive to improve, and may well swear more just for the hell of it (why not, it's free now!).

Some parents find small fines distasteful because the punishment does not fit the crime. In families, especially if you are trying to gain control of a badly behaved or disturbed child, the punishment does not have to fit the crime and very seldom does. If you catch your child the first time they ever swear at, or otherwise abuse, a parent you may be able to impose a memorable punishment and clearly demonstrate that you are not going to take it. I clearly remember the worst punishment of my childhood. I called my mother “A big ape” (under my breath but a friend told her what I'd said). I was sent to my room for the remainder of the day, which seemed like a ten year prison term at the time. I never did that again!

However, once a child is openly defying authority, in a state of near-constant anger or feels unloved and rejected (regardless of whether this is realistic or not) imposing harsh punishments will usually make matters worse, not better. If behaviour has become a habit you need to impose small, manageable consequences to eliminate it.

Try to avoid too much negativity

Include some rewards for improvement or effort rather than have too many punishments. Too much negativity can increase your child's anger, make them convinced they are a bad person and sour your relationship. Find things to reward and praise even if most of their behaviour is diabolical.

Group session 4

Let the consequences speak for you

One of the advantages of using a small fine (or any clearly defined consequence) is that parents can step back and be less emotionally involved. Many parents have found that either getting upset or getting angry can add fuel to the fire with some children. Changing your attitude can sometimes work wonders. Some parents have adopted a calm "Oh well, I'd rather you didn't swear but at least you are saving me money." Attitude rather than lecturing and getting upset. Using humour can also help e.g. jokingly complaining that the child is not scoring very well this week as he has *only* sworn 10 times.

Clear fines, as with other clearly defined consequences, can make punishments less personal and can be especially helpful if parents have been undermining one another, if one parent has a poor relationship with the child, or for step-parents (even those with a good relationship with the child). Instead of "I am going to impose my will on you and punish you", it becomes "You know the rule, you've just lost ten pence".

Keep track of the fines

- It is crucially important that you don't get confused and forget about fines. There are many ways of keeping track.
- Keep a notebook where you record each fine
- Write on a poster or whiteboard (only if you can trust the children not to tamper with or destroy these)
- Have a swear-box in which cash is put each time someone swears (only if no one is going to raid or smash it)
- Use tokens, buttons, toy money (coins or notes) to represent pocket-money. These could be added to a swear box, or else removed from a jar representing next week's pocket money for each child. This visual reminder is very effective with some children.
- Write or print out dozens of IOUs to represent next week's pocket money.
- Keep an electronic record on a handheld computer or mobile phone.
- If you have a really good memory you can simply announce the new amount of pocket-money when each fine is imposed (only for unusually well organised sole parents).

What to do with the fines collected?

Especially if adults are also paying fines you need to decide what to do with the money. This could be used for something special, such as an outing, for the whole family or can be given to charity. A child's fines could even be put in a long term account for him or her.

Paying for damage or theft

A major advantage of giving pocket-money for those with very badly behaved children is that they can pay something towards deliberate breakages, wastage or theft. It is an important principle that young people be made to pay for damage to the home or property. Thus if a child kicks a hole in the door he should pay something towards repair. Parents sometimes will say that the child could not possibly pay for the damage done as their pocket money is insignificant compared to hundreds, or even thousands, of pounds worth of damage. Children should always pay something, even if this is only a tiny fraction of the cost. I once met a mother and ten-year old son shortly after he had smashed every window in the house. As the cost was about 200 times his weekly pocket money the mother had not considered making him pay anything towards repair costs. After discussion she decided to make him pay £25 over a ten week period. This was meaningful consequence for such behaviour children lose respect for their parents and may feel very powerful.

If a child steals from other family members he can be made to repay the amount (or double the amount) from his pocket-money or allowances (or by selling his belongings if necessary).

Paying for damage done or for theft should be treated as a responsibility not as a punishment. Parents may want to impose some form of punishment in addition to having the child make recompense.

Group session 4

If it is a potentially large amount (compared to the child's weekly pocket-money) then before deciding how much should be paid, or what the rate of repayment will be, you should carefully think about it and preferably talk through the details with your partner or someone else. Although you can tell a child that they will be paying for the damage you don't have to tell them immediately (when you are still angry) what the details are.

As with fines, it is important not to stop all pocket-money. It is easier for children to forget about it if they simply receive no pocket-money for a period of time and there may be no incentive for them not to repeat the behaviour. Many children do not look further into the future than a few weeks and losing pocket-money for 6 months is exactly the same to them as losing pocket-money for 1 month. It is usually not worth continuing with a repayment for more than two or three months.

If you feel that your child is making genuine attempts to change his behaviour you may decide to call an amnesty and cancel all fines and repayments after a couple of months. Don't do this so quickly that they think you are soft or not going to follow through with future threats.

Adapted from Eddie Gallagher, 2005



Group Session 5

- Parenting style
- Parental responsibility
- Key learning points

Group session 5

Parenting style and parental responsibility

Aims:

- To give parents a clear understanding of what they do for their children and to link this to the previous week's discussion. What consequences do the parents apply? This is an opportunity to consider our role as parents as a result of our own upbringing.
- The parents decide what they want to be responsible for, and what they want their children to be responsible for.

Welcome!

How has your week been?

Reflections and exceptions during the past week (communication, how to ignore negative behaviour, how to keep calm, consequences, handing over responsibility to the children)

Repetition from Session 4

What does your child expect of you?

What areas would you like your child to take more responsibility for?

Discuss the homework on "Pocket money"

How do you handle pocket money?

How does it work?

Coffee break

Hand out the materials "What do you do for your child?"

Discuss:

What can you do to get your child to take responsibility?

What will the consequences be if your child does not take responsibility?

Your own upbringing: What was your upbringing like?

What responsibilities did you have to take?

What were the consequences for you?

Handout "Parenting Styles", and read through this at home.

Fill in the evaluation form from the University of Brighton.

Homework: Decide on something that you want your child to be responsible for, and hand this over to your child.

Group session 5

Parenting styles

Authoritarian Parenting

In this style of parenting, children are expected to follow the strict rules established by the parents. Failure to follow such rules usually results in punishment. Authoritarian parents fail to explain the reasoning behind these rules. If asked to explain, the parent might simply reply, "Because I said so." These parents have high demands, but are not responsive to their children. According to Baumrind, these parents "are obedience- and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation" (1991).

Authoritative Parenting

Like authoritarian parents, those with an authoritative parenting style establish rules and guidelines that their children are expected to follow. However, this parenting style is much more democratic. Authoritative parents are responsive to their children and willing to listen to questions. When children fail to meet the expectations, these parents are more nurturing and forgiving rather than punishing. Baumrind suggests that these parents "monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative" (1991).

Permissive Parenting

Permissive parents, sometimes referred to as indulgent parents, have very few demands to make of their children. These parents rarely discipline their children because they have relatively low expectations of maturity and self-control. According to Baumrind, permissive parents "are more responsive than they are demanding. They are non-traditional and lenient, do not require mature behaviour, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation" (1991). Permissive parents are generally nurturing and communicative with their children, often taking on the status of a friend more than that of a parent.

Uninvolved Parenting

An uninvolved parenting style is characterized by few demands, low responsiveness and little communication. While these parents fulfil the child's basic needs, they are generally detached from their child's life. In extreme cases, these parents may even reject or neglect the needs of their children.

Adapted from 'Assessment of Parenting Styles Checklist' (Hackett, 2003)

Group session 5

Authoritative parenting:

Look for examples where the parent:

- Praises the child for good behaviour
- Reasons with the child after misbehaviour
- Explains consequences of child's behaviour
- Shows patience with child
- Apologises if he or she is wrong
- Channels child's negative behaviours into acceptable alternatives

Authoritarian parenting:

Look for examples where the parent:

- Uses physical punishment
- Screams at child
- Uses punishment more than reason
- Tells off child as an attempt to improve child's behaviour
- Responds with intense anger when child misbehaves
- Puts child alone without explanation

Permissive parenting:

Look for examples where the parent:

- Gives in to child's tantrums
- Ignores child's misbehaviour
- Allows child's misbehaviour
- Finds it difficult to discipline child
- Bribes child to comply

Neglective parenting:

Look for examples where the parent:

- Is frequently unavailable, either physically or emotionally
- Does not respond to expressions of child's needs
- Appears unconcerned at child's problematic behaviour or at dangers to child
- Does not give child structure or appropriate levels of responsibility

Group session 5

List everything you do or provide for your child:

material (e.g. buying things for household, buying things for them, providing home, electricity, phone etc.), services (what work you do for them daily, weekly, occasionally) **social, recreational, emotional** etc. Especially list all *privileges*.

I provide

Food	Mobile phones
Shelter	Money
Bedding	Electricity
Clothing	Water
Transportation	Gas
Televisions	Heating
Love	Air-conditioning
Respect	Creative outlets
Time	Toiletries
Computers	Microscopes
Xbox	Roller blades
Nintendo	CDs
Books	CD players
Games	Radios
Trampoline	MP3 players
DVDs	Videos
Bikes	Video/DVD players
School equipment	School excursions
Haircuts	Make up
Doctors	Accessories
Dentists	Finance for all their interests
	Gardens

Services provided

Cook
Cleaner
Seamstress
Chauffeur
Confessional priest
Washer woman
Hairdresser
Fashion expert
Personal assistant
Tutor
Nurse
Nutritionist
Time Keeper
Mr Fix-it
Entertainment co-ordinator
Hostess/Social secretary
Teacher

Group session 5

‘Allowing’ parenting style

The parent in this style feels that teenagers only learn from their own experiences and that the parenting role is limited to giving information if asked for it. In other words, the parent leaves them to get on with it. They accept that other people, inside and outside the family, may provide role models for their teenager.

Positive aspects of this style

- The teenager increases their capacity to take responsibility
- The teenager can try out ideas of dress, hairstyle, decoration of own bedroom etc.
- The teenager is exposed to a wider range of influences and role models
- Opportunities for confrontation are reduced

Negative aspects of this style

- Key external influences on the teenager may be negative
- Parental anxiety is heightened when, for example, teenager acquires a motorbike
- Parent may be held responsible for teenager's choices
- Parent abdicates even though the teenager may want some aspects of control

Group session 5

Submissive behaviour

When you use this behaviour what you do is:

- Hope your teenager will somehow give you what you want
- Back-off, sigh, drop hints, express wishes, withdraw
- Develop a sense of being martyred or hard done by
- Allow your teenager to win, whilst you lose
- Destroy your own self confidence
- What you say is:
 - “I’m sorry...”
 - “Oh, well! I suppose so...”
 - “I don’t want to talk about it...”
- What you won’t do is:
 - Say what you really want to. What your ‘bottom-line’ is
 - Withstand bullying or aggressive behaviour from others
 - Say, and mean, what the consequences of crossing the boundary are for the teenager

Group session 5

Involving parenting style

The parent in this style is open and honest with their teenager, appreciating that they need to have their own experiences and to learn from them. While this parent retains their own values they are flexible and willing to try different approaches to parenting. Their authority comes from mutual respect. They also know that at times they can learn from their teenager.

Positive aspects of this style

- Teenager experiences having their views listened to on terms of equality with parent
- Parent learns new things e.g. computers, food, music

Negative aspects of this style

- It takes longer to make a family decision, the process may proceed but only in small steps
- Parent can only exercise power by agreement.
- Outsiders may see parent as weak.
- Family members may exploit the parent's style.

Group session 5

Assertive behaviour

When you use this behaviour what you do is:

- Ask openly and directly for what you want from the situation
- Show that you are clear about your rights in the matter
- Look for ways in which both you and your teenager can win
- Demonstrate belief in yourself and in your capability to find a settlement that both you and your teenager can live with

What you say is:

- “What if we...”
- “Let’s talk this over...”
- “What do you feel about...”
- “I think it’d be a good idea to...”
- “Let’s try to...”

What you won’t do is:

- Trample on your teenager’s rights
- Exploit his or her weaknesses for your own advantage
- Expect your teenager to guess what you want from the exchange
- Reveal your anxiety to your teenager or freeze like a rabbit in the car headlights

Group session 5

Ruling parenting style

The parent in this style knows that they are right and that their way of doing things is best.

Teenagers have to learn from their parent(s) experience. The way for them to equip themselves for the world is to listen to their parent(s) and do what they do. The role of a parent is to provide the right advice and supervision, bringing the teenager back to the right way whenever he or she departs from it.

Positive aspects of this Style

- In an emergency the teenager is given clear and firm instruction
- Legal and conventional position of parents within society is reinforced
- Parents' position is consistently clear
- Boundaries are well defined
- Teenager can blame parent when dealing with peers e.g. why he or she can't stay out late.

Negative aspects of this style

- Teenager cannot develop initiative. May become dependent on parent
- May generate rebellion and resentment
- Teenager can only make parent's mistakes, so little opportunity to learn
- Parent's views, attitudes, experience may not be good for teenager

Group session 5

Aggressive behaviour

When you use this behaviour, what you do is:

- Insist on having things your own way. You want to win, to overcome
- Threaten, bully, become sarcastic
- Provoke a sense of threat and therefore a coping reaction from your teenager

What you say is:

- “You must...”
- “I’m not having you...”
- “You’ll do as I say...”
- “You’d better....”

What you won’t do is:

- Show any respect for the rights and dignity of your teenager
- Show flexibility, or look for ways you can both gain. Remember the mules!



Group Session 6

- Dealing with anger

Group session 6

Managing your anger and conflicts

Aims:

- To enable the parents to identify high-risk situations, prevent conflicts and avoid acting in the heat of the moment.
- To consider our own anger in a positive way. How do you manage your own anger? How does your teenager make you angry?
- To enable the parents to present their children with carefully considered consequences and use I-statements.

Welcome!

How has your week been? Reflections and exceptions:

Repetition:

What do you do for your child? (expectations, responsibility)

Pocket money

Discuss the previous week's homework: An area of responsibility to hand over to your child and parenting styles.

Coffee break

Handout materials: "*The Ten Principles of Anger Control*" – read through and discuss:

Questions for discussion:

- 1) What are the situations in which your child gets angry?
- 2) How can you prevent conflicts/high-risk situations?
- 3) How can you as a parent handle a conflict when it does arise?

Handout "A Tale of Two Wolves"

Homework: Think of something you would like to do together with your child.

Group session 6

The principles of anger control

- Aggression is a learnt behaviour which can be changed. Motivation and commitment to change are essential to successful anger control. Although we are born with the potential to be aggressive, as we develop and mature we learn different ways of behaving, which are influenced by those around us. For some of us this might mean we learn to be aggressive. However, because we learn how to behave, our behaviour can be changed and we can learn to use alternative, non-aggressive behaviours.
- The beliefs that we develop influence the way we understand people and situations. Knowing how our beliefs affect us and our behaviour adversely can help us challenge our views. Holding irrational beliefs can lead to irrational behaviour. For example, believing that life should always be fair inevitably leads to disappointment and frustration, and can ultimately result in us taking our frustrations out on others. Understanding that life is not always fair can give us a more philosophical view of life.
- Awareness and understanding of what we think affects the way we behave. Positive and negative feelings are common to us all. Some of us may experience negative feelings such as jealousy or hatred more intensely than others, and this can become overwhelming. The degree to which we experience these emotions affects our perceptions of situations and hence the way that we react. Learning to recognise the self-defeating nature of these powerful emotions and other ways of reducing their impact can help us control our behaviour.
- Anger has a physiological component. Increased awareness of this physical response can be used as an early warning sign to help you calm down by using coping strategies to reduce the response. Symptoms such as increased heart rate and tense muscles can be alleviated through techniques such as relaxation.
- Aggression almost always results in negative consequences for ourselves and others. Knowing the negative short and long term consequences of aggression reinforces the understanding that it is always better to control anger. Controlling your aggressive impulses results in better relationships, increased self-esteem and more positive consequences in general.
- Identification of all the specific factors which are likely to make you aggressive helps you to anticipate and cope with them as they arise. Underlying factors such as negative life experiences can colour the way that you view the world and make you particularly sensitive.
- Loss of control is usually a result of a build up of small irritants that have not been dealt with. Situational pressures (such as financial worries), internal pressures (such as high expectations of yourself) and interpersonal difficulties (such as relationship problems) can work together to create an aggressive reaction that is out of proportion to the actual situation. Sometimes the final trigger or 'last straw' can be a relatively minor incident.
- An imbalance of chores and pleasures in your general lifestyle increases the likelihood of your behaving aggressively. Too much work, few rewarding activities, self-neglect and continuing relationship difficulties are common factors associated with an unbalanced lifestyle and can lead to a tendency to react negatively to situations. Creating a healthy, balanced lifestyle and looking after yourself and your needs will make life more pleasurable and rewarding.
- Anger can be a positive and empowering emotion if used constructively. Anger is a normal emotional response which everyone experiences from time to time. The goal of effective anger control is not to eliminate anger altogether, but to learn to channel it into behaviour that is productive not destructive. The use of more positive behaviours such as problem solving and assertiveness can improve your life.

Group session 6

A Tale of two wolves

An old Native American Indian was talking to his Grandson. The boy asked to be told about a battle. The old man said that the greatest battle is one that takes place inside people's heads.

"It is a battle between two wolves.

One wolf is evil. It is Anger, Arrogance, Lies and Sadness.

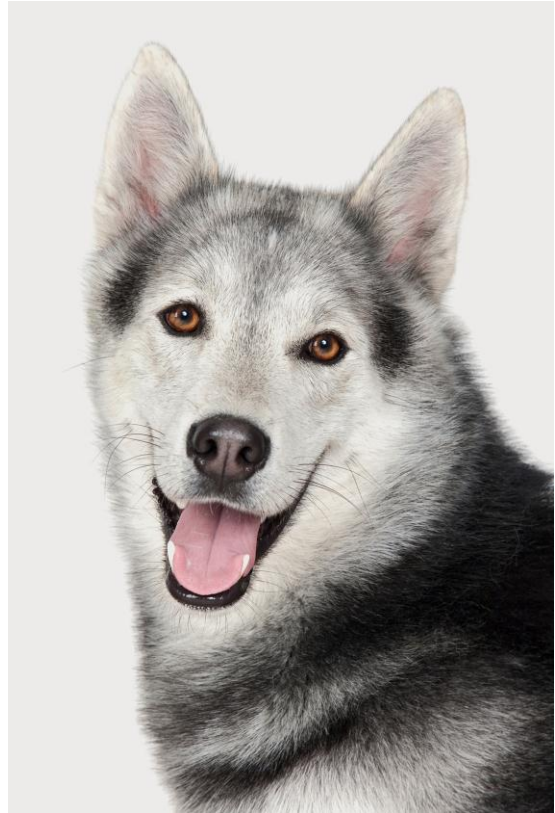
The other wolf is good. It is Peace, Humility, Truth and Happiness.

Both wolves can be strong and powerful."

The boy thought then asked

"Who wins the battle, Grandfather?"

The old Indian replied simply, "The one that you feed".





Group Session 7

- Being clear and assertive

Group session 7

Being clear and assertive

Aims:

- To define the parents' perception of what it means to be assertive, and to have the parents practise how to act in an assertive way. For those participants who are usually passive, this is a chance to try making assertive statements while also getting an opportunity to express their own needs.

Welcome!

How has your week been? Reflections and exceptions

Homework from the previous week: Have you worked out what you would like to do together with your child, and have you done it?

Reflections on Group Session 6 (repeat the three topics for discussion: what are the situations in which your child gets angry, how to prevent conflicts/high-risk situations, how can you as a parent handle a conflict when it does arise?)

Handout materials: assertiveness test. Individual task.

Discussion about assertion/self-confidence.

Read materials for the whole group:

- The Passive approach
- The Aggressive approach
- The Assertive approach

Coffee break

Divide the group into two

Handout materials: "Guidelines for assertive behaviour", "Being assertive", and "Assertive behaviour"

Ask the groups to read through these materials.

Group 1 works on this situation: "The child has a room full of dirty dishes ... again"

Group 2 works on this situation: "The child often calls me a bloody idiot"

Group tasks: You must talk to your child about this in an assertive manner.

- When do you do this?
- Where do you do this?
- What are your thoughts?

Group session 7

Assertiveness test

The following is a rough test of your assertiveness or passivity. Consider the statements and circle the number that describes you best. There are no right or wrong answers.

Add up the numbers to get a rough score for your passivity. The higher your total the more passive you are and the lower the total the more assertive you are.

1	I hesitate to speak up in case others think me aggressive or stupid	0	1	2	3
2	I sound like I'm asking a question when I'm making a statement	0	1	2	3
3	I look down or fold my arms when speaking	0	1	2	3
4	I downplay compliments when I receive them	0	1	2	3
5	I feel uncomfortable taking credit for my accomplishments	0	1	2	3
6	People find it easy to take advantage of me	0	1	2	3
7	I tend to bite my tongue to keep the peace	0	1	2	3
8	I often say yes when I want to say no	0	1	2	3
9	I feel guilty when I say no	0	1	2	3
10	I avoid expressing my opinions	0	1	2	3
11	I make promises which I later regret	0	1	2	3
12	I easily allow myself to be persuaded to do things	0	1	2	3
13	I accept what I'm offered even when it's not what I wanted or expected	0	1	2	3
14	I remain silent when treated unfairly	0	1	2	3
15	I allow myself to be inconvenienced in order to avoid conflicts	0	1	2	3
16	I beat around the bush rather than express my feelings directly	0	1	2	3
17	I ask friends or family to speak for me	0	1	2	3
18	I tend to kick myself for what I should have said	0	1	2	3
19	I suffer in silence when unfairly criticised or insulted	0	1	2	3
20	I find it hard to sound confident even when I know I'm right	0	1	2	3

Under 10: Highly assertive

10 to 20 : about average

20 to 30: slightly below average in assertiveness

30 to 40: low in assertiveness and high in passivity

40-60: Highly passive

Group session 7

Assertiveness

To understand what being Assertive means it is first necessary to understand the two common alternatives, being passive and being aggressive.

The passive approach

Being passive means taking the soft approach, avoiding conflict as far as is possible and giving in when conflict cannot be avoided. The passive individual places themselves below the other person. The passive individual does not respect their own rights.

There may be the recognition of very unequal power with the passive person acting like a servant or as a child, or there may be the pretence of friendship and equality despite the other person acting aggressively or dominating.

Being passive often means having little real control over the outcome of events.

Passive individuals often have low self-esteem. There may be a vicious circle in operation here. Because they don't have the confidence to stand up to aggressors they back down, which reinforces their low opinion of themselves. Running from fears can become a way of life. Some people have learned to be passive to avoid being abused, either by parents, a partner (or both).

Sometimes being passive can be the sensible course of action, either because the issue is trivial or when there is real danger. If your partner expresses a view which you disagree with you may choose to ignore it because it is of no real importance: asserting your right to disagree is not worth the trouble. If the boss makes an outrageous remark you may choose to let it pass because he has real power over you.

In our society many women have been taught and encouraged to be passive. For some, becoming more aggressive can be positive, hopefully as a stepping stone towards being more assertive. Many of the books on assertiveness appear to be aimed more at women (who read more self-help books) and they often strongly discourage passivity. For many men this may be the wrong emphasis and an increase in passivity can be positive. For some men being passive may be progress, moving away from excessive aggression and competitiveness towards the ultimate goal of being assertive. If someone has been habitually aggressive towards those close to them assertiveness may initially be misunderstood.

Typical characteristics of people being passive:

Voice: timid, apologetic, quiet, unsure

Expression: eyes down or averted, sad, servile

Stance: stooped, defensive, fearful, trying to hid or ready to run

Words: "sorry!", "don't mind me", "that's ok"

Feelings: anxious, fearful, hurt, hidden anger, inferior

Group session 7

The aggressive approach

When acting aggressively the goal is victory over the other person, not necessarily the best solution to the problem. The assumption is that you are enemies with no common ground. The aggressive individual attempts to put themselves **above** the other person by intimidation, by various means of physical control or violence, by economic control, by intellectually overpowering them.

The aggressive individual generally fails to respect others rights.

Aggressive individuals will usually adopt an unwavering position. They attach the person, not the problem. Feeling powerful may be the aggressive individuals ultimate goal and to exercise this they may even make demands that are trivial or not even in their own best interest.

Like passive individuals, habitually aggressive individuals may also have low self-esteem. Aggression may result from an inability to be assertive about ones needs and feelings – these are ‘bottled up’ rather than expressed, until explosion point is reached. A common pattern within many families is for someone to be passive for a period of time then switch to aggression. A mother may ignore her children’s annoying behaviour, such as yelling at each other and fighting, although this is causing her stress. After a time she reaches the end of her tether and yells furiously at them or smacks them. Not only is she modelling the behaviour she wants to stop but she may then feel guilty and inadequate, leading to another period of passivity.

Another common pattern is when a husband or wife lets resentments about their partner simmer away over a period of time. Their level of annoyance rises until they confront their partner angrily, perhaps because they are stressed by some unconnected event. The message which should have been: “Darling, I get irritated by your socks lying around on the floor for days on end” becomes “You’re a lazy drunken bastard with smelly feet who never thinks about anyone but himself”. Usually the genuine concerns get lost among the mud-slinging and yelling.

Typical characteristics of people being aggressive: -

Voice: angry, arrogant, accusing, demanding, loud

Expression: staring, angry, cold

Stance: intimidating, standing-over, standing too close, clenching fists

Words: “you”, insults, sarcasm, absolutes (always, never, totally)

Feelings: righteous, superior, irritable

Group session 7

The assertive approach

The assertive individual is not willing to be dominated nor does he try to dominate others. He puts himself on the same level as the other person. Finding the best outcome to the problem is the important thing, not mere "winning". Assertiveness requires being aware of emotions, yours and theirs, taking them into account, but not letting them dominate. You need to be willing to express your feelings where these are relevant.

To be assertive you need to be aware of your own rights and also respect the rights of others. Assertive individuals should be comfortable giving and receiving compliments. They should be able to handle criticism. Communication aims at being direct and honest.

Assertive individuals generally have reasonable self-esteem. A positive cycle often occurs where confidence is boosted by the assertive individual feeling in control of himself and from being open to positive messages from others. Since he treats others well they are more likely to (there is no guarantee of this, of course) treat him better.

He tends to be less stressed than either passive or aggressive individuals.

Typical characteristics of people being assertive: -

Voice: even, clear, confident

Expression: maintains eye contact without staring

Stance: upright, open, non-threatening

Words: "I", clear statements, avoids absolute terms

Feelings: confident, self-respecting, self-controlled

"Between people, as among nations, respect of each other's rights insures the peace." Benito Juarez

Group session 7

Assertive behaviour

Definition

This involves standing up for your personal rights and expressing your thoughts, feelings and beliefs directly, honestly and openly in ways that are respectful of the rights of others. An assertive person acts without undue anxiety or guilt. Assertive people respect themselves and other people and take responsibility for their actions and choices. They recognise their needs and ask openly and directly for what they want. If refused, they may feel saddened, disappointed or inconvenienced, but their self-concept isn't shattered. They are not over-reliant on the approval of others, and feel secure and confident within themselves. Assertive people give the lead to other people as to how they wish to be treated.

Message communicated

This is what I think. This is how I feel. This is how I see the situation. How about you? If our needs conflict, I am certainly ready to explore our differences and I may be prepared to compromise.

Subconscious thoughts

I won't allow you to take advantage of me and I won't attack you for being who you are.

Goal

To communicate clearly, adult to adult.

Verbal and nonverbal characteristics

- Receptive listening
- Firm, relaxed voice
- Direct eye contact
- Erect, balanced, open body stance
- Voice appropriately loud for the situation
- "I" statements ("I Like", "I Want", "I don't like")
- Co-operative phrases ("What are your thoughts on this?")
- Emphatic statements of interest ("I would like to")

Payoffs

The more you stand up for yourself and act in a manner you respect, the higher your self-esteem. Your chances of getting what you want out of life improve greatly when you let others know what you want and stand up for your own rights and needs. Expressing yourself directly at the time of negative feelings means that resentment is not allowed to build up. Being less preoccupied with self-consciousness and anxiety and less driven by the needs of self-protection and control, you can see, hear and love others more easily.

Price

Friends may have benefited from your non-assertion and may sabotage your newly developed assertion. You are reshaping your beliefs and re-examining values that have been closely held since childhood. This can be frightening. There are no 'tablets of stone' to guarantee an elegant outcome of your efforts. There is often pain involved in being assertive.

Group session 7

Being assertive

Guidelines for assertive delivery

- Acknowledge and be honest about your own feelings to yourself
- Adopt new positive self-talk for situations where you need to be more assertive
- Be clear, specific and direct in what you say
- If necessary, keep repeating your message if you encounter objections
- If necessary ask for clarification if you are uncertain about something
- If necessary, acknowledge diversion tactics, then again repeat your message
- Adopt appropriate body language to back up your assertion
- Keep calm and stick to the point
- Always respect the rights of others

Always ask yourself these questions:

- How can I express myself more clearly?
- How can I be more specific about what I have to say?
- Am I likely to have to repeat my message? Will I feel comfortable doing this?
- Am I prepared to respond to their 'red herrings' and at the same time stick to my message?
- What body language will I use to back up my message?

Group session 7

Guidelines for assertive behaviour

1. Ask yourself 'how important is this issue for me?'

Being assertive takes energy and time. Is it worth it? Try scaling incidents on a 10 point scale: 8-10 means that it is very important to you. 1-4 of little importance, 5-7 of some importance. For example, when eating out, ask yourself whatever being served cold is really worth 8 points to you if it may spoil the evening. Be aware of the consequences – don't feel you have to be assertive all the time.

2. Be aware of timing

Acting assertively immediately may not always be the best policy. If you are angry, jealous etc., or if the other person is busy, upset or pre-occupied it is often not a good idea to try to respond assertively at the height of those feelings. Pick your time and place if you can.

3. Be clear on the issue

Know what you want, or do not want, before being assertive with someone.

4. Avoid nervous gestures

Engage in direct eye contact. Don't jump from foot to foot. Stay calm with an even expression.

5. Don't expect the other person to do exactly what you want

If you do you could be approaching aggressiveness. The person may not respond immediately, or may not respond at all. Be aware of others feelings and interests. Be ready to negotiate, compromise and look for win-win situations.

6. Be specific

State clearly what you want or do not want.

7. Be consistent

Is what you are saying consistent with how you are saying it? Non-verbal behaviour has a great deal of impact – consider tone of voice, posture and stance, gestures, eye contact and facial expression.

Group session 7

Saying no

Some people find it exceedingly difficult to say 'No'. Others can only say 'No' indirectly, softening the blow with excuses and apologies. The inability to say 'No' means that you lack some control over your life and that you have to cope with consequent increase in stress. Saying 'No' directly and openly gives greater control and boosts self-esteem.

Common myths

- Saying 'No' is callous, uncaring, mean and selfish
- Saying 'No' directly is rude and aggressive, too abrupt and blunt
- Saying 'No' will hurt and upset others, making them feel rejected
- Saying 'No' over little things shows small-mindedness or pettiness

Seven points to remember

1. When you say 'No' you are refusing a request, not rejecting a person. Saying 'No' does not have to mean a rejection. Much depends on the way you refuse.
2. When making a refusal, try accepting full responsibility for doing so. Don't blame or pass the buck. Change, "I can't" to "I don't want to".
3. Saying 'No' without excessive apology or excuse does not mean saying 'No' without an explanation. But ask yourself whether you are explaining because of your own anxiety rather than for the sake of the other person.

4. You are probably over estimating the difficulty the other person will have in accepting your refusal. Very often by expressing your feelings openly and honestly you allow other people to express themselves.
5. If you wanted to say 'No' but end up saying 'Yes', it can show. Our bodies often express themselves despite us (in the form of headaches etc.) as a consequence of the stress which comes from being over compliant.
6. Acknowledge your feelings. A simple statement like 'I feel guilty' or 'I find this difficult', allows you to express your feelings honestly.
7. If you are having difficulty in saying 'No', use the 'broken record' technique. This involves repetition of your assertive refusal each time the other person tries to persuade or evade you.

Group session 7

The tyranny of the shoulds

Here is a list of some of the most common pathological shoulds:

- I should be as generous and unselfish as possible
- I should be the perfect lover, friend, parent, teacher, student, spouse and so on.
- I should be able to endure any hardship with equanimity
- I should be able to find a quick solution to every problem.
- I should never feel hurt, I should always feel happy.
- I should be completely competent.
- I should know, understand and foresee everything.
- I should never feel certain emotions such as anger and jealousy.
- I should love my children equally.
- I should never make mistakes.
- My emotions should be constant – once I feel love, I should always feel love.
- I should be totally self-reliant.
- I should never be tired or get sick.
- I should never be afraid.
- I should have achievements that bring me status, wealth or power.
- I should always be busy; to relax is to waste my time and my life.
- I should put others first; it is better I feel pain than cause anyone else to feel pain.
- I should be unfailingly kind.
- I should never feel sexually attracted to...
- I should make enough money so my family can afford.....
- I should be able to protect my children from all pain.
- I should not take time just for my own pleasure.

These are shoulds that we may have personally developed in our lives, not what we **SHOULD** be feeling.



Group Session 8

- Self-esteem

Group session 8

Self-esteem

Aims:

- Conversation about the self-esteem of parents and children.
- The fact that parents must recognise those factors which have a negative effect on their own and their children's self-esteem, and those which help to improve their self-esteem.

Welcome!

Homework from the previous week: "Being clear and assertive".

Which changes have you noticed in the interactions with your children? – write your answers on the flip chart.

Homework task: Discuss "The Tyranny of the Shoulds".

Handout materials: *Maslows' hierarchy of needs* and discuss.

Handout materials: What is self-esteem? What is self-confidence? *Discuss*.

What factors affect your self-esteem? Handout materials: *The Self-Esteem Tap*.

Your children's self-esteem – how good/bad is it?

Coffee break

Handout materials: How can you improve your child's self-esteem?

Questions for discussion:

What kind of support does your child need in order to increase their self-esteem and self-confidence?

Which positive qualities does your child have, which you are able to acknowledge? (Positive acknowledgement of qualities helps to increase self-confidence)

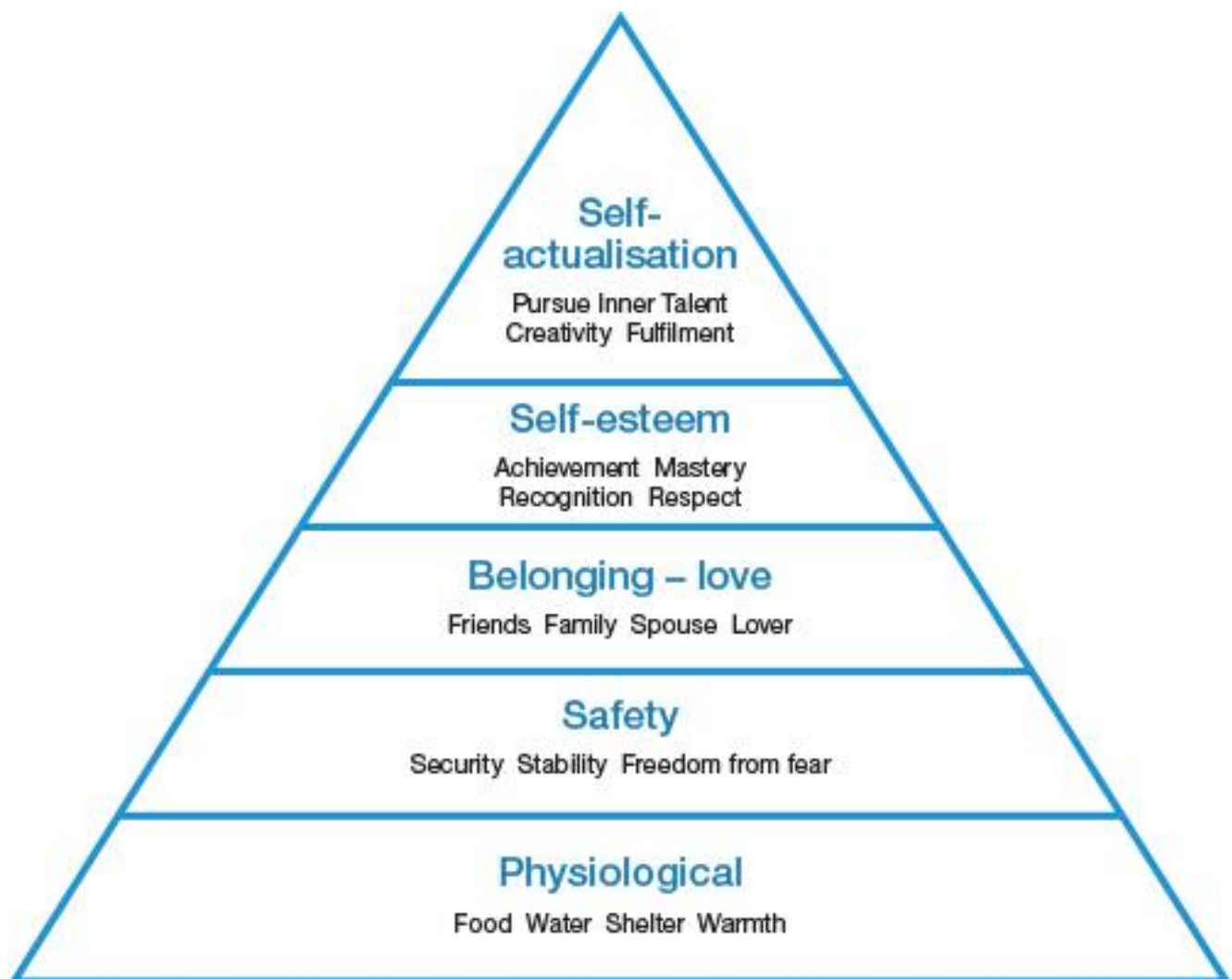
Homework: Pay attention to and acknowledge the positive qualities of your child

Group session 8

Maslow posited that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy.

The original hierarchy of needs five stage model includes:

1. Biological and Physiological needs – air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep
2. Safety needs – protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability
3. Belongingness and Love needs – work group, family, affection, relationships
4. Esteem needs – self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, managerial responsibility
5. Self-Actualisation needs – realising personal potential, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences



Maslow (1954)

Group session 8

What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is our self-image, or how we feel about ourselves. It is made up of thoughts and feelings we have about ourselves. These may be positive or negative. The more positive feelings we have about ourselves, the higher our self-esteem. The more negative feelings we have about ourselves, the lower our self-esteem.

Good self-esteem can be gained from:

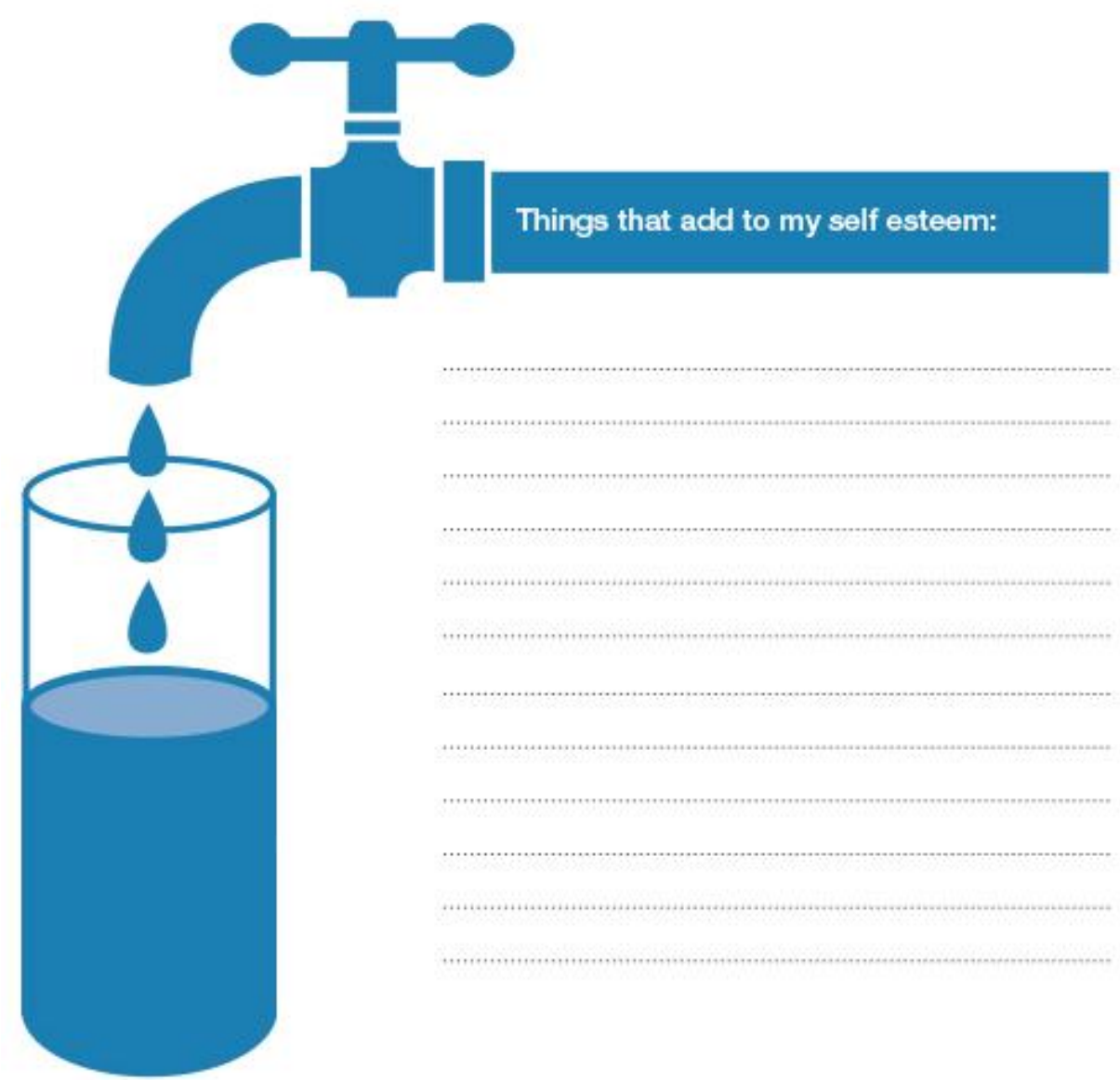
- Feeling confident
- Feeling good about ourselves
- Being positive
- Enjoying our children
- An enjoyable job
- Our surroundings
- Other people
- Our appearance
- Receiving compliments
- Taking charge
- Friends Partners
- Being with positive people

Low self-esteem can make us feel:

- Down about ourselves and our lives
- No confidence
- Negative
- Passive
- Lonely
- Critical of ourselves
- Feel rejected
- Misunderstand people
- Unable to follow our dreams

Group session 8

Self-esteem tap



Group session 8

Giving, strokes to teenagers

Building your teenagers confidence is perhaps the most important thing you can do for him/her. So much good flows out of a truly self-confident young person - an ability to make and keep friends, to form relationships, to resist temptations, to perform well in school, in sport, to enjoy activities such as dancing, drama, debating.

Their self-confidence comes from:

- A sense of knowing that they are valuable, that they attract the unconditional love of their family and the respect and friendship of others.
- A sense of knowing they can achieve, cope with adversity, take on responsibilities.
- A sense of knowing that they understand and can express their feelings, ideas and views in ways that others hear and accept as valid, even though they don't always approve of or agree with them.

You can help to foster this self-confidence by:

- Letting them know how much you love them, not only when they do things that please you.
- Always reinforcing their positive behaviour; making a point of noticing it, not just reacting when they do something wrong, making your praise specific and telling them what they've done that deserves your positive strokes.
- Treating them with courtesy and respect, as you would want them to do to you.
- Asking them to do things you know they can do; not asking for the impossible. And always thanking them when they've done it.
- Putting deposits in their stroke bank and letting them know you have. Helping them learn from their mistakes as well.
- Always giving them credit for trying - even if they haven't actually succeeded.
- Looking out for their special talents, strengths and interests and encouraging them to recognise and develop them.

Group session 8

How to build your teenager's self esteem

Every human being has four needs that must be satisfied in order to create his or her self esteem:

- **A need for affection** - to be loved and feel he or she is lovable
- **A need for achievement** - to feel capable of doing things, of overcoming difficulties
- **A need for security** - to have a predictable future and a firm base from which to live
- **A need for status** - to feel heard and accepted within the community where he or she lives

You do:

- Show them by lots of words and gestures that you love them
- Praise them when they achieve something
- Are there for them when they need your support and help
- Listen to what they have to say; treat them, their feelings, ideas and views with courtesy, even if you don't agree with them, or can't allow them

You don't:

- Ever suggest they are unloved, unwanted, entitled to less love than any other of your children or family
- Write-off or discount their achievements as 'not good enough'
- Make them feel they're completely on their own in the business of growing-up
- Put down what they say

Group session 8

Examples of negative strokes are:

- **Rudeness:** 'Not you again!' 'Clear off!' 'Out of my way!'
- **Declarations:** 'I hate you'. 'We're ashamed of you'.
- **Criticism:** 'That's not very good.' 'What a mess you've made of it.'
- **Disapproval** 'I wish you wouldn't do that' 'No thanks to you '
- **Put downs** 'You wouldn't have a clue.' 'What have you done to your hair?'
- **Blame:** 'It's all your fault' 'If you hadn't done that '
- **Sarcasm:** 'I suppose you think that's great.' 'If you're playing for them they must be hard up'

Negative strokes leave one feeling bad, unwanted, de-skilled.

According to Berne, while we prefer to get positive strokes, if we can't get any we'd rather have negative strokes than no strokes at all. When no one bothers to notice us even in a way that's unpleasant to us, we feel insignificant which makes us feel non-human. This explains why people who are deprived of positive strokes will go out of their way to get negative ones by displaying behaviour that provokes disapproval, criticism, even outrage.

While almost every one of us cannot live without strokes of one kind or another, some people need more stroking than others. People who are insecure have to have a lot of recognition and attention. They soak up positive strokes -they simply can't get enough of them. In some cases they may compensate for their insecurity by attracting negative strokes through ostentatiously deviant or anti-social behaviour. Better to be notorious than not known at all.

We tend to store up the memory of the positive strokes we have had. You could call this our 'stroke bank'. We draw on our account when we want to reassure ourselves that we are worthwhile and significant. People who are insecure seem to forget very rapidly that they have a credit in their stroke account so they need constantly to be adding to the account. Unfortunately this may result in stroke-givers using hollow flattery, or becoming tired of giving positive strokes that are unearned. In either case, the outcome is increased insecurity for the stroke seeker.

We can, and should, give ourselves positive strokes. An example would be a little treat we allow ourselves when we've finished our shopping or have completed a tiresome task. We can also give ourselves strokes by acknowledging our achievements - things we've done against some odds, for example, managing our finances efficiently, saving for something our family or we wanted. It's very important for our psychological well being that we learn to value ourselves.

Setting clear boundaries to behaviour, but allowing them freedom within them. Encouraging them to make choices and supporting their decisions. Guiding them towards taking increasing responsibility for their own actions. When you have to criticise or disapprove, doing it constructively, not nagging or using it as an opportunity for a put down

Some examples:

Positive strokes:

- 'I love you'. 'We care what happens to you'. 'I really admire you for that'. Making a phone call to them
- Sending them cards, going to things they're involved with - school, sport.
- Listening to their music
- Making their friends welcome in the home
- Rewarding them for things they've done or have to do, taking them a hot drink, giving them their favourite meal
- Paying them genuine compliments - 'I liked hearing about...' 'That colour really looks good on you'.

Negative strokes

- 'I don't like it when you...
- I was/am hurt by what you did'.



Group Session 9

- Taking care of yourself as a parent
- Conclusion

Group session 9

Taking care of yourself as a parent and Conclusion

Aims:

- To realise the meaning and importance of taking care of yourself in order to feel good and to function properly as a parent.
- Talk about the changes and progress you have experienced during the course.

Welcome!

Talk and discussion about the importance of taking care of yourself. Why is it important?

What do we communicate to our children when we take care of ourselves?

Handout materials: *How can we take care of ourselves?*

Divide the group into two. The participants start by filling out the form on their own, and then share their answers with the rest of the group.

Coffee break

Handout materials: *The Cycle of Change*

Write down one change that you have already made during the parenting course, or that you're planning to make. Write this on a post-it note and put it in an envelope.

The group leaders will then put the post-it notes on a noticeboard for everyone to read.

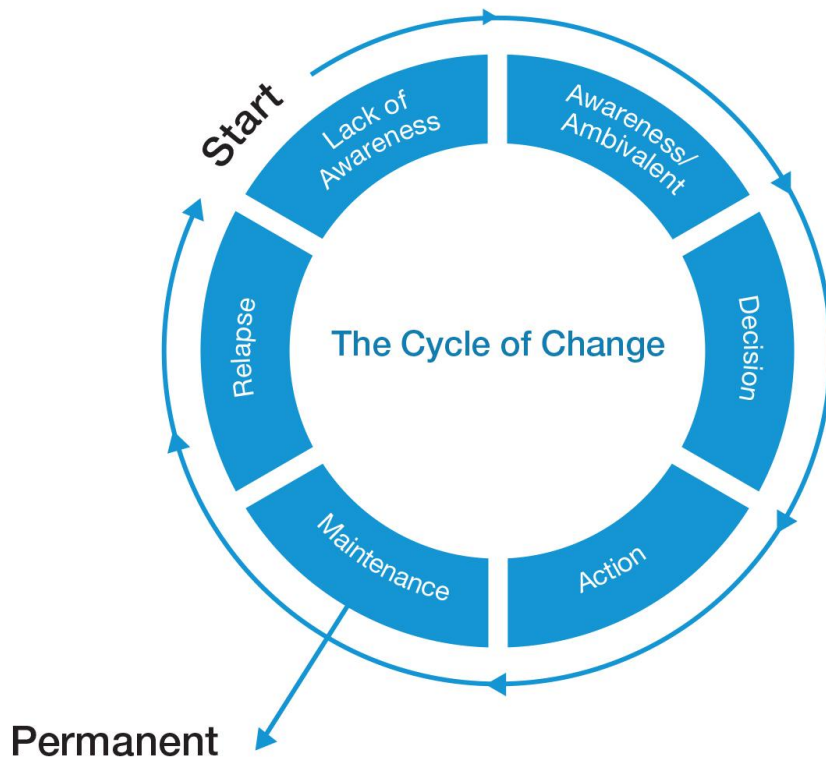
Handout materials: *Who will give you positive/negative support?*

Evaluation from University of Brighton and personal evaluation.

Diplomas and conclusion

Group session 9

The Cycle of Change



The six stages of change

1. **Lack of awareness:** Where you cannot see that the family have a problem. You may have been told by friends and family that you should seek some support or advice, but remain in denial.
2. **Awareness/Ambivalent:** Where you recognise that there is a problem or things need to change and you look at the positive and negative of making changes.
3. **Decision:** You decide that making changes would benefit you and your family.
4. **Action:** Putting your decision into Action. You may start with the help of a worker to look at small steps that need to be put in place to change the situation. This may involve negotiation with other members of the family, school and friends, both yours and your teenager's.
5. **Maintenance:** Where, with help from workers, friends or family you identify coping strategies to maintain the changes and not slip back into old patterns of behaviour. This may involve working or talking to other agencies who can support you and maintain and expand on your problem solving skills.
6. **Relapse:** This is when you return to old patterns of behaviour. There will be times when you are not as consistent as others, we all have our off days, but you can learn from those times/days to reinforce the positives of the decision and action you have taken

Group session 9

"Who will give you positive/negative support"

Who will give you positive support	Who will give you negative support