

## II. Instructor's Guide

### *Introduction to Classes for Parents of Infants and Toddlers*

#### Format of the classes

The classes in the Compassionate Childrearing Parent Education Program begin with informal discussion, a brief explanation of the relevant concepts, and question and answer exchanges about our underlying philosophy of child-rearing and information about child development. Participants are encouraged to describe their experiences with their infants or toddlers. This is followed by a 15-minute break.


After the break, there is an introduction to, and viewing of DVD or streamed video clips, followed by open discussion of participant's reactions to the clips, for example, how they relate the material to their own experiences, both in growing up and today as parents with their children.

Please be sure to leave time near the end of each class for participants to interact and socialize. If their infants or young children have been in childcare in nearby room, this is the time to have them join the group. Create an informal, friendly atmosphere for this period.

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Class meetings are 2 ½ to 3 hours each, and are held weekly for six weeks. There is a 15-minute break halfway through the class. **Some agencies have adapted the program to a 12-week course with class meetings of 1-1/2 to 2 hours each.**

If possible, classes should be small, limited to six or seven couples or a total of 15 including singles and couples.



Instructors may elect to provide child-care if one or two infants tend to cry or disrupt the discussion. If child-care is provided, time should be allotted during the coffee break and during the last fifteen minutes of class for socializing and interacting with the infants and toddlers, as noted above.

### **Schedule of Activities**

- (1) The first 15-20 minutes can be used to review the previous week's concepts and to consider questions parents have from the Parent's Workbook. (During the **first class** meeting, this time period is used for the instructor and participants to introduce themselves and to discuss the goals of the course)
- (2) The concepts and topics to be covered during the class meeting are introduced through informal lecture, questions and answers, and open discussion with participants.
- (3) It has been found that some degree of self-disclosure on the part of the instructor about his/her experiences as a parent or as a child facilitates discussion at this point.
- (4) Following a 15-minute break, the DVD is introduced and shown.
- (5) At least 30 – 45 minutes should be allowed for discussion after the tape has been screened. The DVD excerpts have been found to be an excellent means of stimulating both intellectual insight and emotional responses. Lively discussion and expression of feelings on the part of participants usually follow the viewing of tapes. Participants tend to identify with at least one, or sometimes many, of the experiences of parents shown on the DVD.

The emotions experienced by the participants while viewing the videos are at the core of the process of change or transformation that occurs over the course of the class meetings. As they get in touch with how they felt as children in certain painful situations, they gain insight into the origins of some of their limitations as parents. Even more important, they experience feelings of compassion toward themselves in relation to these childhood events, feelings that they then extend to their children.

- (6) Refreshments and social hour following the classes can be used as a time for the instructor to interact with participants as well as their infants and children.



## Pre-Meeting Preparation

- \_ Have name tags available for registration in Class 1. [for larger classes]
- \_ Have books, additional resources, and brochures on child-rearing on a display table. A **lending-library arrangement** is recommended so that parents may check out resource material.
- \_ Preview DVD excerpts to be viewed during the class meeting.
- \_ Have toys and games available for older children, and if possible, childcare for younger children when parents are unable to arrange for a baby sitter or child care.
- \_ Read referenced book chapters and lecture notes. Add other material where needed for specific populations. (foster parents, court-mandated parents, etc)
- \_ Prepare refreshments to be served during the break and after the class; refreshments could include coffee, tea, soda, juice, milk, cookies, chips and dip, etc.