



## Compassionate Child-Rearing Parent Education Program

### **Workbook for Parents of Infants and Toddlers**

“I want to close with a personal plea to professionals and parents alike to consider their own humanity and the humanity of children, to give value to their own lives and their experiences in spite of painful existential issues. I hope that we can move beyond our limitations and reach out to children in a way that will spare them so much unnecessary suffering”

-Robert Firestone, Ph.D. from *Compassionate Child-Rearing*



## Purposes of This Workbook

- To provide you with a guide to use at home as you go through the program.
- To reinforce and enhance the insights you develop during the 6-week program through selected questions and suggestions.
- To serve as a resource book for continuing study and for your own personal development after the classes are over.
- To encourage the use of your own journal notes as a method for reinforcing the new perspective on child-rearing that you develop during the course.

## How to Use This Workbook

- Read the objectives for the class.
- After each class, fill in answers to the questions. The questions are designed to stimulate your thinking about important issues you may want to bring up in next week's class discussion.
- The exercise following Class Meeting 2—writing down your negative and positive thoughts on Exercise 1.3 – Keeping a Journal can be continued through the program and be used as an ongoing exercise after the program is completed.
- Exercise 1.3, Keeping a Journal is provided as a Handout for Class 2 and at the end of this Parents Workbook.



## Class Meeting I

### Compassionate Child-Rearing and Parental Ambivalence

#### Objectives

1. Following this week's class and after answering the questions on the Handout -- The New Parent's Questionnaire, you may notice that you are more accepting of all of your attitudes and feelings toward your infant or toddler. You may also feel more tolerant of any feelings of anxiety, fear, insecurity, and self-doubts that new parents typically experience when caring for their newborn.
2. You may recall some of the ways that your parents treated you that you approve of and others you disagree with.
3. You will probably notice some positive changes in your self-esteem.
4. You will probably begin to feel more compassionate toward yourself and more confident in your interactions with your children as a result of exploring your own childhood experiences.

Questions to consider before next week's meeting. The topics covered by these questions will be discussed over the course of the next 5 class meetings.

1. Describe your fantasies and expectations before your baby arrived.
2. What hopes do you have for your child in the future? Do you anticipate that your child will look like a certain person in your family?



3. In thinking about the parents in the videotape *Parental Ambivalence*, were you reminded of any incidents from your childhood that were similar to the experiences the parents talked about? Describe one event you remember.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Is there one specific problem you currently have in caring for new baby or toddler? Describe the problem and your strategies for dealing with it.

**Notes:**



## Class Meeting 2

### Factors Limiting the Emotional Development of Children How the Critical Inner Voice Impacts Parent-Child Relationships

#### Objectives:

1. After this week's meeting, you will be more aware of the times when you criticize yourself and will learn ways to interrupt the process of running yourself down needlessly.
2. In keeping a journal (see Handout, Exercise 1.3 and at the end of your workbook) you will record your self-critical thoughts as well as positive traits and qualities you like in yourself. In this way, you will be better able to identify the kinds of thoughts that make you feel depressed, resentful, or angry. Writing down your negative thoughts and the more realistic, congenial thoughts you have toward yourself also helps interrupt destructive ways of thinking about yourself.
3. You will learn ways to interact with your infant or toddler that make him or her feel secure, soothed, safe, and seen for who he or she really is.
4. You will learn more about how children's early environment shapes their views about themselves, their ability to regulate their emotions, their sense of self and emotional well-being. Although there are genetic differences between babies, the truth is that no baby is born "difficult," "bad," or "angry," even though infants do have different styles of responding to their early environment. Parents who are relaxed and easy-going and who accept both their positive and negative feelings toward their children are better able to help even a very "difficult" or temperamentally "slow to warm-up" infant feel secure and loved.


#### Changing Negative, Self-Critical Views

##### Step 1 - Recognizing Self-Critical Thoughts

The first step in changing self-critical thoughts and self-depreciating attitudes occurs when you are able to identify your self-attacks or "voices" as the parents in *The Inner Voice in Child Abuse* were able to do.

##### Step 2 - Recognizing the Source of Your Self-Critical Thoughts

Secondly, you may recall being spoken to by your parents in much the same way that you run yourself down in your current life. You may also remember being labelled or defined by family



members as “bad”, or the “trouble-maker,” or other negative labels. By recognizing that someone criticized you as a child, inaccurately categorized you in a negative way, or made you feel bad about yourself in other ways, you will gain a sense of compassion for yourself and an understanding of the sources of your present-day limitations.

### **Step 3 - Extending More Positive Attitudes to Your Child**

Thinking negatively about yourself has probably interfered with your attempts to apply effective child-rearing methods. As you begin to think of yourself in a more positive light, you will be better able to apply the child-rearing techniques you read about in parenting books and/or learn in your class.

#### **About the Parents in *The Inner Voice in Child Abuse* and *Invisible Child Abuse***

The parents who participated in making the videotapes, *The Inner Voice in Child Abuse* and *Invisible Child Abuse* recognized the origins of their self-critical attitudes in early childhood. They were able to see that they had come about their limitations innocently; something had happened to them while growing up that was still having a detrimental effect on them and their interactions with their children.

This new understanding was the key factor in changing attitudes and actions that had been hurtful to them and to their children. The exercise that follows is similar in many respects to the process of change that these parents experienced in their series of discussions.



## Exercise

1. Purchase a journal or begin using Exercise 1.3 in the Class 2 Handout to write down negative, self-critical thoughts you might have about yourself each day.
2. On the left-hand side of the page, record your negative, self-critical thoughts in the second person, for example “*You’re not a very good parent. You just can’t do anything right. You’re so nervous and high-strung.*”
3. On the right-hand side of the page, write down a more objective and positive view of yourself, qualities that you like or admire in yourself. Record these rational, and more congenial attitudes in the first person, for example: “I’m a pretty good parent. I do many things competently. Sometimes I get nervous, but I’m basically relaxed and easy-going;” and other answers back to self-critical “voices.”
4. Keep this journal for a week and see how many negative thoughts you have every day. You may be amazed at how often you run yourself down and how much these self-critical thoughts control your moods and influence your actions.

Even if some of the negative things you tell yourself are partly true, there is no reason to accuse yourself or criticize yourself so harshly. Negative thoughts lead to depression, anxiety, and irritability. These self-critical thoughts originated in statements your parents may have said to you when you were a child. Now you carry these statements around as an inner “voice” or thought process that runs you down and makes you feel bad.

Keeping this journal will help you identify the specific ways you criticize yourself and will help you formulate answers to these self-attacks in the form of positive statements about yourself.

This exercise can lead to an increase in self-esteem and feelings of positive self-regard, which, in turn, will have a positive effect on your children.

**After writing down your negative thoughts and your positive or more objective attitudes toward yourself, please consider the following questions:**

1. Where do you think you learned to put so much pressure on yourself to be perfect? Describe your ideals in relation to child-rearing that you think may be unrealistic.



2. Were you told “No” by your parents when you asked for things you really wanted? Did you feel selfish for wanting things as a child? Describe your reactions to your parents’ refusal to give you what you asked for.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What are some of the ideas you’ve had regarding ways to prevent your children from thinking that they are bad, demanding, or burdensome?

**Notes:**







## Class Meeting 3


### Reasons Parents Often Have Difficulty Sustaining a Close, Secure Relationship with Their Child

#### Objectives:

1. By the end of this class meeting, you will be familiar with many of the factors that contribute to attuned interactions between parents and their infant; you will learn what is involved in repairing disruptions that inevitably occur in every parent-child relationship
2. You will understand why it is sometimes difficult for parents to sustain a close personal relationship with their child; why it is sometimes hard to repair misattunements.
3. You will become more aware of times when you feel like pulling away from your child. This awareness and an understanding of the reasons that you put distance between yourself and your child will help you remain emotionally close at those times.

#### Questions to consider before next week's meeting:

1. Were there any long-term separations from your parents during your childhood? Through death? Divorce? Illness? If so, describe your reactions at the time.
2. What do you think your parents offered you that has been the most valuable to you in your adult life?
3. What faults or weaknesses did you dislike in your parent or parents? Describe.

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4. Have you decided not to do certain things the way your parents did? Not set up certain rules, as your child grows older? Not follow certain family traditions or rituals? How do you do things differently in your new family?
  
  5. How difficult or easy is it for you to talk honestly about your own feelings with your children?
  
  6. How do you usually respond when your child has a strong opinion that may differ from your own?
  
  7. How do you usually handle a strong “No” from your child? (typical of a two-year old expressing his or her independence). Describe an example.
  
  8. What are some of the “shoulds” you feel in relation to being a “good” parent?
  
  9. Continue to record your negative and positive thoughts in your journal. Do you ever criticize yourself for doing things differently from your parents? What negative things do you sometimes tell yourself about these differences?

**Notes:**



## Class Meeting 4

### Independence and Individuation: Emotional Hunger versus Love

#### Objectives:

1. You will become more familiar with the important features to look for when selecting a baby-sitter and/or a day-care arrangement for your baby or toddler.
2. You will learn about the distinction between love and emotional hunger. Love is based on affection *for* a child, whereas emotional hunger is based on a painful longing for love *from* a child, based on unfilled needs from a parent's own childhood.
3. You will develop a better understanding of what children need as they progress through different developmental stages of early childhood. By recognizing what every child needs—warmth and affection as well as control and direction—you may recall times in your own childhood when your needs were not met. This understanding will enable you to become more sensitive to your child's wants and needs.

#### Questions to consider before next week's meeting:

1. After viewing the video, *Hunger vs. Love*, could you recall either of your parents being overprotective or intrusive in taking care of you? Do you think the way you were treated made you feel that you were more helpless or incompetent than you really were at that age? Describe your reactions.
2. Did your parents try to get comfort from you when you were a child? Did one of them seek you out as a confidant or special companion and leave the other parent out? If so, how did you feel in these situations?



3. Did your parent or parents insist that you perform for friends and relatives? How did you feel at those times?
  
4. Did your parent or parents brag excessively to their friends and relatives about your accomplishments (as though your achievements or talents were theirs or positively reflected on them)? How did you respond?
  
5. Do you ever notice yourself asking your toddler or child to perform for friends or relatives even when he or she is uncomfortable or shy in the situation? Do you notice other parents doing this? How does it make you feel?

**Notes:**



## Class Meeting 5


### Attachment and Child Development

#### Objectives:

1. Infant research in recent years has come up with some fascinating findings about the abilities of the newborn. You will learn some interesting facts about your baby's vision, hearing, perception, mobility, smell, taste, and motor development.
2. You will learn what to expect at different stages in your child's early development.
3. You will become familiar with the different patterns of attachment that children develop with their parents, (secure and insecure), and some of the environmental factors that contribute to the development of each pattern. You will learn how our early attachment patterns often affect how we parent our own children.
4. You will view videotaped interviews with several parents who have explored the attachments they developed with their parents and who they turned to for safety and security during their childhoods. They also speak about the challenges they face today as parents.
5. You will be asked to think of three adjectives or words that reflect the relationship you had with your mother and your father or primary caregiver. (See below HANDOUT.) There will be an open discussion of the words you choose. You may also talk about any memory or incident that illustrates one of the words or adjectives you have chosen.

#### OPTIONAL

Your instructor may arrange for you to learn resuscitation and other procedures from a certified nurse or CPR trainer, suggestions about what to look for in selecting a car seat for your infant or toddler, and other ways to protect your toddler from potential health and safety hazards in the home and outside environment.



## Planning for a Continuing Support Group and Play Group for Your Children [in preparation for Class Meeting 6]


Many parents have decided to continue meeting together after classes are completed. They tend to have several motives for this decision. They want:

1. To use each other as resources for support and reinforcement of concepts and methods learned in class.
2. To continue friendships they formed with each other during the 6-week class period.
3. To exchange baby-sitting and child-rearing functions. As their children grow older, these parents generally form play groups for their children and baby-sitting exchanges, where each parent or two parents take turns providing activities for several children.

In many cities around the country, play groups and cooperative nurseries have been formed by parents who became friends through parent education classes and pooled their personal resources to implement the kind of program they wanted.

You might want to begin discussing the logistics involved in setting up this kind of play group, baby-sitting exchange, or support group for you and your friends at the final class meeting.

You might also want to plan a reunion with your class instructor six months from now, especially if you plan to continue as a support group or establish a baby-sitting exchange network.



## Questions about discipline

1. Were your parents strict or overly permissive in their discipline of you and your siblings?
2. What do you think the major goals of discipline are?
3. Do you feel that parents can *really* share in the child-care functions and discipline? Did your mother and father share in taking care of you and your siblings? Who was the disciplinarian in your family when you were growing up? Who is the disciplinarian in your family today?

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**Notes:**





# HANDOUT

## Words to Describe Your Early Relationships

**Choose three adjectives or words that reflect your relationship with one of your parents. Try to think back as far as you can remember to your early childhood.**

Adjective 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Adjective 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Adjective 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, try to think of a memory or an incident that would illustrate each of the words you choose to describe the relationship. Write these memories or incidents down.**

Adjective 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Memory: \_\_\_\_\_

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Adjective 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Memory: \_\_\_\_\_

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Adjective 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Memory: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Class Meeting 6

### Facilitating a Secure Attachment: Attitudes toward Discipline Making Plans for an Ongoing Support Group

#### Objectives:

1. You will achieve a better understanding of the distinction between “punishment” and “discipline.”
2. You will get a real feeling for the goals you want to accomplish when disciplining your child.
3. You will be better able to recognize what your child may be feeling when he or she misbehaves, is “oppositional,” sulks, cries in anger, or throws a tantrum.
4. You will be more in touch with what YOU are feeling when your child misbehaves, is oppositional, sulks, cries in anger, or throws a tantrum. This will help you to NOT “flip you lid” or go down the “low road” and to stay in touch emotionally with child and explore together what is troubling him or her.
5. You may want to be involved in helping set up a baby-sitting exchange with your fellow participants.
6. You may also wish to arrange for future meetings together for an in-depth exploration of your childhood and of your present-day relationships with your children. You may want to pursue other courses, such as the **PsychAlive E-Course, Making Sense of Your Life with Drs. Dan Siegel and Lisa Firestone**.

The **E-Course** material can be used in a series of group meetings where participants work toward creating a coherent narrative of their early attachment relationships. They also explore how these past relationship may be affecting interactions they now have with their children.



## Optional Questions

These questions are confidential and personal. The questions may stimulate further thoughts and memories about your experiences in growing up.

### Your Parents' Behaviors That May Have Caused You Shame or Guilt

**Mother**

**Father**

Yes No

Yes No

As a child were you beaten or scolded in the presence of others?

Yes No

Yes No

Did your parents show with words and gestures that they liked you?

Yes No

Yes No

Did it happen that your parents said something you had said or done in front of others so that you felt ashamed?

Yes No

Yes No

Did your parents begrudge you things you needed?

Yes No

Yes No

Did your parents usually criticize you and tell you how lazy and useless you were in front of others?

Yes No

Yes No

Did your parents use expressions like, "If you do that, you will make me sad"?

11.

© *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*. (Firestone, Firestone & Catlett, 2002) excerpted from Ross, M.W., R.L. Campbell, and J.R. Clayer. 1982) New Inventory for Measurement of Parental Rearing Patterns: An English Form of the EMBU, *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 66: 499-507.

Describe your reactions to questions that you answered with "Yes."

**Notes:**

