

PARENTS: ADVERSARY OR ALLY--

A COOPERATIVE APPROACH

INDEPENDENT STUDY

A THREE CREDIT CLASS

#SS401q/SS501q

INSTRUCTOR:

DR. MICHAEL SEDLER

Email: mike@communicationplus.net

(509) 443-1605

THE HERITAGE INSTITUTE

Please use the checklist/syllabus in the manual.

PLEASE SEND ASSIGNMENTS ELECTRONICALLY (AS AN ATTACHMENT). It is best to send in no more than 2 to 3 assignments at a time and I will send you back comments. Send them in numerical order (#1, #2, #3...). You may send work in Microsoft Word, in a Google Doc (but give permission for review), zip folder, a converted Pages file, etc.

Thank you for signing up for my independent study classes. You may take up to six months to complete this course, and may obtain an additional 3 month extension. DO NOT send in any completed papers unless you have registered for the class! If working in a group, put all names on each paper, except the integration paper which must be individually authored. See ** at bottom of page.

The checklist in the manual is to help you plan your schedule to successfully complete this course. The last page of the manual includes a General Bibliography with phone numbers of publishing companies. If you prefer, you may choose an alternate book not on the suggested list.

On the following page, I have given you a brief biography/resume of my background. You will see that I have a Master's Degree in Social Work; my K-8 Teaching Certification and am a Licensed Social Worker with the State of Washington. My current primary role is as a consultant and trainer for schools, businesses and agencies. I also worked in education for 15 years as a Director of Special Education, a Behavior Intervention Specialist, School Social Worker, and Teacher.

I teach classes and seminars throughout the United States and in Canada. I am adjunct professor through two Universities in Washington. I am available for on-site training, classes, and in-services for agencies and schools. I anticipate this class will be enjoyable and full of learning. Please contact me if you would like me to be involved directly with your school or business.

Thank you once again, for signing up for it and I look forward to working with you over the next weeks/months. If you would like individual feedback on assignments, please indicate this when turning in your work.

Sincerely,

Michael Sedler
(509) 443-1605
E-mail: mike@communicationplus.net
Website: www.michaelsedler.com
P.O. BOX 30310 - Spokane, WA. - 99223

** For those working in groups (400/500 level only!)- be sure to go to The Heritage Institute website at www.hol.edu and click on the "group collaboration" icon.

1. Each group member must pick a book to read (you may all choose the same book).
2. Each group member must read the entire manual.
3. Final evaluation/integration paper must be individually authored.

Please share about my classes with others; it is my main form of advertising.

MICHAEL SEDLER

(509) 443-1605 (w); (509) 939-6302 (c)

email: mike@communicationplus.net or michael@michaelsedler.com

website: www.michaelsedler.com

Education

B.A., Political Science

Master Degree, Social Work

Master Degree, Divinity

Doctorate Degree, Ministry

Teaching Certificate

Work Experience

Consultant/Trainer/Counselor

Director of Special Education

Developmental Disabilities Administration, State of WA

Supervisor, Educational Services

School Social Worker (K-12)

Behavior Intervention Specialist (K -12)

Classroom Teacher (elementary and middle school)

Assistant Pastor

Other Experiences

State Correctional Facility for Juveniles, Counselor and Supervisor

Community Mental Health Therapist

State Trainer in Autism (State of Washington)

Adjunct Professor for several Universities

Student Teacher Supervisor

Consultant for schools, business, churches throughout United States

Provide weekend marriage retreats

Interview and Speech Coach/Trainer for Miss Arizona, 3rd runner-up Miss America 2012

Author

When to Speak Up and When To Shut Up. (Jan., 2006 Revell Books, \$5.99). Book from faith-based perspective.

Communication book discussing conflict, power struggles, listening strategies, asking questions.

(Over 300,000 copies sold).

What To Do When Words Get Ugly. (October, 2016. Revell Books, \$5.99) (updated/edited version of "Stop The Runaway Conversation.") Two new chapters in addition to edits. Book from faith-based perspective.

Importance of not listening to negative discussions and how they impact a person's attitude.

Books are available through all bookstores, at www.bakerbooks.com, by calling 800 877 2665, or by checking with various online book companies. Revell Books is a division of Baker Publishing Group. Both books are available in CD format as audio books.

INDEPENDENT STUDY COLLEGE COURSES

THE HERITAGE INSTITUTE (credits through Antioch University, Seattle, WA)

MICHAEL SEDLER, INSTRUCTOR

Register for courses anytime. (6-month period for completion from the date you register). ***Collaborate with fellow educators-only one set of assignments turned into instructor.*** (Check out "Group Collaboration Guidelines" at www.hol.edu). **Clock hours available for partial course completion.

The following are **3 CREDIT CLASSES** (3 quarter credits = 2 semester credits)

1. Increasing Motivation and Self-Esteem in Students (SS401p/SS501p)

Strategies to help students feel confident and help educators find more successful approaches with them.

2. Parents: Adversary or Ally--A Cooperative Approach (SS401q/SS501q)

Specific ideas on connecting with parents and helping better communication between school and home.

3. Social Skills: A Foundation For Learning (SS401v/SS501v)

Activities and ideas to encourage students to improve their peer and social relations.

4. Understanding & Connecting With Aggressive Students (ED404d/ED504d)

Each person will increase their understanding of ways to de-escalate aggression and its' causes.

3 CREDIT COST: \$280-400/500 level; \$195-clock hours (3 quarter = 2 semester)

The following are **5 CREDIT CLASSES**: (5 quarter credits -3.3 semester credits)

1. Bullying Behaviors: Enough is Enough (ED437q/ED537q)

Identification and interventions to reduce bullying behaviors and victim mentality within schools and community.

2. Counseling Skills For Educators (ED409r/ED509r)

Helpful ideas on listening skills, asking questions, and communicating with students.

3. Gang Attitudes And Actions (SS406k/SS506k)

This class will help each person to identify gangs and intervention strategies for your community/school.

4. High Maintenance Behaviors & Interactions (SS409f/SS509f)

This course investigates the many aspects of high needs people, behaviors and effective interactions.

5. Mental Health Issues and Students (HE402n/HE502n)

Understand various disorders (oppositional defiant, obsessive compulsive, bi-polar) and interventions.

6. Nurturing Compassion Within Our Schools (ED434y/ED534y)

Ideas to help adults and children learn to be more sensitive, kind, and compassionate toward one another.

7. Organizational Teaching Skills (ED429w/ED529w)

Increase your own organizational and time management skills as well as helping students in these areas.

8. School Violence (SS406m/SS506m)

Each person will learn indicators and interventions for potential violent situations.

9. Stress Reduction in Staff and Students (HE401m/HE501m)

Strategies to reduce stress, become more effective in life, and teach these skills to students.

10. Student, Classroom and Whole-School Discipline (ED419g/ED519g)

Focus is on negative talk, gossip and rumors within schools. Behavioral strategies for each above area.

11. Youth Suicide (SS404u/SS504u)

Specific discussions on signs and interventions for suicide prevention.

5- CREDIT COST: \$415-400/500 LEVEL; \$315-clock hours (5 quarter = 3.3 semester)

NEXT PAGE FOR MORE CLASSES AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION

INDEPENDENT STUDY COLLEGE COURSES

THE HERITAGE INSTITUTE (credits through Antioch University, Seattle, WA)

MICHAEL SEDLER, INSTRUCTOR

The following are **6 CREDIT CLASSES**: (6 quarter credits - 4 semester credits)

1. Autism: Questions and Answers (ED445y/ED545y)

Understanding the general areas of autism, diagnosis, and overall strategies for interventions for children with special needs.

2. Establishing Rules and Boundaries (ED445x/ED545x)

Ideas to assist educators in setting up a successful work environment for children (rules, procedures, teaching tools).

3. Inspirational Education (ED452f/ED552f)

This course will re-charge the batteries and create a new excitement about teaching in each person.

4. The Impact Of Trauma and Loss in Students (ED464z/ED564z)

Strategies to support children who have experienced traumatic situations in life.

5. Why Children Act Out (ED458t/ED558t)

Recognize the underlying function of behaviors and interventions approaches.

6- CREDIT COST: \$495--400/500 LEVEL; \$380-clock hours (6 quarter = 4 semester)

REGISTRATION: Call The Heritage Institute--1 (800) 445-1305; 1 (360) 341-3020

Or register on line at www.hol.edu

QUESTIONS: Please call Michael Sedler at (509) 443-1605. Leave message when necessary.

Email address: mike@communicationplus.net **Website**: www.michaelsedler.com

****For clock hours, only complete the first section of the course. Remember, clock hours may not transfer to other districts or states. You cannot go back and acquire credit once clock hours have been earned for a class.**

COURSE TITLE: PARENTS: Adversary or Ally (SS401q/SS501q)

NO. OF CREDITS: 3 QUARTER CREDITS
[Semester Cr Equivalent: 2.00]

CLOCK HRS: 30
PDU's: 30
CEU'S: 3.0 (30 HRS)

INSTRUCTOR: MICHAEL SEDLER, D.Min., M.S.W.
Box 30310
Spokane, WA 99223
(509) 443-1605
EMAIL: mike@communicationplus.net

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

The assignment checklist will help you plan your schedule of work for this course. Check off items completed so that you can better monitor your progress. While you have six-months to complete your work, many will find a shorter time period convenient. **Please email no more than 2 to 3 assignments at a time for comments. Do NOT send further work until you receive comments from the instructor. Grades will be submitted once all assignments and the integration paper have been sent to instructor.** If involved in a group, all work should be sent through the Group Leader.

For Washington Clock Hours, Oregon Professional Development Units, or Continuing Education Units, please complete the first 7 assignments.

 Assignment #1:

Read all materials enclosed in the packet received from the instructor.

 Assignment #2:

Read a book from the bibliography or one of your choice. If taking this course in a group, each person should read a book. Only one person needs to write a summary. Write a 2-3 page summary of main ideas and key points. **(Send to instructor)**

 Assignment #3:

Read and answer questions on the "parent involvement form" (p. 16). **(Send form to the instructor)** photocopy or scan.

 Assignment #4:

Choose a "focus" student for this class. Read the file of student, interview teachers who have taught family members, and obtain additional information.

- To maintain privacy, please do not refer to students in your paper by their actual name, but rather use an alias or designation such as "Student A."

 Assignment #5:

Make phone calls to parents or students, as explained in the outline in the workbook (p. 18-19). Call a minimum of 5 students or parents. **(Send log to instructor)**

 Assignment #6:

Write a 2-3 page summary of your findings during the phone call conferences you had with a parent. **(Send to instructor)**

 Assignment #7:

Discuss the phone call process or the home visit strategies with another educator.

Describe what aspects of existing practice pose a barrier to implementing desired practice. Describe any areas that need improvement and how you will make modifications. State any unanswered questions that may still exist. Summarize your reflections in a 1-2 page paper. **(Send to instructor)**

This completes the assignments required for Washington Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, or CEUs.

Continue to the next section for additional assignments required for University Quarter Credit

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED for 400 or 500 LEVEL UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

In this section you will have an opportunity to apply your learning to your professional situation. This course assumes that most participants are classroom teachers who have access to students. If you are not teaching in a classroom, please contact the instructor for course modifications. If you start or need to complete this course during the summer, please try to apply your ideas when possible with youth from your neighborhood, at a local public library or parks department facility, (they will often be glad to sponsor community-based learning), with students in another teacher's summer classroom in session, students from past years, or use one of your own children or other relative

__ Assignment #8: (Required for 400 and 500 Level)

Thoroughly study the handout on home visits. Set up a home visit with a family, preferably the family of the student chosen. Analyze the family dynamics and styles and compare those to the styles found in the manual. Write a 2-3 page summary. **(Send to instructor)**

__ Assignment #9: You must choose either "A" or "B" (Required for 400 and 500 Level)

Assignment #A: (SEND commentary to Instructor)

- Develop a lesson to reflect what you've learned in this course.
- Implement your lesson with students in your classroom.
- Write a 2 page commentary on what worked well and what could be improved.
- Include any student feedback on your lesson.

(The following is encouraged but not required):

- Share what you've learned with other teachers taking our courses by also contributing your Lesson to The Heritage Institute Lesson Library located at <http://www.hol.edu/lesson-plan-library>

OR

Assignment #B: (SEND lesson and summary to Instructor)

Use this option if you do not have a classroom available.

- Develop a lesson to reflect what you've learned in this course. (Do not implement it.)
- Write a 2 page summary concerning any noteworthy success you've had as a teacher with one or more students.

(The following is encouraged but not required):

- Please refer to the guidelines on our blog <http://www.hol.edu/blog> prior to writing your article.
- Please email a copy to [Rebecca Blankinship](mailto:Rebecca.Blankinship@hol.edu) (rebecca@hol.edu) THI blog curator and media specialist.
- Indicate whether or not you are OK with having your article considered for publishing on our website.
- Subject line to read: (Course Name, Blog)

Send to instructor: mike@communicationplus.net

500 LEVEL ASSIGNMENT

__ Assignment #10: (500 Level only)

In addition to the 400 level assignments, complete **one** (1) of the following assignment options:

Option A) Get feedback from a parent regarding a home visit (comfort level, connection with you, likes and dislikes). Write a 2 page summary. **(Send to instructor)**

OR

Option B) Another assignment of your own design, with the instructor's prior approval.

400 & 500 LEVEL ASSIGNMENT

__ Assignment #11: (Required for 400 and 500 Level Credit)

Write a 2-3 page Integration Paper answering these questions:

1. What did you learn vs. what you expected to learn from this course?
2. What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
3. What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
4. How, when and where will you use what you have learned?
5. How and with what other school or community members might you share what you learned?

(send to instructor)

Must be individually authored (name and course title) for those taking in a group.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE:

Mike Sedler, M.S.W., brings over 30 year of educational experience as an administrator, social worker, behavior specialist and teacher to each of his classes. He provides consultation and seminars throughout the United States and Canada for schools, agencies and businesses. He has a graduate degree in Social Work, a Doctoral degree in Ministry, a Counseling license, as well as his teaching certification. All of Mike's classes are practical and "field tested" in schools and classrooms. Educators have found success in implementing Mike's clear and concise approaches. All of his course material may be immediately implemented into a school or a home.

NOTES: You may work collaboratively and submit joint assignments on all but the Integration Paper portion (and other designated assignments) which must be individually authored and submitted. Alternatives to written assignments such as a video, audio tape, photo collage, etc. are permissible with prior approval of instructor. **If you do not receive a confirmation email back after sending your paperwork via email, please re-send or contact the instructor to confirm it has been received. It seems that occasionally things get lost in cyber- space. Thank you.**

Full credit will be given to each student as long as all work is turned in. If something is missing, I will be in contact with you. Failure is not an option. ☺

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UNDERSTANDING

FAMILY

DYNAMICS

SCHOOL/PARENT COMMUNICATION REPORT CARD

Grade each of the following on a scale of 1 - 4, with 4 being "excellent."

(Send to Instructor—bottom of page)

Reaching Out To Families

School

You

1. Communicating often and openly with families
2. Reaching all cultural and language groups
3. Reaching working and single parents
4. Extra effort to reach all families

Welcoming Families to the School Building

5. Schools welcome families
6. Open and available school and staff
7. Encouraging volunteer involvement
8. Reaching out to the community

Developing Strong Relationships

9. Teachers communicate with parents
10. Parent-teacher partnership
11. Parent-principal partnership
12. Parents involved in decision making
13. School-parent involvement policy exists

Helping Parents Understand the Curriculum

14. Information about the curriculum
15. Goals for student achievement
16. Information on student performance

Helping Parents Be More Effective

17. School supports parents with parenting information
18. School connects parents to community services

*1. Are there areas you need to improve in? 2. What about the school? 3. How is the school, classroom, each teacher perceived by the community and individual parents? **SEND TO INSTRUCTOR—answer the previous three questions. 2 pages.***

FAMILY STYLES

ABDICATOR

- a. Postpones decisions
- b. Decides by not deciding
- c. Shifts responsibilities to others
- d. Free from the responsibility of the outcome

CONTROLLER PARENT

- a. Decides everything
- b. Judges everybody else
- c. Punishes a lot
- d. Preaches
- e. Result is child fails to develop independence
- f. Power struggles are common
- g. Controller is a full time job
 - 1. Never off duty
 - 2. No time for anyone else

MARTYR

- a. Devoted to the child
- b. Often pushed into this role inadvertently
- c. Needs met through child
- d. Seeks pity and reinforcement for sacrifice
- e. Guilt users
- f. Produces dependent child
- g. Parent acts as if parent has no personal rights
- h. Divorce high
- i. Children leave home early if they can

CAVALIER PARENT

- a. Always wants to be liked
- b. Will do anything to make the day fun regardless of long term effects
- c. Feels they must make things up to child

ACCEPTING PARENT

- a. What do I want from my child?
- b. What is my job?
- c. What can I do?
- d. What options should I try?
- e. What can't I do?

TWO TYPES OF EXTREME FAMILIES: SURVIVAL FAMILIES AND OVER-ACHIEVING FAMILIES

There are some students who will learn no matter what we do ...

There are some students who will choose to not learn no matter what we do...

We are talking about the large population in the middle.

SURVIVALCHILDREN

Manipulate with circumstances
Lack of regard for others
Kill each other
Alcoholism (beer/wine)
Child abuse (physical)
No achievement reinforcement
Gangs (unconditional love)
Eats candy fast
Cheats, lies, steals
Worried about today
Enjoy adult warmth/charm
Takes on parental role

OVER-ACHIEVING CHILDREN

Manipulate with money, status
Lack of regard for others
Commit suicide
Alcoholism (scotch, vodka)
Child abuse (verbal/emotional)
Overly strong comparisons
Cults (unconditional love)
Saves and saves and saves candy
Cheats, lies, steals
Worried about future
Indifferent to adult warmth/charm
Reject any type of parental role

Children from both these families are trying to find the definition of "what it takes to be acceptable and accepted?"

SURVIVAL CHILDREN:

- Lower the stakes-don't up the ante ... too much pressure.
- Try to keep them back-they will accomplish to show you.
- Help them define their identity in life (role confusion).
- Small incremental steps toward success.

OVER-ACHIEVING CHILDREN:

- Define the boundaries, hold them to the guidelines
- Try to keep them back-worth not based on performance
- Allow them to define own identity. Avoid cookie cutter mentality.
- Allow them to risk without condemnation and criticism.

Risk, be outrageous, and gamble. Most children will try anything ONCE. Educators need to spend time working with the system (colleagues, administrators). Help "the system" to have fun, loosen up, and try new things.

DYSFUNCTIONAL VS. HEALTHY

"Dysfunctional" is now a popular buzzword in psychological circles. But what exactly is a dysfunctional family? The following "guidelines" provide a description of dysfunctional vs. healthy families.

RULES OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES:

1. Don't talk about problems. If you must talk about problems, avoid the real problem.
2. Don't express feelings.
3. Never talk to another family member directly, always go through another person.
4. Be strong, be good, be right, be perfect.
5. Make us proud.
6. Don't be selfish.
7. Do as I say, not as I do.
8. It's not okay to play or be playful.
9. Don't rock the boat.
10. Rigid roles.
11. Rigid rules.
12. Family secrets.
13. Resists outsiders from entering the system.
14. No personal privacy, unclear personal boundaries.
15. False loyalty to family, members are never free to leave the system.
16. Family resists change.
17. There is no unity; the family is fragmented.

RULES OF HEALTHY FAMILIES:

1. Talk about family problems openly and honestly and deal with the real problem.
2. Express feelings freely, including sadness, fear and anger.
3. Communicate easily.
4. Be human. It's okay to make mistakes.
5. Do your best.
6. Have a sense of self
7. Own your own actions.
8. It's okay to play and laugh.
9. Conflict is allowed and resolved.
10. No rigid roles.
11. No rigid rules.
12. No family secrets.
13. Allows outsiders into the system
14. Members have a right to personal privacy and to develop a sense of self
15. Members have a sense of family and are permitted to leave the system.
16. Family adapts to change.
17. There is a sense of wholeness in the family.

PARENTING

General guidelines and helpful boundaries for parenting. This is not to be used as a test for "good parenting."

1. A child should know up front what the punishment will be if he/she misbehaves.
TRUE FALSE
2. My feelings of closeness for my children are influenced by their behavior from moment to moment. TRUE FALSE
3. I feel uncomfortable discussing "touchy" subjects like sex, tobacco, and alcohol with my children when they raise questions about these things. TRUE FALSE
4. I regularly take the time to discuss issues with each of my children individually.
TRUE FALSE
5. It is healthy to show feelings honestly, so it doesn't bother me to praise or scold my children in front of his/her siblings or friends. TRUE FALSE
6. Children should be given a sense of independence as soon as possible, even if it means they might suffer painful defeats now and then. TRUE FALSE
7. I rarely discuss controversial subjects with my children, because it might cause an argument. TRUE FALSE
8. I show my children that I'm on their wavelength and very much like one of their peers. TRUE FALSE
9. Children shouldn't be allowed to question their parents' judgment.
TRUE FALSE
10. Basically, most children really want their parents to give them more freedom than they have. TRUE FALSE
11. If I make demands of achievement too early in life, it will create too much anxiety for my child. TRUE FALSE
12. Young kids who are hard to manage usually need more discipline.
TRUE FALSE

SCORING ON NEXT PAGE

SCORING

To tally your score, give yourself one point for each response that matches yours.

1. False
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. False
7. False
8. False
9. False
10. False
11. False
12. False

10 or more points = Aware of parenting skills, keep reading, listening, and asking questions.

5 to 9 points = Most parents fall into this area. Don't stop learning; keep seeking new ways to understand your children.

0 to 4 points = Be open to input from others.

SEND TO INSTRUCTOR: Write one page on what characteristics do you value for “solid parenting.”

FORMS
AND
PARENT
CONTACT
IDEAS

PARENT INVOLVEMENT FORM

Answer each question and return to instructor (assignment #3)

1. WHY DO WE NEED TO INVOLVE PARENTS IN OUR PROGRAMS?
2. HOW CAN PARENTS BE INVOLVED?
3. SHARE SOME CONTENT IDEAS FOR PARENT MEETINGS.
4. DO WE NEED TO DOCUMENT PARENT INVOLVEMENT? IF SO, HOW?
5. SHARE ONE PARENT INVOLVEMENT IDEA YOU COMMIT TO ENACT DURING THIS COURSE.

PERSONAL PARENT CONTACTS

On the following page is a form one may use for contacting families. The information includes:

- finding out the name of the parent (which is often different than the student)
- phone number(s)
- a good time to call.

There are many ways to keep track of calls, but it is recommended to use some type of tracking system for calls.

Many years ago, I found it very beneficial to make phone calls to parents. These calls were not for disciplinary reasons, but were simply to make contact with the parent. When I taught in the elementary schools and had around 30 students, I would call each family within the first 2 weeks of school. The calls were brief and positive in nature. "Hello, my name is Mike Sedler and I am your son/daughter's 6th grade teacher. I just want you to know what a pleasure it is to have them in my class. If you ever have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call. Thank you for your time." CLICK. I did take a breath or two and wait for a response. Usually, the parent was so shocked to hear something positive, they would say only a word or two.

When I began working in the secondary schools and had close to 130 to 150 students, it would take me a little longer. However, whether it took me 2 weeks or 2 months, the response from parents was always positive. It would range from "Thanks for calling, I have never had a teacher call and tell me something good about my child" to "You mean my son did something right?" to "My kids have never had problems at school, but we have never had a teacher call us and let us know how they were doing". I have had many parents cry, profusely thank me, offer to have me call anytime, give me money (well, maybe I am exaggerating a little). I hope you understand my point, calling parents just because ... can pay big dividends when you do call them for discipline reasons.

When I was in playful moods, I would call students. This was also very beneficial as well as enjoyable. "Hello Teri, this is Mr. Sedler. What are you up to tonight?" Naturally, the response was a pensive, intelligent "nothing much." "Well", I would say "I just called to say hello. If you need help on homework, let me know. Have a good night and see you tomorrow." Imagine when the child gets off the phone. "Who was that?" asked a parent. "My teacher." said a confused student. "Well, what did he want?" came the retort from the concerned parent. "Nothing, he just wanted to say hello." mumbled Teri. "Right! Did you get in trouble? What's going on?" quizzed the parent. Of course, calling problematic students can be especially enjoyable when imagining the conversations with the family. Honestly, I called to connect with the students, but the fallout was at times humorous.

I use 3 X 5 notecards and have the kids write their name, address, telephone number and who they live with (parent) on it. Pay close attention to different last names, guardians, group homes, foster homes, etc. As part of this course, you will be asked to make parent contacts, either by phone or by home visit.

PARENT CONTACT RECORD

Student Name: _____

Parent Name: _____

If you live with an adult other than your parent, please list their name(s):

Phone Number:

_____ (Home)

Work:

_____ (Dad)

Work:

_____ (Mom)

Work:

_____ (Other)

Email: _____

Good Time to Call: _____

Contact Date: _____ Parents: _____

Called Concerning:

Contact Date: _____ Parents: _____

Called Concerning:

PARENT FORMS

Enclosed are parent forms which you may use, duplicate, or change. They include:

Parent Volunteer Form: This form can be used to send home and get a sense of what type of help you will from parents. In the elementary school, you can get your room parents from this list. Please be sensitive to the fact that a parent may choose to do nothing. There are many factors which play into a person having time and energy to volunteer. Avoid judging a person's parenting skills or their "love" for their child on how often or how much they volunteer.

Parent Conference Form: This form is again excellent for elementary school conference week. Instead of having parents come in and talk "at them" for 20 minutes, have them come in with questions or ideas. I found this to be an excellent way for parents to feel they can bring something to the conference. Also, by having juice, nuts, candy, etc. available for them when they come in, it can help break any tension. Make the conference comfortable (then nail them. Just kidding!!)

Parent Contact Form: I explain this on another page. This should be utilized by all educators in contacting parents. For more information, see Personal Parent Contacts.

PARENT VOLUNTEER FORM

(this is a sample form which I used when teaching in the elementary school. When teaching at the secondary level, I made minor modifications)

I believe it is very important to have parent involvement in a school setting. While I know not all parents are able to come to the school to volunteer, I do feel there is always something people can do to help. Below is a list of possible things you can do to help your child's year be excellent. Please check the areas of interest and return with your child. They will receive an extra bonus if they are returned in a timely fashion (within 3 days). So, don't be too upset with them, if they begin to bug you to fill this out.

Thank You,

Mike Sedler

- ___ Volunteer in the classroom.
- ___ Bake treats (holidays, just because, for Mr. Sedler, etc.)
- ___ Go on field trips.
- ___ Make phone calls from home reminding parents of activities.
- ___ Attend one evening for a parent class.
- ___ Transport kids to field trips (need seatbelt for each student).
- ___ Come to watch special programs or speakers.
- ___ Stuff envelopes for mailings.
- ___ Send your child off with a smile, hug and/or kiss each day
(just testing you).
- ___ Other _____

Dear Parent(s).

*This is a reminder of your conference on _____
from _____ to _____. If you would like,
your child may be in attendance. I will leave that up to you.*

*Please complete the following questions and bring to our
conference (just like a teacher to give homework). I look
forward to seeing you.*

Thank you,

Mike Sedler

*Does your child seem to enjoy school? _____

_____*

*How does this year seem to compare with previous years?
Academically? _____
_____*

*Behaviorally? _____
_____*

*Socially? _____
_____*

Any other comments, questions, or concerns.

(A HELPFUL HANDOUTS TO PARENTS)

LESSON PLANS: NINE WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD EXCEL IN SCHOOL

BY Dolly Calhoun Williams

SEND TO INSTRUCTOR (NEXT PAGE)

Education does not begin and end at the schoolhouse door. In order for our children to succeed, we parents must take an active part in their education. Here are some strategies that will help your child to do her or his best in school.

**** *Instill a strong sense of self-worth in your child.*** Give your child constant nurturing, guidance and encouragement to build the self-confidence and self-esteem she needs to succeed in school. Do this by acknowledging your child's accomplishments and affirming her talents.

**** *Talk with your child and really listen to what he/she says.*** Have a daily conversation about events in school. Encourage him to explain new ideas he has learned or other projects he is working on. You can further his interest and enthusiasm by discussing how his new knowledge and skills relate to something he already knows.

**** *Find lessons in your daily activities.*** Your home and daily routine can provide a wealth of opportunities for conversation and learning. Sorting books on a shelf and cooking together can develop matching and math concepts, shopping can boost writing and language skills, and discussing television programs you watch together can encourage critical thinking.

**** *Set a good example.*** Show your child that you value education and that learning is important in your life too. Let reading be an integral part of your family's leisure time. Include your child in home, community or church projects that relate to what he is learning in school. Let him see you take a project, such as planning a block party, from start to finish. This will teach him that he can complete a challenging job if he sticks to it.

**** *Get to know your child's teachers, counselors and principal.*** Let them know that you are paying close attention to your child's school progress. Ask-for specific suggestions on what you can do at home with your child to increase learning. Keep your child's teacher abreast of what is going on at home-particularly if there has been a major upset in the child's life such as a death, divorce, move or new sibling. This information will help the teacher understand the child better.

**** *Request that your child be put in classes of particular interest.*** Find out which teachers she especially likes and encourage a relationship of learning between them.

**** *Take an active interest in your child's homework.*** Insist that the television and radio not interfere with her learning. Know what assignments have been given and when they are due. If she continually insists she does not have homework or tests, be sure to check with her teachers or other parents of children in the class.

**** *Support special school events.*** Attending all Open House gatherings, school plays, athletic events, and concerts not only boost the morale of your child but it also encourages the students and shows the staff a support for the school.

**** *Volunteer.*** Your child's school needs you. If you have the time, be a class parent, supervise on field trips, make phone calls for the school, or go to a career day. Help other parents to prepare class parties, special classroom projects or be active in the parent organization.

WRITE A 1-2 PAGE SUMMARY OF YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS PAGE,
ADD ADDITIONAL IDEAS, AND/OR STRATEGIES ON HOW TO USE THIS
WITH PARENTS. **SEND TO INSTRUCTOR**

MANAGING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Responding To Feedback

When talking to a parent, it is important to be open to feedback, guidance, and ideas. The parent is often intimidated and may feel defensive in the meeting. By aligning ourselves with a parental strategy or idea, it will diffuse any anxiety and frustration.

1. Listen- our tendencies are to think while someone is talking. Focus on the words and hear what the person is telling you.
2. Don't defend/justify- excuses only get in the way of making a change in our lives. Your "rationale" may be accurate, but the impressions from your behavior may also be accurate.
3. Avoid blaming others- it is easy to find a scapegoat. Stop ..look in the mirror, and be willing to evaluate your behavior.
4. Ask for examples- obtaining examples allows one to understand the other perspective. A situation may be viewed differently by each person ... and they are both valid.
5. Apologize (ask forgiveness)- be willing to admit you were wrong. This is a sign of honesty, humility, and maturity.
6. Gain additional feedback- ask others for feedback. Have they seen certain attitudes or behaviors in you. Be open to support from others.
7. Set up follow up time- it may be necessary to talk again.

CONFERENCING WITH *ANGRY* PEOPLE

1. SHIFT TO NEUTRAL
2. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN
3. DEMONSTRATE YOU HAVE LISTENED
4. GAIN PERMISSION TO SHARE ALTERNATIVES
5. OFFER ALTERNATIVES
6. LOOK AT CONSEQUENCES OF ALTERNATIVES
7. ALLOW PERSON TO RESOLVE/NOT RESOLVE PROBLEM
8. INVOLVE STUDENT/CHILD, IF PRESENT

PARENT - TEACHER CONFERENCES

PREPARING FOR THE CONFERENCE

1. Contacting the parent- *Letters, phone calls, emails*
2. Leave enough time- *Set the time frame before starting*
3. Have positive and problematic examples for parent-
4. Have solutions for problems- *Suggestions, options*
5. Have documentation of previous contacts with parent

THE CONFERENCE

1. Room preparation- *Tidy up! Make the room look nice*
2. Seating- *Large chairs* ☺
3. Ask for questions- *Have parent come with questions*
4. Start with overview- *Warm up; Ice breaker*
5. Be positive- *Find upbeat, encouraging words to share*
6. Put things in writing- *Written info to take with them*
7. Seek out suggestions- *Ask for feedback and ideas*
8. Give concrete examples/suggestions- *Be specific and helpful*

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

1. Follow-up- *Call, letter, note*
2. Communication- *Two way communication*
3. Talk with student about conference- *Update them*

RULES FOR CONFERENCES WITH PARENTS
(A humorous approach)

If you find conferences with parents difficult, try these 13 steps:

1. Always hold conferences at the end of a hard day. Friday afternoon is hard to beat.
2. Make the previous teacher look pretty inadequate. But, be subtle.
3. When talking to mother, blame the father, and vice versa. When talking to them both, blame grandma. Never be afraid to take sides in a family argument about the child. It will bring parents closer together.
4. If a parent begins to understand you, switch to jargon and pedageese (using special education terms and abbreviations is excellent). If the parent has been a teacher, you are in trouble.
5. Try to do most of the talking. It may be hard to stop a parent once he or she gets started. If necessary, interrupt them with "just a minute, I disagree."
6. Explain your superior methods of teaching, especially if the child has learning difficulties.
7. Hold interviews during regular class hours and keep the class quiet by threatening looks or by saying, "Be quiet, can't you see I have my hands full?"
8. Always stress a child's weak points. It will help the parent see what you are up against.
9. Let the child overhear the conversation. Maybe he will try harder to make something of himself.
10. If the parent is tired, conduct the interview standing up. It may shorten the whole thing, and the parent probably wants to get home anyway.
11. Ask if there has been much insanity in the family. This will get a chuckle when the going gets rough.
12. Tell the parents about other difficult cases that are even worse than their child. If you can, give the names of neighbors.
13. Try staring out the window and sighing very loudly.

EXCUSES FOR STUDENTS FROM PARENTS

--- Please excuse John for being absent January 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

--- Chris has a crease in his side.

--- Mary could not go to school because she was bothered by close veins.

--- John has been absent because he had 2 teeth taken out of his face.

--- Jerry was absent yesterday because he had a stomach.

--- Please excuse Gloria. She has been sick and under the Doctor.

--- My son is under the Doctor's care and should not take P.E. Please excuse him.

--- Lillie has been absent from school yesterday because she had a gang over.

--- Please excuse Roland from P.E. for a few days. Yesterday he fell out of a tree and misplaced his hip.

--- Please excuse Joey Friday. He had loose vowels.

--- Please excuse Joan from gym today. She is administering.

--- Carl was hit yesterday playing football. He was hurt in the growing part.

--- My daughter couldn't come to school Monday because she was tired. She spent the weekend with some Marines.

--- Please excuse Sandra from being absent yesterday. She was in bed with gramps.

--- Ralph was absent yesterday because of a sour trout.

--- Please excuse Wayne for being out yesterday, because he had the fuel.

--- Please excuse Sarah for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot.

--- Irving was absent this morning because he missed his bust.

MORE
IDEAS
FOR
CONNECTING
WITH
PARENTS

PARENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

- Startup phone calls- calls at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the school year.
- Beginning of the year questionnaire- find out about student interests and parental involvement.
- Suggestion Box- an open forum for students to share ideas, strategies, frustrations, and ways to improve the classroom.
- Monthly (weekly) calendar- organized format for students and parents to know what is coming up in the class (tests, projects, field trips, homework).
- Homeroom helpers- parents willing to do bulletin boards, call parents regarding upcoming tests/projects for students, organize field trips, etc.
- Homework line- find a way for parents to be updated on homework. This may be done on an answering machine, a school wide homework line, email, or some other format.
- E-mail list- contacting parents can be done quickly and efficiently with emails.
- Parent book shelf- resource books for parents to check out on a variety of topics (ADHD, depression, anger, organization, child development, etc).

BECOME A TEACHER
**Survival Guide for New Teachers—
ideas from a variety of educators.**

"Parents became my greatest resource ... I openly solicited their active involvement and suggestions on how to better serve their child. I also presented them with ideas and activities they could do at home with their child to enhance their learning process. I later set up a homework/classroom Web site for my community of learners on the Internet so both parents and students could access the homework schedule.... I purchased a cellular telephone for my classroom and turned it on during my 90-minute planning block so parents could reach me, if needed, on a daily basis."--Margie Robinson (Viera, Florida)

First-year teacher Katy Goldman (Pine, Arizona) believes that children learn best "when given the opportunity to taste, feel, see, hear, manipulate, discover, sing, and dance their way through learning."

But the parents of her students were clamoring for a more back-to-basics approach. Goldman could have given in, turning her back on strongly held beliefs, or she could have ignored her parents' concerns altogether, promoting bad relations. Instead, she navigated the tougher but more rewarding course. She showed parents how effective her pedagogical strategies could be and ultimately won parents' support, which has proven invaluable.

She began a weekly newsletter to inform parents about learning events in the classroom. She also invited parents into the classroom.

"This created a sense of well-being since they knew I had nothing to hide. Watching the children's excitement and 'aha' looks of accomplishment said it all," Goldman remembers. The long-term benefits of Goldman's efforts became clear over time: parental support for her teaching methods, which yielded a cadre of classroom volunteers and an improved, solidly reinforced learning environment.

Connecting With Parents

Teacher outreach efforts to parents most typically include writing a newsletter or inviting parents into the classroom. Calling parents with good news about a child's progress also strengthens the teacher-parent relationship.

Home visits, done either before or after the school years starts, can also be extremely valuable. These visits can improve significantly the relationship between teachers and parents.

"From the very beginning, I knew the importance of soliciting help from parents," says Julie Gutierrez (Richardson, Texas). "I sent a weekly newsletter home explaining our weeks' worth of activities, and in it, I gave ideas for working with the children. Conferences and phone calls also served as wonderful opportunities for me to get parents involved. Periodically, I sent papers explaining developmental stages of reading and writing so that parents might gauge their child's progress and look forward to the next step. It's amazing how quickly a child can achieve mastery when the support of a parent is present."

Making Parents Allies and Helpers

Teachers say parents may not make the first move but generally will respond when asked to help at home or play a role in the classroom. Some teachers involved parents in academic activities such as reading and tutoring, while other teachers turned to parents to relieve them of duties that otherwise would get in the way of teaching.

Marie Mallory (Reno, Nevada) writes: "It wasn't until I discovered just how handy parent volunteers can be, that I finally got the paper tidal wave under control. I overcame my time and paper management issue by delegating to my parent helpers. I had them construct the bulletin boards that I would create in my mind, so I could spend that time giving feedback to my students. I have one parent who could give any Kinko's employee a run for their money. She not only is the fastest copier person in the West, but she can run more types of machines in this school than anyone. It's rumored that she can fix them too, but we try to keep some things quiet around here," Mallory writes.

Parents Make a Difference

Successful first-year teachers say parental involvement in education--at home and in the classroom--is vital to effective learning and discipline.

"If parents back a teacher's discipline of a student, and the parent restricts privileges at home, the teacher notices real improvements in the student," says Mercedes Huffman (Washington, DC).

Disinterested Parents

Some first-year teachers are saddened to learn that not all parents can be persuaded to take an active role in supporting their children's education. When this happens, teachers must recognize that they are limited by factors outside their control.

"Naturally, I expected that the parents of my students would be active in helping their child at home I expected to have full support from each student's parents, for who wouldn't want to help their most precious gift, their child?", writes Pilar Geisse (Torrence, California).

"Unfortunately, my expectations were not always realistic. Although they may want to help their child succeed in their educational career, some parents do not always have the time to help their child. In addition to this problem, I was shocked to find that other parents did not seem interested in their child's success (or failure) in school at all."

Firsthand: Going the Extra Step for Parental Involvement

Jennifer Rego-Brown (Portland, Maine) made it a priority to bring parents into the educational process. She sent home mid-quarter progress reports, checklists, and a written evaluation. Her comments noted areas where a student was doing well and showing improvement, and where the child needed to work harder. Her reports also discussed academic standards and behavioral expectations.

"If I could only pass along one important piece of information to first-year teachers it would be, keep the communication lines open between you and your students' families," Rego-Brown writes. "Keep your door open to visitors, volunteers, and parents who just want to drop in and say 'Hi!'. Send home weekly letters to let families know what is going on in the classroom for that week. Often times children do not tell their families everything that goes on. Call or send home letters as soon as a problem or concern arises with a student. Create family-oriented projects for homework and classroom activities for families. Part of a healthy and successful education comes from the home. If you involve families and the community you will have more resources for your classroom. You will find that an extra set of hands in the classroom or supplies that are sent in from home will help you as much as the children. Families will feel as if they are a part of the classroom and their child's education. Learning will also happen at home, not just in school."

Look to Parents to ...

- Show support for learning at home;
- Communicate positive feedback about a teacher's influence or performance;
- Welcome new teachers;
- Volunteer to help in the classroom;
- Support fair discipline measures that teachers impose;
- Refrain from assuming the worst about first-year teachers;
- See that children do their homework;
- Offer the workplace for a field trip when appropriate;
- Talk to a teacher directly about a problem; and
- Become active partners in education.

Tips for Working with Parents

- Contact parents early on and before a problem occurs, particularly when there's good news to report;
- Consider writing a weekly newsletter or report on classroom learning and activities;
- Invite parents to come into the classroom and assign them tasks if they are willing;
- Involve them in reading groups and remedial assistance when possible, being aware that all parents may not read or write English;
- Let parents know how they can reinforce classroom learning at home; consider asking them to sign a contract requiring them to make children complete homework and other home learning activities;
- Visit families in their homes if possible to see firsthand how well learning is supported there;
- Address parents' concerns head on. If you are taking a pedagogical approach that raises questions, work to show parents the benefits of your methods and explain your reasoning to them; and
- Hold a parent meeting the first month of the school year in which you talk about your expectations for student achievement and behavior, leave time for questions, and if you don't know the answer promise to call soon with one.

KEEPING PARENTS INTERESTED

(especially at the secondary level)

1. Get e-mail addresses- this is a great way to stay in contact with parents. You may update them on homework assignments, due dates, field trips, tests, etc. It allows the parent to be a part of the school without having to come to school.
2. Hand out grades regularly- most school grades are computerized and may be easily copied off. Each student may be updated each week as to their grade. This will prevent any surprises and a student being upset over a sudden grade change.
3. Send grades home regularly- mail home grades every couple of weeks. Avoid waiting until the mid-quarter grades are sent out. This will help each parent to stay on top of the grades.
4. Monthly newsletter from class- just one idea that may keep a family connected. You may have your students develop this type of newsletter. I personally did not feel I had the time to organize this myself. But, I had volunteer parents do this or volunteer students.
5. Keep office hours for phone calls- help each parent to connect with you. If it is easy to get a hold of you, there will be fewer complications.
6. Student send letter home- this is one way for a student to update a parent. Have a student share about what he/she is learning in class or what upcoming events (tests, projects) may be occurring.

HOME VISITS (why they are important and how to do one)

A. ARE HOME VISITS NECESSARY?

The importance of home visits cannot be overemphasized. Meeting parents on their "own ground" in the familiarity of their own environment enhances the family's perception of the commitment of the school to problem solving.

Families often feel anxiety when contacted by the school. Usually, a contact is made only when the child is hurt or in trouble. Therefore, the family has been trained to fear school contact.

Parents may feel threatened when directed to come to school. For a family to come to a school building or office puts them in the "other person's domain." By allowing them to remain in a comfortable setting (their home), direct observations may be made and strengths of the family emphasized.

The home visit shows the family that the school is willing to cooperate and compromise. It allows the family to see an immediate effort and desire by the school to be supportive and helpful. In addition, it shows that the school representative is not afraid to take a risk on the family's terms. This may very well result in increased cooperation from the family. .

B. STEPS IN HOME VISIT CONSULTATION

The initial contact is crucial. It is important for the consultant to be nonjudgmental, empathetic, and perhaps the most supportive of all roles--to listen carefully. It is important to remember there is a common ground for both family and school--the child. Find out what areas the family sees as problem issues and focus on them. If the school has other concerns, slowly integrate those issues into the discussion.

For intervention methods to be successful, the involvement of the family is imperative. Listed below are a few ways to gain their support.

1. **MODELING**- The school representative may show the parent how to utilize a specific technique or skill. By doing this in the home, the family can rapidly generalize it to all natural environments.
2. **COOPERATION**- Depending upon how committed/involved the family wants to be, the worker may suggest the opportunity for the family to talk with appropriate school personnel. In this situation, the worker may want to serve as moderator or facilitator.
3. **WRITTEN GUIDELINES**- It is often helpful to leave the family with a written summary of the discussion. They may then refer back to specific questions and areas of concern.

4. CHARTING- Using a chart to collect data or to reinforce their child may be helpful. Once again, this helps them to organize and be a part of the process.
5. CARRYOVER- Share the home program or information with the school. Implement appropriate strategies in the school. Allow the parent(s) to feel they involved with the school in effectively working with their child. Allow for follow-up with the family. Some possible ways are phone calls, notes, additional home visits. This may be done by a teacher, principal or other school personnel. Above all, involve the parent in planning for their child's future. If they do not feel a part of the process, there may be limited commitment from them.

C. PROBLEM AREAS IN INTERVENTION

1. Overwhelming the family with advice.
Don't lecture or flood them with information.
2. Conflicting advice or suggestions.
If the family receives different suggestions from various sources, this will encourage them to try to utilize all techniques. This may be confusing to them unless it is monitored. Families should be encouraged to use different approaches to find what works best for them.
3. Dwelling on failures.
The family may feel hesitant to be involved because of apparent carelessness and irresponsible behaviors on their part during previous years. Be supportive-help them move along the spectrum from "good parents" to "better or responsible parents."
4. Forcing decisions or choices.
Be careful not to usurp or undermine the family's right to make decisions. Share all information with them and work with their decisions. Regardless of direction, help them to be successful in aiding the child.

D. CONTRACTING

By listening to the family's emotional and personal needs, a positive relationship may be built. Consistently refocus the discussions to the issues of "what are we doing" and "where are we going."

1. Verbally, and perhaps on paper, list or write down different issues.
2. Have the parent write or repeat the issues (paraphrase).
3. Seek and develop alternatives. Together, decide on effective plan.
4. Discuss/develop implementation alternative interventions (just in case).
5. Follow through.
6. Develop a plan to allow parent(s) to be fully in charge of program without any feedback or intervention from school (for summer purposes).

E. THE HOME VISIT: FROM BEGINNING TO END

1. Preparation
 - a. Name
 - b. File Review
 - c. Clarification of Referral
2. Initial Contact
 - a. Phone
 - 1) Call early (8:00 to 9:00 a.m.)-usually up with kids.
 - 2) state name, school, reason for call (would like to connect regarding child)
 - 3) Set up time for home visit ("when would be a good time to come by and talk with you")
 - b. Face-to-Face (if no phone)
 - 1) Go later in the morning (10:00 to 11:00 a.m.)- gives them time to clean up.
 - 2) Introduce self
 - 3) Set up time for home visit (don't assume they want to talk then)
 - c. Dealing With Resistance
 - 1) Reflect feelings
 - 2) Supportive listening
 - 3) Be flexible

Letters are not effective tools for initial contact. They may be used as reminders. Stress positive aspects of child.

ARRIVING AT THE HOME--outside

- a. Assessment of physical environment
 - 1) Signs of depression, hiding, or lack of contact with others: closed curtains or blinds, debris in yard, being overwhelmed, suspicious nature.

ARRIVING AT THE HOME--inside

- a. Use judgment as to whether groundwork needs to be laid prior to presenting problem. Be specific, brief, to the point.
 - 1) Initial contact- positive comments about child, home, pets, etc. Be hospitable, friendly, and courteous.
 - 2) Interactions (ice-breakers)- relate to children, pets. Show an interest in their lives. Make comments on pictures, hobbies, collections (e.g. "that's a nice pile of garbage you have in the corner" or "you sure have a beautiful collection of rats" ONLY JOKING!!) Be positive. Explain your purpose for coming to their home (to reach, make it more convenient, etc.)

F. PROBLEM AREAS

ASSUMING

1. Believing you understand inferences or hints can be detrimental.
Check out assumptions and re-direct questions. Ask for further clarification or explanations.

THREATS, ATTACKS

1. Telling the family they had better do a specific course of action may alienate them. Don't put yourself in a place of authority, unless they do so by asking you. Be the liaison between school and family. Help them understand your perspective. Don't try to force something upon them.

G. SELF-AWARENESS

1. Be confident, polite and listen

H. ENDING THE HOME VISIT

1. DOOR KNOB THERAPY

- a. Leave time for further discussion once you begin toward the door.
Many subjects come up as it is the last opportunity for the parent to share in the visit. Making a statement like "Thank you for the visit. I need to get back to the school (or home). Is there anything else you want to share?"
- b. Summarize with short statements. Discuss goals, solutions and future contacts.
- c. Clarify by asking questions of any unclear parts (who is responsible, purpose of meeting, where one can be reached).

2. WRITE DOWN THOUGHTS

Leave a written summary along with your name and phone number.

I. HOMEWORK

1. If possible, develop tasks or programs for the family to be involved in during the week. This will help give them ownership and develop a supportive role to home/school programming.

HOME VISITS: DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

- Be prepared.
- Have positive areas to focus in on when talking with parent(s)
- Dress nice (I believe you should wear what you normally wear to school. This way you don't feel like you are putting on a show for the parent or trying to "fake them out")
- Take a note pad and paper
- Get directions to the house
- Confirm the time you are to meet
- Be prompt
- Be willing to chit-chat with the family

DON'T

- Get so focused on the visit that you aren't friendly
- Be too negative about the child (there will be plenty of time for that)
- Be in too much of a hurry
- Force your ideas upon the parent(s)
- Be inflexible. If the parent can't meet or changes their mind, that is okay
- Be afraid to say you need to leave. If the visit begins to get uncomfortable or too long, let them know you need to leave and you will call them later (perhaps, much later).
- Be so task oriented you forget to talk about the family pet (no not the kid), the house, etc.

FOR PARENTS

SIX TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT THAT INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS

1. COMMUNICATING: design effective forms for home-school communication, conferences, letters, and phone calls.
2. LEARNING AT HOME: provide information to parents, educate family in working with their child, and assist families in successful teaching.
3. VOLUNTEERING: allow opportunities for parents to be in the school in an effective manner, break down barrier between home/school involvement.
4. PARENTING: parenting education and training, home visits, support programs.
5. DECISION MAKING: find a place for parents to be involved in the decision making process of the school. Help them feel it is "our" school.
6. COLLABORATION: help the family see the school as a resource and a community support.

Communication Phrases

Your choice of words can have a huge impact on your child. The way you give a suggestion, deliver a time-out, or phrase a compliment can determine whether you are met with cooperation or saddled with resistance. Parents know that the way we talk to children is crucial to helping them learn to see themselves as capable individuals and build successful communication skills of their own. We also know that it's not always easy to say the right thing on the spur of the moment. Here are a few easy to remember "parent talk" phrases that help kids gain confidence and learn responsibility.

1. "Check Yourself"

Examples: "It seems noisy to me. Please check yourself to see if you are using your inside voice."

The message that you send with this phrase is an important one. You're telling your child by your language and actions that you see them as capable and responsible. You are saying "I see you as individuals who can check on yourselves. Checking is your job. I believe you can handle it."

Using "Check yourself" frequently with children encourages responsibility and autonomy. It allows you to check out of the authoritarian, rescuing role. Hopefully, you'll then spend less time monitoring their behavior and you'll be giving your children the opportunity to be responsible for their own choices.

2. "Next Time ..."

Examples: "Next time, please let me finish my sentence before you start talking."

"Next time, please respect the rules in the house."

"Next time, I'd like you to use words to communicate your feelings."

When you use "Next time" as a positive alternative to the word "don't," you place a positive image in your child's mind about what you want to see happen in the future.

"Don't walk through Lionel's blocks" is critical and draws attention to the negative behavior. "Next time, walk around Lionel's blocks" is instructive. It helps the child build a mental model of the expected behavior.

"Next time" also communicates to the child that any "mistake" he or she made is over, and you have moved on. Saying "Next time" does not guarantee that a child will choose the desired behavior at the next opportunity. But it increases the odds that the behavior will occur.

3. "Please Make a Different Choice."

Examples: "Paul, you're talking is disturbing me on the phone. Please make a different choice."

"Mandi, crayons are not for throwing. Please make a different choice."

This phrasing does not tell children what to do. It gives them information about their present behavior and respectfully asks that they choose a different response. It does not scold or reprimand, persuade or cajole.

Asking students to make a different choice communicates respect. "Please make a different choice" may be your exact words, but the real message is, "I see you as responsible for your actions. You choose your responses in life. I believe in your ability to find a response that is appropriate. I am leaving that choice up to you."

4. "I See..."

Examples: "I see papers on the floor." "I see that you are not paying attention."

An alternative to telling children to "clean up" is to respond, "I see paper scraps on the floor." Instead of telling them what to do, you are describing the situation at hand and leaving the "what to do" part up to them. The children must stop and think "What do I do next?" instead of "What does the parent want me to do?"

Giving fewer orders and commands decreases defiance. It communicates to your children that you think they are capable of creating appropriate responses once they understand the situation.

5. "You Decide."

Many times throughout the day a child asks questions that place the parent in the role of permission giver.

"May I watch TV now?" "Is this book a good one for me?" "Is it okay if I ask Laurie for some help?"

When you respond to these questions with a "yes," you assume the role of permission giver. If the request is clearly within the bounds of house rules, step out of the permission-giving role and empower your child with "You decide." This phrase, along with similar language, such as "You choose," "It's up to you," and "You can pick," creates opportunities for children to practice being decisive. It is one more chance for them to experience their own power and to exercise independence.

6. "Check It Out Inside."

Examples: "Do you think you hurt Jenny's feelings? Check it out inside."

"Why did you choose to behave that way? Check it out inside."

We teach children where to turn for answers. We show them how to find answers in the dictionary, on the Internet, in their textbooks, and in the library. But rarely do we teach them to look within themselves. "Check it out inside" is a phrase that can help children to learn to look within for some of the answers they seek. Each of us has a wise part within, an intuitive part that knows what is best for us. Contacting, listening to, and trusting that inner authority are important skills. They are invaluable when life presents us with problems whose answers aren't in the back of the book.

Having faith in their own inner authority serves children well by helping them to resist peer pressure, or the temptation to please others at their own expense. When you use phrases that encourage children to trust their own judgment, you help them to develop as competent, autonomous individuals.

TEN GUIDELINES FOR LIVING WITH CHILDREN

1. CATCH THEM BEING GOOD
2. LET THEM HELP YOU
3. MONITOR YOUR CHILDREN
4. ORDERLY/PREDICTABLE HOME ROUTINES
5. CLEAR DISCIPLINE PLANS
6. MINIMIZE LECTURES
7. COMPASSION WITH DISCIPLINE
8. IMPORTANCE OF IMITATION/MODELING
9. BE A PERSON, NOT JUST A PARENT
10. PARENTS ARE TEACHERS

SAMPLE REWARD MENU-- FOR A FAMILY
(TO BE SHARED WITH PARENTS IN YOUR SCHOOL)

1. Go for a walk with Mom and/or Dad.
2. Choose a favorite meal for dinner.
3. Watch an extra 30 minutes of TV.
4. Go out for ice cream or yogurt.
5. Read a story with Mom and/or Dad.
6. Feed the ducks at the park.
7. Go on a bike ride with Mom and/or Dad.
8. Go to McDonald's.
9. Ride the Carousel.
10. Bake cookies with Mom and/or Dad.
11. Go to the pet store.
12. Help Mom and/or Dad make dinner.
13. Do an art project with Mom and/or Dad (e.g. drawing, painting, etc.)
14. Play a game with Mom and/or Dad.
15. Stay up 15 minutes later than usual.
16. Go to the library with Mom and/or Dad.
17. Write a book with Mom and/or Dad (e.g. "Things I like to do"--write one page per day).
18. Call a special friend on the phone (e.g. Grandparents, older siblings).
19. Invite Mom and/or Dad to school or to special activity.
20. Enjoy a piece of candy or gum (sugarless, if you prefer).
21. Have a party at home (popcorn, soft drink or juice, watch a movie together).
22. Receive stickers to put on a chart.

The most important feature of any program is the consistent reward given each time a child is "caught" doing positive behaviors.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FAMILY MEETINGS

Keep Family Meetings Short. *They should last no longer than 10 to 15 minutes. Keep topics simple enough to be solved easily. As the children become more skilled at these meetings, you can bring up more difficult topics. However, keep all meetings brief.*

Set A Reasonable Time For Meetings. *Be sure to have them at a convenient time. Be flexible. Adjust the time of your meetings to meet your schedules.*

Make Family Meetings Fun. *Have a snack or treat during the meeting. Be sure to be positive and bring up encouraging topics as well as difficult ones.*

Use Preventative Teaching. *Teach your children how to bring up topics, how to discuss issues, how to give a compliment, how to listen. It would also be important to teach them to accept feedback, criticism or guidance.*

Keep a Written Record of Decisions, Schedules, Issues, Etc. *Use a notebook or some other convenient way to keep notes. Having a visible means of record keeping cuts down on confusion and arguments. This will allow for follow through as well as an enjoyable anecdotal diary for future years.*

Give Everyone A Chance To Speak. *You can teach cooperation, respect, and sensitivity by assuring everyone a chance to speak. Everyone has a voice and therefore there will be less need to yell and prove a point.*

Give Positive Consequences. *Give rewards and praise for listening, for not interrupting, for bringing good suggestions, or for offering to help others.*

Family Meetings can be one of the most important times your family spends together. You'll improve communication among family members and your children will feel more confident about sharing opinions, accepting compliments and criticism, and making decisions.

HELPING PARENTS WITH ORGANIZATION

1. **STUDY AREA**- use the same area as often as possible. Make materials available. Avoid having the child have to search for pencil, paper, etc. Is the area quiet, conducive to learning, close to resources (books, parents, computer).
2. **KEEP TRACK OF ASSIGNMENTS**- colored folders help to keep track of each class. Use of a "to do" basket, "done" basket or other area to keep assignments helps the child. Many children benefit from assignment sheets, notebooks, or portfolios to keep information separate.
3. **USE VISUAL ORGANIZERS**- The majority of people are visual learners. Use of charts, graphs, or other reminders may help the child. Have a place to write out notes (whiteboard, notepads) for the child.
4. **PARENT GUIDELINES**-
 - **Set a specific time for homework.** When will it start? Will there be breaks for snack? Don't turn homework into a "ball and chain" activity where the child can't leave until completed. Children need to have some physical movement after periods of time.
 - **Diminish distractions.** While we may see music, television, and other media as a distraction, many of us listened to music or had background noise when we did homework. Even in school, children are use to having noise around them. Help the child with attention issues to find the right balance of stimuli.
 - **Take a break.** Let the child have a breather every 15 to 30 minutes.
 - **Keep a focus.** It may be necessary to break down tasks into smaller segments. If there is an assignment with 50 problems, have the child complete 10 then take a break.
 - **Watch homework overload.** How much is too much? If the child becomes too frustrated, they will be ineffective with the homework.
 - **Use a timer.** Set a timer to keep track of how long they have been studying.
 - **Avoid cramming and late nights.** Yeah, right! But, we all know a little bit at a time is the best learning process.

PUNISHMENT VS. TEACHING

PUNISHMENT (may include screaming, belittling, ridiculing, isolating, hitting, slapping, punching). The main concern is the potential negative result to the child's social/emotional growth.

WHY DO WE USE IT?

1. Punishment seems to get an immediate change. Short term impact, but over the long run it creates defensiveness, resentment, and a lack of behavior change.
2. We are not sure what else to do. We become angry, hurt, and frustrated and we respond with our emotions ... often times without clearly thinking of the results or consequences.
3. Fear over losing our authority or control over our children. When we feel a need to "become tougher" and show our children that "we mean business" we may respond with punishment.

WHAT IS THE POSSIBLE IMPACT UPON MY CHILD?

1. Increase in negative behavior (yelling, swearing, mumbling).
2. The child views him/herself in a negative perspective thereby lowering self-esteem.
3. It may create a revenge motive within the child. While they may not take it out on the parent, it may be transferred to other adults (teacher, coach, neighbors) or to other children.
4. It damages the long-term relationship between the parent and the child.
5. A snowball effect often results. This means that if one punishment doesn't work, we use a harsher one ... and on and on. This is often how abuse cycles in the life of a family.

SO WHAT DO WE DO? WE USE APPROPRIATE TEACHING!!!

Naturally, no one thing will work all the time. But the following ideas may help to keep the parent calm, give them direction in using consequences and boundaries, and teach the child alternative skills.

1. Be Specific. Let your child know exactly what they did wrong or right. Avoid placing a judgment upon it. For example, "I'm tired of you not cleaning your room." Instead, "I noticed you haven't cleaned your room yet? When do you think you will be doing it?"
2. Be Responsive. Help your child understand the results of their behavior and consequences (good and bad).
3. Be Concrete. Give clear examples of how they can improve their behavior.
4. Be Positive. Let them know that next time will be better. Help them see you haven't given up on them and are anxious for their success.
5. Be Interactive. Give them a chance to show what they have learned. Practice the correct response, role-play, reverse role-play, work together for success.
6. Be Informative. You become the teacher, the coach. Be their rooting section.

OTHER IDEAS:

- Re-Direction. Gently and carefully guide the child to other activities. "How about we go for a walk?" "I was just about to make lunch. Do you want to help?"
- Guiding. Show them a more effective approach. By guiding, you actually do it for them and then let them come along side you. "Let me show you what I mean when I say to clean up your room. This shirt would be folded (do it), now you do it."
- Shaping. This is a process of changing behavior. Notice the small steps and changes in their behavior on the way to major changes.

Practical strategies for helping children of divorce in today's classroom

Childhood Education

Paul A Miller, Patti Ryan, and William Morrison

By the time they turn 18, approximately 50 to 60 percent of all children in the United States have been affected by divorce. Virtually every teacher needs to be familiar with the effects divorce may have on children's classroom behavior. Unlike some other stressors, divorce-related problems (e.g., visitation, child support, parental custody) can be ongoing sources of stress to children, even up to 8 years after the initial separation. As a result, teachers are likely to have students who are dealing with a variety of divorce-related issues at any one time. Effective teaching of these children requires an understanding of the impact of divorce, a supportive environment, safe channels for children to communicate feelings and problems, instruction on building coping and self-regulation skills, and resources to help parents.

Divorce's Effects on Children's Functioning

According to research reviews, children of divorce, when compared to children from dual-parent families, exhibit more "acting-out" behaviors (e.g., aggression, conflict with school authorities) as well as maladaptive, internally directed behaviors (e.g., depression, anxiety, and withdrawal). Children of divorce also are more likely to perform less well academically, have a lower academic self-concept (but not lower self-esteem), and are less motivated to achieve. These adjustment difficulties are sometimes directly divorce related, and sometimes due more to problems in parents' functioning.

Current trends in the literature indicate that the effects of divorce on children may vary by gender, age, developmental level, and quality of non-custodial parenting. It is critical, however, to remember that these findings are based upon group averages, and that any given child in your classroom, of course, may not fit these trends:

Although some studies find that boys have more adjustment problems than girls do, empirical research across multiple gender studies finds that boys do less well than girls only in terms of their social adjustment. More conflict is noted between mothers and sons, but mother-daughter conflicts rise to equal levels in adolescence.

While divorce can have adverse effects on children of all ages, there do not appear to be specific types of negative effects for any given age. Elementary school children's social adjustment may be more affected, while high school students may have more problems with self-concept.

There may be age-related divorce concerns that are linked to children's levels of cognitive and emotional development. Preschoolers are more likely to focus on maintaining emotional security and relationships with both parents, and to need routines in their school and home environments. In middle childhood, issues that originated during the preschool years can be compounded by children assuming guilt, blame, or responsibility for the parents' divorce, or by children holding unrealistic expectations about their ability to influence parental behavior, such as bringing their parents back together. High school students are more likely to deal with divorce-related concerns cognitively, and to express these concerns in terms of their own identity, capacity for relationships, and life-choice issues.

The quality of contact with the non-custodial parent is associated with children's levels

of anxiety and conduct problems in school. The amount of visitation alone does not promote children's adjustment. High-quality contact lowers the levels of anxiety and lessens the likelihood of conduct problems. Even though, over time, fathers increasingly see less of their children, up to half of children still consider their fathers to be members of the family.

Learn What the Divorce Means to the Individual Child

Children's responses to divorce are not uniform; some children may be indistinguishable from children of intact families, while others may experience serious emotional, behavioral, or academic adjustment problems. Children of divorce may:

- ** Have to contend with their parents' suddenly unpredictable moods
- ** Feel more emotionally isolated, insecure, anxious, or depressed
- ** Feel (or be made to feel) guilty or responsible for the divorce, and they may assume adult-like responsibilities for themselves, their siblings, or even their own parents
- ** Feel pressured to take sides, share or withhold secrets, or bad-mouth or spy on the other parent
- ** Be unable to do favorite activities with their friends
- ** Lose contact with everything dear to them, including friends, home, siblings, and their neighborhood.

Emotional Security and Support

There are five types of support that children of divorce need: recreational, advice-giving, resource, emotional, and positive feedback. Children's sense of emotional security is a significant factor in reducing their risk for developing adjustment problems. How, then, can teachers foster emotional security in a supportive classroom?

First, because children of divorce sometimes worry about abandonment, assure them that their relationship with you is secure and intact. A positive teacher-child relationship can affirm a child's sense of safety, security, and self-worth. Whatever your own style of expressing support, it is important that you tell children exactly how you can provide it. Second, be compassionate. A tolerant, calming, or kind word to a child who is having a difficult time communicates acceptance and understanding (e.g., "You seem to be having a hard time following the rules. Are you feeling bad about something?"). Feeling "understood" opens the door for the child to talk about concerns, which is the first step toward constructive problem-solving.

Some children may be more sensitive to major changes in school routines, classroom schedules, and staffing. If changes have to be made, prepare children in advance. Provide information about how the new situation will unfold, and what they can do to manage it. Provide as much notice as possible about any change. Also, provide opportunities to talk about what the change means to them. Hold a party or some other ritual to celebrate the person. If the move is within the school, find ways for the child to maintain contact with this person.

Provide Opportunities To Exercise Personal Control

Children have virtually no control over many divorce related events. Their non-custodial parent may move away, they themselves may have to move from their home or

school, and they may have to adjust to a lower standard of living. This lack of control can threaten children's developing sense of mastery. Teachers can help by allowing children to exercise control over meaningful classroom procedures, activities, and events. Look for ways to allow children to make or influence decisions about seating arrangements, work groups, learning and play activities, homework assignments, and extracurricular activities. Also, assign children to various leadership roles, with clearly assigned directions for completing the tasks.

Be Tolerant of Variability in Academic Performance

Children, understandably, are often emotionally preoccupied. Consequently, they may have a harder time paying attention or persisting on academic tasks. Changes in their schedules for staying with either parent, for example, also increase the chances of children forgetting or not completing homework. Be careful of interpreting declines in academic performance as due to lack of interest, laziness, or as intentional. By using a communication procedure, such problems-and their solutions-can be discussed calmly and collaboratively with the child.

Express Faith in Children's Character and Capacity for Growth

Negative emotional reactions stemming from divorce related events often underlie children's behavior problems. Misbehavior may occur because children are overwhelmed by these feelings, don't know how to express them, or express them immaturely (e.g., through name-calling, teasing, fighting, giving up). If we view children's poor classroom behavior or work habits as something that is inherent to their character, we will more likely feel compelled to control their behavior. That is, we will be inclined to focus solely on punishing the behavior, rather than on helping the children learn more constructive behaviors. If we think of children's misbehaviors as natural reactions to divorce, we are much more likely to be less critical, more patient, and more willing to engage them in learning new behaviors.

Create a Communication Procedure With Children

Many children of divorce want their teachers to know about their home situations, and are anxious not to be criticized by their teacher when they have problems. They want their teachers to listen and talk with them about their feelings.

Ask yourself the following questions: Do you have a mutually agreed-upon procedure through which your students can come talk with you? Does the procedure encourage students to talk with you before they engage in non-constructive behavior? Can children rely on you to listen to them? Do you consistently use rules for listening (e.g., establishing times when you are available, respecting confidentiality, refraining from criticism)? Do you encourage children to come to you to talk? Do you make it safe for them to talk? Do you listen, or do you immediately start telling the child what to do? Do they appear to calm down after talking with you? If not, obtain candid feedback on your communication style.

Apply Communication Skills to Divorce Concerns

Communicate your commitment by helping the child tell his or her "story." An educator can help children identify and express what is bothering them through such

basic listening skills as:

- ** Active or reflective listening ("It sounds like you're sad / mad about not seeing your dad this weekend")
- ** Open-ended, versus yes-or-no, questions ("Can you tell me about those sad/angry feelings?" "Tell me more about ... " "What's going on with you today?")
- ** "I" versus "you" statements ("I'm feeling frustrated because I want to help you focus on your reading, but what I'm trying isn't working" instead of "You're really frustrating today! Why can't you focus?")
- ** Clarification ("Let me make sure that I'm understanding what you mean. Are you saying...?")

Have a "Grab-Bag" of Strategies That Match Individual Children

When children are having a difficult time controlling their feelings or behavior, help them devise strategies to regain control. Some may like talking about the problem with you or with a peer counseling group, or they may respond to a personal touch. Others may need to deal with feelings and issues nonverbally (e.g., drawing a picture or writing in a diary). Still others may like a more strenuous and distracting activity (e.g., running around the playground, role-playing), or they may prefer having a quiet time and place away from social and academic demands (e.g., reading alone or running a school errand). Remember, however, that when children are extremely upset or angry, the first step is to help them regain their composure.

Similarly, have an agreement that when students' class work is affected they will come and talk to you about how to handle the situation. You may identify a series of alternative behaviors they might use to deal with the problem, and you also may ask the child if he or she has any ideas on how to deal with the situation. Short breaks, breaking down the task into smaller, more manageable parts, and peer social support are some ways to handle academic problems.

Children's temperaments influence their styles of coping with stress. Some children are highly social and "bounce back" relatively quickly, others need a little coaxing and support, and still others need much more assistance in settling themselves down. It is critical not to judge or compare one child against another in terms of coping skills. Teachers can learn about their children's styles of dealing with stress, and about their coping skills, through social problem-solving exercises.

Be Firm Yet Fair About Expectations

An established communication process assures students that they will have a chance to tell you their stories and find solutions that are based upon commonly understood rules. Communicate your expectations of classroom standards for behavior and expressing feelings, including a firm and immediate response to violations. If a child acts out his anger by acting rudely to another student, the essence of your message should be: "You appear to be angry, but we don't hit or break things, or act rudely to others. Let's talk about another way of handling those feelings." Or "You need to sit by yourself for a while to think about how you could have handled this situation better. When you are able to control your feelings and behavior, let me know and we'll talk about what to do the next time."

Be Proactive, Not Reactive

Consult with the school counselor as soon as you know a child is struggling with a family-related problem. Intervening at the first sign of a child's divorce-related problem can prevent the problem from worsening and affecting other areas of the child's functioning. Once the child is behind in schoolwork or has alienated his or her peers, the problem becomes much harder to resolve. Early intervention should begin with a parent conference as soon as the child's classroom difficulties persist beyond normal limits. Parents are more likely to be cooperative and hopeful if they see that their child's behaviors are in the early stages, and that you are trying to prevent the situation from worsening.

Limitations of Teachers' Roles

Teachers, understandably, wonder about how much they need to become involved in children's divorce related problems. Some general guidelines are:

- ** Focus upon divorce-related problems only as they affect children's classroom behavior and academic performance
- ** Refer general divorce-related problems (e.g., a child chronically stressed by divorce-related events) to the school's counselor/psychologist, and proceed on the basis of that person's recommendations
- ** Discuss divorce-related problems with parents only in terms of how they affect the child's classroom behavior and academic performance
- ** Avoid being drawn into taking sides, or supporting one parent's claims over the other
- ** Be compassionate and a source of support to children, but do not take on a parental role
- ** Facilitate parents' and children's access to relevant resources and information for dealing with divorce-related problems, without suggesting that you will be involved in resolving such problems.

For Teachers

In a review of 25 teacher training programs, found that while topics of divorce were addressed, none had prioritized it among their training objectives. Consequently, teachers will need to take the initiative for additional training.

- Ask the school psychologist/counselor to sponsor workshops, or provide resource materials, on how to deal with divorce-related issues.
- Create a teacher group to discuss and brainstorm strategies for handling divorce-related problems in your classrooms.
- Create a list of reading resources for children, teachers, and parents
- Ask the librarian for age-appropriate literature on books covering divorce-related topics and make these readings available.

For Parents

- Prepare a 1 to 2-page handout on how they can help their children deal with divorce-related stresses.
- Collaborate with the school counselor in providing materials to distribute or in setting up workshops for parents.

-- Do not neglect fathers; stress the importance of their attending.

Also, ask parents to let you know 1) about divorce issues their children are dealing with, 2) how the child is coping with these issues, and 3) when new stressful events occur (e.g., a parent starts dating again).

Include a reading list of books on how parents can help their children deal with divorce-related events. Parents need to know what issues stress children the most, including:

Being involved with or observing inter-parental conflict or physical aggression, especially when it is related to custody or parental visits. Children often feel they are to blame for conflicts on matters relating to them. Parents need to keep their conflicts to themselves, and not involve their children. They should explain to their children that the conflict is a problem between the adults, and that it is not the child's responsibility to fix it.

Being drawn into the middle of parental relationship problems. This often makes children feel like they are either betraying one parent or the other. Parents should not ask a child to pass along critical or negative information to the other parent, take sides, show a preference for one of the parents, or spy on or keep secrets about the other parent. Such pressures threaten children's need to sustain and maintain their own relationships with each parent.

Being blamed by the parent or feeling at fault for the divorce (or related problems). Parents need to encourage and explain to their children that the divorce did not occur because of them, but rather because of adult choices and relationship problems.

Having a parent angry with them or critical of them. Such anger or criticism, if chronic, raises children's fears of further abandonment and loss of emotional support. Consequently, such threats seriously undermine children's self-esteem and sense of worthiness to be loved.

Observing one parent being criticized, mocked, or demeaned by the other parent, or by other adults. Such "bad-mouthing" can make children feel they are wrong to want to maintain a relationship with that parent.

Adjusting to multiple changes in school, home, and visitation routines. As much as possible, parents should try to maintain continuity in the child's daily routines, school, friends, home, and neighborhood. A consistent environment helps children maintain their sense of security and emotional stability, which enables them to handle the stress of separation from the other parent, and the demands of school and peer relationships.

CONCLUSION

Separation from a loved one is one of the most difficult, emotional events in life. Those of us who care for children must recognize what we can do to help those dealing with divorce-related problems. The way we do so may frame their notions of how human relationships are to be conducted. By being proactive, supportive, and willing to communicate, teachers model positive relationship skills.

**PARENTS: ADVERSARY OR ALLY
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What To Do When Words Get Ugly. Michael Sedler. Revell Books, 2016 (edited/revised edition). Examines the topic of gossip and how it impacts people. (Adult) www.bakerbooks.com 1-800-877-2665

When to Speak Up and When to Shut Up. Michael Sedler. Revell Books, 2006. Communication book discussing conflict and encouragement. (Adult) www.bakerbooks.com 1-800-877-2665 **(over 300,000 copies sold).**

Both books are available in CD format as audio books.