




Effective Parenting: Creating a Happy Family Environment

Potential Plus Big Family Weekend, 27th October 2013


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Outline of the Workshop

- Constitutive parts of family environment
- Exercises: 1. Identifying problem area(s) and 2. Finding solutions (with neurological levels)
- Happiness and better study
- Parent and child responsibilities
- Parenting strategies
 - Non-violent communication
 - Problem resolution process
 - Empathy
 - Praise
 - 5 Love languages
 - Responsibility and authority
 - Inclusion in decision making
 - Setting boundaries
 - Inclusion in decision making
 - Accountability
- Parenting resources



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Who we are



- Potential Plus Members since 2011
- Parents of 9½ y.o. daughter, Aliyah
- Dr Shoshana Garfield
 - PhD in Psychology
 - Contracted to revamp our school's wellbeing policy
 - Attachment theory specialist
 - Expertise in psychological trauma recovery and happy relationships



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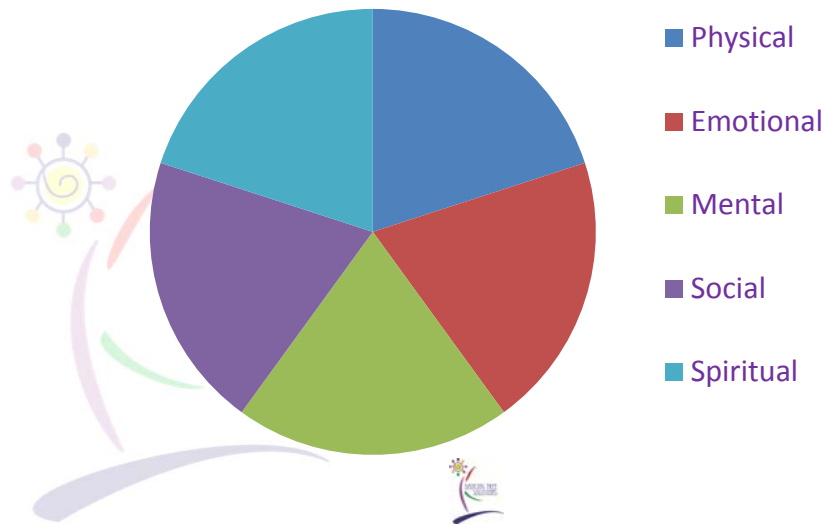
Question:

What is a Family Environment? What are its constitutive parts?



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Constitutive parts of family environment



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Physical environment

- Study space (Public / private? Tidy/ untidy? Ergonomic/not?)
- Rest space (tidy/untidy? Quiet/loud? Spacious/cramped?)
- Distractions /fun (TV, Xbox, Wii)
- Study objects (books, musical instruments, computer)
- Food & drink (sweets / healthy snacks? water/ coke?)
- Activities (computer gaming / sport)



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Emotional environment

- What are the typical emotions at home?
- Life attitudes
- Boundaries and their enforcement
- Arguments? Unspoken feelings?
- Mood at the dinner table
- Emotions when doing homework
- Songs on the radio, TV / films



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Mental environment

- What do you speak to your children about?
- Books
- TV / radio /online programmes
- Board games
- Computer games
- Newspapers / magazines



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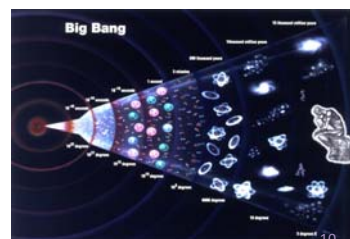
Social environment

- Parents (present / absent, together / divorced)
- Family members (what are they like?, what do your children learn from them?)
- Family friends
- Radio / TV / Internet programmes
- Newspapers
- Social media (e.g. Facebook, games chat rooms)
- School friends / playdates



Spiritual environment

- Family Values & Priorities (what is important?)
- Family identity (e.g. “we are atheists / agnostics / Christians”)
- Beliefs & convictions (how is this world arranged? what are you here for? what’s the purpose of living?)
- Attitude to failure



Exercise 1: Family environment

1. For each of 5 types of environment (physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual), ask yourself:

- What is working well?
- What is not working?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate it? (1 -worst / 10 - best)

2. Identify the most problematic area(s)

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Exercise 2: Neurological levels

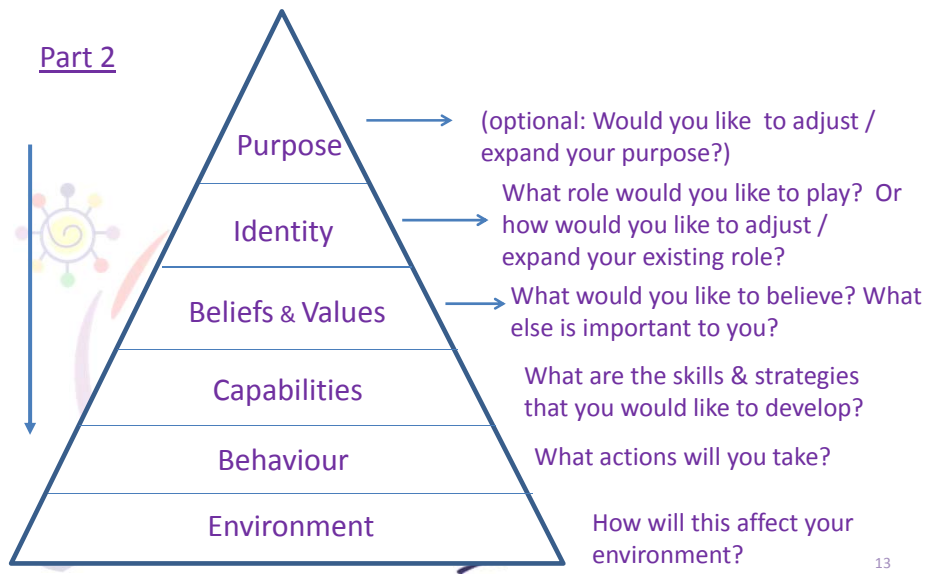
Part 1



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Exercise 2: Neurological levels

Part 2



Happiness and Better Study

- Happy children study better because it happiness promotes:

- Better focus
- More creativity
- More energy
- Higher motivation
- Less fear / anxiety / worry



What is Happiness?

- What makes you happy / unhappy?
- Where does happiness come from?
- What are the constitutive parts of happiness?
(e.g. joy, peace, calm, etc.)



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Happiness and Responsibility for it

- Our happiness comes not from circumstance, but from the meanings we create out of our experience of circumstance.
- Feelings are the felt side of our thinking, however unconscious that thinking may be.
- We are therefore 100% responsible for 100% of our feelings 100% of the time. **NO EXCEPTIONS**, even when it really looks like there should be.

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Responsibility For Our Feelings

- Your children don't make you angry, you make yourself angry with the meaning you are making from the content of your thinking
- Your children don't make you peaceful either – you make yourself peaceful with the meaning you make of what you are thinking about
- **Holding your children accountable for your feelings fosters unhealthy co-dependency**
- Hold yourself accountable and you teach that responsibility to them
- Your children are responsible for all their feelings – tantrums are hence unacceptable after 2 (ish).



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What is your job as a parent?

- To guide your children into being happy, contributing, responsible, self-fulfilled, moral, functioning, independent adults to the utmost of their abilities.



What is NOT your job as a parent?

- It is NOT your job to make your child(ren) happy.
- You can point them in the direction of their happiness but cannot create it for them.



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What is your child(ren)'s job?

- To continually become themselves... which means...
- To be happy, contributing, responsible, self-fulfilled, moral, functioning, independent adults to the utmost of their abilities –
 - Sound thinking (e.g. critical thinking skills, reasoning ability, awareness of and ability to defend against manipulation)
 - Emotional intelligence (e.g. reflexivity, perspective, inner wisdom)



What is NOT your child(ren)'s job?

- It is NOT your child(ren)'s job to make you happy (i.e. with their achievements or compliance).
- This is different from children being held ACCOUNTABLE for their actions.



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Leading by POSITIVE Example

- Your children learn through countless repetition, i.e. what you habitually do, not what you manage to pull out on occasion.
- To be the best parent you can be, you are beholden to clean up your own issues. (We all have them!)
- **Point them to their happiness and self-worth by living yours daily**
- **Point them to their responsibility for their happiness by demonstrating yours daily.** (They need to see you make mistakes and deal with it)



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PARENTING STRATEGIES



“Because of their size, parents may be difficult to discipline properly.”

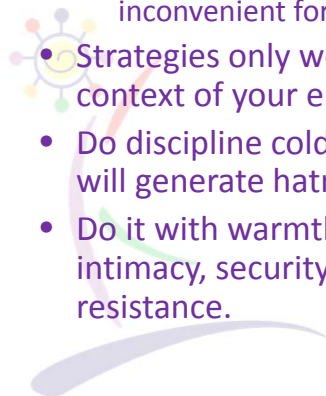
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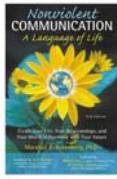
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Caveats

- Strategies are a means to an end, and that end must be in the genuine best interests of the child
 - What is best for your child may be uncomfortable or inconvenient for you.
- Strategies only work if they are presented in the context of your empathy, reliability, care and wisdom.
- Do discipline coldly and with intent to control - and you will generate hatred from your child towards you.
- Do it with warmth and acceptance - and create intimacy, security and cooperation, even with initial resistance.



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Non-Violent Communication

1. Observation
 - “I noticed that you left your coat on the floor in the hallway again”
2. Feeling
 - “It bothers me to see the house untidy”
3. Need
 - “I need to be able to walk through without stumbling on your stuff”
4. Request
 - “What needs to happen for you to remember to hang your coat on a hook in the future?”

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Problem solving / resolving process

- Talk about the child’s feelings and needs (NVC)
 - Do not permit the child to blame or accuse you
- Talk about your feelings and needs (NVC)
 - Without blaming or shaming
- Brainstorm together to find a mutually agreeable solution
- Decide together on the future plan of action
- Decide together on accountability and consequences



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Empathy

- Getting in touch with what may be going on for your child without getting absorbed/flooded/overwhelmed by their feeling
 - Rather, be attentive and curious
 - Whenever possible take an appropriate empathic / compassionate stance
- Expressing empathy
 - Non-verbal: hug, touch, soft eye-contact, gentle voice tone
 - Verbal: “I’m sorry honey...”, “You must be in pain”, “You look so distressed, darling...”



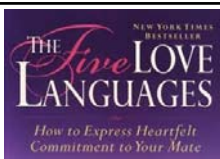
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Praise

- The importance of specific praise (vs. just evaluation)
 - High self-esteem
 - Willingness to cooperate and to share
 - (Trap of good boy/girl bad boy/girl non-specific feedback)
- Using descriptive praise
 - Describe what you see
 - “Wow, this room is really tidy now!”
 - Describe what you feel
 - “It’s so pleasant to be in your room now.”
 - Sum up the behaviour with a word
 - “That’s what I call being well-prepared!”



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The Five Love Languages

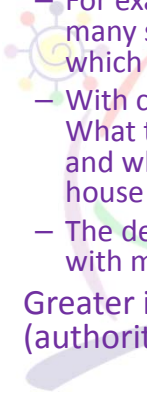
- Gifts
- Words of affirmation (e.g. saying “I love you”)
- Acts of service (e.g. doing washing up, fixing things)
- Quality Time (e.g. watching movie together)
- Physical Touch (e.g. hugs and cuddles)



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Responsibility and Authority

- Responsibility without authority is incredibly disempowering (Moss-Kantor)
- Responsibilities and rule-setting must be age appropriate
 - For example, it isn't up to a 6 year old to determine how many sweets to eat daily, but it can be her/his choice on which sweets, or things like clothes, movies, or playmates
 - With coaching, children can make bigger decisions, e.g. What time to go to bed, when homework should be done and where, how they contribute to the running of the house
 - The depth and breadth of potential involvement increases with maturity (and vice versa!)
- Greater independence comes with greater (authoritative) responsibilities



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Inclusion in Decision Making

- Involve children in making rules (e.g. even bedtime!)
 - Concept of natural consequences – if the bedtime is too late, child wakes up tired. Hence, it is the child's body saying go to bed earlier: ownership leads to self-care, which is much healthier than compliance
- Involve children in deciding consequences for rule breaches when there are no natural consequences
- Rules apply to big people and little people alike



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Accountability

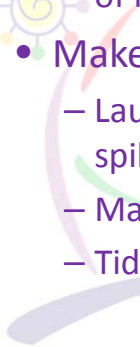
- Honesty comes first to enable healthy accountability
- Avoiding accountability diminishes respect.
 - “Tell them the truth... If the child finds out the parents have been lying... they would be angry and treat you with less respect” *Aliyah Kaitlyn Orr, 8 ½*
- Admitting mistakes doesn't diminish authority
 - But can increase intimacy, (self-) respect and authority
- Just saying 'Sorry!' is not enough - Teshuvah
 - Admit it
 - Say sorry
 - Think about it
 - Make changes / make up for it
- Accountability leads to reliability



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Helping Out At Home

- It's not helping YOU, it's contributing
 - By asking them to contribute you teach them community participation rather than the benefits of keeping you 'sweet'
- Make it age-appropriate, keep adding on, e.g:
 - Laundry in hamper properly at age 2, wiping up spills
 - Making bed from age 4
 - Tidying room at age 6



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Importance of Boundaries

- “Don't give them whatever they want, or they will get too used to having everything they want and have terrible tantrums and you'll have to pay extra for the babysitter.” *Aliyah Kaitlyn Orr, 8 ½*



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Boundaries: Rigidity and Flexibility

- Inconsistent holding of or too much change in boundaries creates addictive pushing against boundaries.
 - Video games programmers use random rewards to deliberately foster gaming addiction
 - Rats pressing levers
 - Having a privilege and then having it taken away is anathema to our human psychology and triggers forceful rebellion (Cialdini – USSR)
- Boundaries/rules must be known in advance where possible and explained where feasible.
- Exceptions need to be explained; the exception criteria become a set of rules themselves, and thus remain predictable



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It's an Art

- Art of listening, allowing, responding, engaging
- Boundary holding and bending and reformulating
 - Although not formulaic and constantly changing, still needs to be predictable. This requires even more skill.
- Remember your parenting is systemic, not a collection of techniques
 - Your authority comes BOTH from your systemic coherence and warmth
- Be conscious and deliberate in your leadership
 - You lead by example whether or not you like that example or are even aware of it



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Parenting Resources

- <http://wellbeingforschools.com/freevideos> - a collection of video recordings of Shoshana's previous talks at Potential Plus / NAGC conferences
- How To Talk So Kids Will Listen And Listen So Kids Will Talk – *Faber & Mazlish*
- Parenting from the Heart – *J Pransky*
- Non-Violent Communication: A Language Of Life – *M Rosenberg*
- Influence: The Psychology Of Human Persuasion – *R Cialdini*
- NLP for Parents (Google search, a few good ones out there)
- Five Love Languages – *C Gary* (www.5lovelanguages.com)
- Raising Resilient Children: Fostering Strength, Hope, And Optimism In Your Child – *Brooks & Goldstein* (*They have an edition for children on the autistic spectrum*)
- Clarity – *J Smart*
- You Can Be Happy No Matter What – *R Carlson*
- Conscious Loving: The Journey To Co-commitment *Hendricks & Hendricks*
- Radial Honesty – *B Blanton*
- To arrange a consultation, or a speaking or teaching engagement:
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