THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CURRICULUM FOR A CO-PARENTING SKILLS PROGRAM

by

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A Master’s Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

With the high incidence of divorce, it is critical that divorcing couples develop the ability to co-parent in a healthy and effective manner. In recognition of this need, many courts are requiring co-parenting education in conjunction with the divorce process. Co-parenting is simply effective parenting in the situation where the parents are no longer committed to each other as marital partners. Both parents support and honor the parent/child relationship and work to provide for the child/children physically, emotionally, and financially. Effective co-parenting allows children to fully experience the parent/child relationship without guilt. Effective co-parenting also encourages acceptance and healing from the trauma that can occur from divorce.

The purpose of this study was to develop a curriculum for a co-parenting skills program that can be used by the judicial system, legal and behavioral professionals and divorcing/divorced families that will minimize the negative effects of divorce on the children.

Current research, trends and practices as presented in the literature as well as personal observations, training, education and experience of the researcher were used as a source of data for the curriculum. The data was analyzed and categorized into a curriculum consisting of six sessions focusing on: effective interacting; effects of parental conflict on children; communication, negotiation and conflict resolution; parenting and co-parenting techniques; family issues, and resources. This curriculum was designed to be in compliance with the guidelines provided by the Arizona Supreme Court.
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Divorce has become commonplace in today’s society. Hirschfeld (1992) reports that since 1972 over one million children under eighteen years of age have experienced divorce each year and the numbers are expected to continue increasing.

Since divorce has been on a steady upswing for over a century, and as adult children are more likely to divorce than others, I am concerned that future numbers may exceed any that we’ve seen before as divorce passes down from generation to generation. (Hirschfield, 1993, p. 3)

According to the United States Bureau of the Census: of every one hundred children born in 1983, forty will live in a family where there is at one divorce and five will experience a prolonged parental separation; and 60 percent of all children will spend some time in a single-parent household by the age of eighteen.

Divorce creates a family crisis. The proper raising of children takes time, energy, and stability, both financial and emotional, and despite the best of intentions, divorcing parents operate with reduced efficiency. (Hirschfield, 1993, pp. 4-5)

The impact of divorce on children is determined by the life skills and coping abilities of the divorcing parents. The key to creating the least harmful impact is the acknowledgment that despite the end of the marital relationship, the child’s needs still rely on the parentchild relationship with both parents. This will require positive interaction and
cooperation between the divorcing partners with the focus on the child’s welfare. In an effort to help divorcing and divorced parents develop the skills to co-parent successfully, the Superior Court of the State of Arizona is implementing court-ordered co-parenting education. The curriculum’s emphasis is on developing effective co-parenting relationships while building good parenting skills. This study is focused on the design/content of a court-ordered co-parenting class for divorcing/divorced parents.

**Development of the Problem**

Demographics show that every thirteen seconds, someone is divorced. Predictions for increases in the rate of divorce are based on the continuing changes in men and women’s roles, the increase in women’s economic and social independence, the increase in life such as “broken home” expectancy rates, and the increased acceptance by the courts, churches and other traditional societal restrictions (Ahrons, 1994). While divorce may be the best solution to the marital problems, it also carries risks, both short and long-term, for family members in the areas of social, behavioral, emotional, academic and developmental problems. (Kalter, 1990) The social problems of divorce include the negative reaction of society to divorce by using doomsday reports that scapegoat the single parent and the child. This reaction reinforces the traditional viewpoint that divorce is one of life’s greatest failures. This becomes a threat to non-divorced families. It brings to reality the fear that divorce is contagious. Married couples may fear that the divorce of a couple sets free two people who will break-up other marriages. Another fear involves comparing marriages and finding similarities that could be read as sign posts that lead directly to
divorcing couple and ostracize the entire family from the “normal and successful two parent families” in society. This type of response is extremely damaging because it occurs at a time when the family’s need for support, guidance, and resources is critical.

Behavioral problems can escalate when children experience the emotional ups and downs within the divorce. It becomes difficult for them to control their behaviors. During the divorce and even afterwards, the behaviors role modeled by the divorcing adults may be lacking in appropriateness causing a continued breakdown in the family’s emotional equilibrium. This inconsistency during and after the divorce aggravates the behavioral and emotional interactions of the family within itself and with society.

Academic and developmental areas often undergo regression as family members become overwhelmed by the many divorce issues and changes that result from dealing with those issues. Anger, aggression, fear, the inability to concentrate, withdrawal from contact with others, including absences from school and work, and a sense of loss of personal power are not only symptomatic of the divorce, but also become obstacles to resolution and restoring the family’s equilibrium.

Need for the Study

The need for the study is to eliminate the negative impact from the divorce on the children by providing couples with healthy co-parenting skills. Divorce will impact the children for the rest of their lives.

The experience of divorce, while intended to improve life for at least one parent and the children, frequently had the opposite effect. Children felt abandoned, isolated, responsible and fearful. These and other feelings were carried from childhood into adulthood. Adult Children of Divorce (ACOD) tend to be trapped in outmoded survival behaviors that helped them as children but that prove disastrous in their adult
responsible and fearful. These and other feelings were carried from childhood into adulthood. Adult Children of Divorce (ACOD) tend to be trapped in outmoded survival behaviors that helped them as children but that prove disastrous in their adult relationships.

As a result of the experience of divorce, they have developed a specific set of characteristics that affect their ability to form healthy relationships, marriages, and families of their own. In addition, ACOD carry these characteristics into their jobs and leisure time. (Fassel, 1991, p.71)

During her research, Fassel determined that “divorce itself is a neutral act.” (1991)

It is the process of divorce that affects children. Where the divorce process is one where each family member shares their feelings and needs and there is no denial, there is less risk for children to become “problem-afflicted ACODs.” This creates a positive divorce experience. Children from a positive divorce experience as ACODs report that they get to know one or both parents better, neither parent undermines the other parent in front of the child, and the child’s relationship with each parent is respected and honored.

When the process is handled in a straightforward manner, it did not cause long term trauma and consequences.

Providing good coping and life skills, opportunities for developing high self-esteem and personal worth through positive parental relationships will help children as they grow and provide a good base for adulthood.

Divorce is a subtle experience for children. Being aware of what children need to develop into healthy adults will help you avoid some of the problems children of divorce have experienced. How children are treated in divorce does affect their adulthood. The necessary psychological and emotional levels of loyalty, trust, security and safety, being loved and cared for and having a sense of belonging that children need, are influenced by the way you act during and after the divorce. When parents are able to love and maintain a consistency with their children after the divorce, the fulfillment of these needs resumes and the loss can heal. (Todd and Barros, 1995, pp. 48-49)
Purpose Of the Study

The purpose of the study was to develop a curriculum for a co-parenting skills programs that can be used by the judicial system, legal and behavioral health professionals and divorcing/divorced families that will minimize negative effects of divorce on the children.

Research Question

What is the content of a curriculum for a co-parenting skills program?
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review is organized into three sections: (1) Family Systems, (2) Divorce, and (3) Effective Parenting.

Family Systems

In the 1950's theorists and therapists began to view the family as a living system, made up of the individuals and the way(s) those individuals interact or function together.

Bradshaw (1988) claims that to study the family as a system one must see the various connections between the individualized person and how they interact (p. 28).

Each person in the system relates to every other person in a similar fashion. Each is partly a whole and wholly a part. Each person within the system has his own unique systemic individuality as well as carrying an imprint of the whole family system. I am my family as well as whatever uniqueness I have actualized as a person. I am individual and group simultaneously. (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 28)

The family system functions through the use of family roles and rules that create a balance or homeostasis that maintains the family as a system. In addition to the roles and rules, Bradshaw believes that all family systems have components.

In a family system the chief components are the mother's relationship to herself and her relationship to the father and the father's relationship to himself and his
relationship to the mother. The status of these relationships dominates the system. If the marriage is functional, the children have a chance to be fully functional. If the marriage component is dysfunctional, the family members are stressed and adapt dysfunctionally. (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 31)

Coping skills in the divorce will be only as good as the coping skills that existed in the dysfunctional marriage. According to Smoke (1978) “People don’t divorce situations, they divorce people who create situations and fail to take responsibility for those situations.” Therefore, assuming responsibility for self does not start after the divorce. It begins with the past marriage and family system and accepting responsibility in those areas. Smoke (1978) says, “If both parties do this, the blame game will come to an end and the post-marital relationships will not be warring ones.”

Nichols and Schwartz (1991) describe the dual nature of the family system as it seeks stability while at the same time experiences change.

Families must also adapt to changing circumstances. To do so, they must be capable of revising their rules, and modifying their structure. Dysfunctional families are distinguished by their rigidity and inflexibility; when circumstances change, they do not. (p. 516)

This rigidity and inflexibility in responding to the changes created by the divorce may create a world view held by the children that life is chaotic and unpredictable. The intention to control the situation by avoiding change only forces the situation to become more uncontrollable and the family experiences even more trauma. The children may
Divorce

Divorce does not automatically create a dysfunctional family, but it does modify the structure of the family and demand flexibility and a revision of rules, roles and expectations. The family that cannot grow to meet these demands becomes dysfunctional and suffers short and long-term effects.

Ahrons (1994) suggests that the traditional stigma of divorce still carries shame and the sense of failure for the couple and the family. This creates unnecessary stress that interferes with effectively dealing with the real issues.

We must stop looking for causes and shift our priorities to prevention—not of divorce but of the negative consequences. The real consequences of divorce fall upon the children, who like their parents are labeled deviant... The negative effects on children would be minimized if they could be assured that their parents, with the help of social institutions—schools, churches or synagogues, and social agencies—would work to provide the security, love and support of family life. (Ahrons, 1994, p. 46)

Divorce ends the marital relationship, however, couples need to focus on the parenting relationship. Todd and Barros (1995) advise divorcing couples to grieve and accept the loss of the marital commitment while making a new commitment to co-parent. When the commitment focus is no longer on the couple and their issues, but on the needs of the children, resolutions are often more easily reached.

Effective Parenting

The quality of parenting skills is not determined by marital status. However, families dealing with divorce may find new or improved parenting skills are needed
The quality of parenting skills is not determined by marital status. However, families dealing with divorce may find new or improved parenting skills are needed appropriately deal with the feelings and changes brought on by the divorce. Parenting as a divorced couple will require time, effort and adjustment into the roles of co-parents.

The concept of co-parenting makes it possible for two people to continue parenting despite their decision to divorce. Marriage relationships and parenting relationships are two different alliances. Another definition of co-parenting is the “decision both parents make to work together to parent their children by supporting the parenting philosophy they believe in.” Over the years an understanding grows between you as the focus stays on the children. Because of this determination, divorce is made easier on your children and yourself. (Todd and Barros, 1995, p.34)

By focusing on the needs of the children, divorcing parents can avoid pushing the children into the roles of mediators, and/or messengers.

Avoiding the negative effects of divorce, or of other kinds of loss, on children involved means that the adults who wield the power, must involve the children in a way meaningful to the children themselves...
Keeping the children accurately informed, frequently informed, and giving them a role in the divorce situation is extremely important. The role of the adult is to involve the children at their (the children’s) level of understanding and to provide support, information, and involvement in the process. But getting the children involved does not, repeat, does not mean assigning them adult roles that require them to somehow fix the problem or to judge who’s right or wrong...
The first role of the child is to continue to be a child at his or her appropriate age level and developmental level. (Kline and Pew, 1992, p. 19)

Parents may have difficulty interacting with each other after the divorce. Lansky (1989) reminds parents that, “Divorce is a process, not a single event.” Parents need to remember that they are setting the tone for not only childhood events but for the adult relationships they will share with their grown children and relationships with their grandchildren. Woolever (1990) explains cooperation with an ex-spouse may be difficult.
But cooperation doesn’t mean pretending to love your ex-spouse for the children’s sake. It simply means conveying to the kids that your ex-spouse is still their parent and deserves respect.

Todd and Barrows (1995) believe that co-parenting is a motivation to heal.

In a co-parenting relationship, you will heal and so will your children. You heal because you can eventually accept your new reality and difference in relationships and go on with your life. So can your children... Life goes on in a positive direction. (Todd and Barrows, 1995, p. 142)

In order to co-parent effectively, parents can incorporate techniques including communication skills, boundary setting, awareness of children’s developmental needs and abilities, and positive parenting. Healing and reconnecting are the goals of effective co-parenting.

Good communication skills include both listening and speaking. Divorcing parents need to provide information on an age appropriate level as well as listen to their children’s’ needs, fears and feelings. Boundaries are set by determining what are marital/divorce concerns regarding the and what are parent-child concerns concerning co-parenting. Awareness of the children’s developmental needs and abilities can be addressed through child development classes and an awareness of divorce as an issue that may temporarily interfere with growth and development or cause regression. Positive parenting techniques are the same for all parents whether together or co-parenting. The focus is on doing what’s best for the children. This focus allows healing and reconnecting to occur much more quickly and sometimes, with less pain.
Summary

It is necessary to view the family as a system that functions through the use of rules and roles to maintain itself as a unit. When this unit is divided by divorce, the family needs new rules and roles to develop a new balance or homeostasis. Positive parental guidance and interaction is necessary at this time to help the children through this critical period and create continued healing and ability to mature into healthy, functional adults. Divorce does not automatically create a dysfunctional family. However, divorce will escalate dysfunction within the family as it emerges into a new family system, headed by two adults who have broken their bonds with each other. No longer marital partners, these adults must still work together as parenting partners. With a focus on improving individual parenting skills and developing a strong parenting partnership, parents can help their children through what could easily become a critical event.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to design a curriculum for a co-parenting skills program that will meet the needs of the judicial system (court-ordered clients), divorce attorneys, professionals in the behavioral health field, and individuals/couples, and families.

Research Design

A descriptive research design was used to determine the content of a co-parenting curriculum that would meet the needs of the judicial system, professionals in the legal and behavioral health fields and families dealing with divorce and parenting. According to Merriam and Simpson (1984) the descriptive design allows for the use of divergent sources of data.

Description may include (1) collection of facts that describe existing phenomenon; (2) identification, of problems or justification of current conditions and practice; (3) project or product evaluation; or (4) comparison of experience between groups with similar problems to assist in future planning and decision making. The researcher examined literature on parenting and co-parenting methods as well as the requirements for a co-parenting program listed in the Maricopa County Parent Information Program.
Source of the Data

The data for this study was collected through literature on parenting and co-parenting topics as well as the researcher’s observations, education and eight years of experience teaching parenting classes and counseling families.

Method of Analysis

The information collected through the literature review was analyzed and sorted into categories which corresponded to the six sessions in the program and which follows the guidelines provided by the Arizona Supreme Court.
CHAPTER 4

A CURRICULUM FOR A CO-PARENTING SKILLS PROGRAM

Introduction

The curriculum developed for the co-parenting program was based on the criteria set forth by the Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 25-351 and the Superior Court of Maricopa County. Additional consideration was given to information gathered in the literature review and that information was implemented into the curriculum. A multimodal approach was taken using reality therapy, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and child and adolescent development theories.

A six session didactic group program will provide parents with validation, support and effective co-parenting skills. Each two hour session will include a check-in, homework review, lecture, discussion and activities. Homework assignments are given to allow members to practice what is taught in the class and have the opportunity to discuss the results in a supportive atmosphere.

Group members are court-ordered or may enroll voluntarily. The court requirements will determine group rules about absences, tardiness, and the consequences of disruptive behaviors.

The group will be facilitated by a state certified therapist.
Session 1
Introduction and icebreaker
Group Rules
Overview of Co-parenting, Effective Interacting, and Awareness

Session Goals
Create a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere.
Encourage openness to learning and self-awareness.
Develop positive interactions and a sense of group support.
Define marriage, parenting, divorce, and co-parenting.
Develop personal awareness of feelings and behaviors and their impact on others.

Icebreaker-- Human BINGO
Pass out BINGO cards. Clients have 5 minutes to complete their cards.
After 5 minutes, everyone returns to their chairs. BINGO cards are passed to the person on the left. Using information from the card, each person introduces the person to their right.

Policies and Procedures-- The facilitator will briefly review the participant contract each client signed at registration. Policies and procedures will also be reviewed including such areas as attendance; tardiness; homework; duty to warn; and court notification. Contact with ex-partner and family members to discuss handouts and homework is on a safety first basis and only in compliance with the court.

Group Rules-- The group determines the rules. The facilitator will set the first rule which is confidentiality. Participants may add rules, such as, one person speaks at a time; no obscene language, etc. As the group determines the rules, the facilitator will list them on the board. Clients will fill out their group contract at this time. The facilitator will post a copy of the group rules at the next session.

The following four handouts are given to provide a basis of effective and positive interactions not only in the group situation, but also at home. Clients will be expected to demonstrate these techniques throughout the program.
Write the following words on the board:

1. Marriage
2. Parenting
3. Divorce
4. Co-parenting

Ask: Define these terms. Have your definitions changed since you have experienced these things? If yes, how have they changed?

Ask: How would your children define marriage, parenting, divorce and co-parenting? What are their expectations and rules about marriage, divorce, parenting and co-parenting? How have these changed since the divorce?

Ask: How do your children express their feelings about these concepts? What behaviors might be used to act out their feelings?

Discuss the parents’ reactions and feelings. How are they similar/different to their children’s? What are the parents’ reactions to the children’s’ behaviors and feelings?

Homework:

#1. Discuss with your children their expectations, rules and feelings about marriage, divorce, parenting and co-parenting. Record your children’s’ actual responses on paper.

#2. Begin incorporating the techniques from the four handouts in interactions
with ex-partners, children, family, friends and co-workers.
Session 2
Re-introductions
The Effects of Parental Conflict on Children

Session Goals
Create a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere.
Encourage openness to learning and self-awareness.
Develop positive interactions and a sense of group support.
Develop awareness of the child’s developmental stages, needs and how to
minimize the negative impact of separation and divorce.
Develop awareness of loss, grief and the healing process.

Re-introduction-- Name Tag game-- The name tags will be shuffled and
randomly passed out. Each client will introduce the person whose name tag
he/she has with a one sentence identifier. For example: This is Alex. She
plays the piano and loves white chocolate.

Discuss Homework: Encourage clients to explore both the cognitive and
emotional reactions and responses to the experience. Ask what they learned
about their children and about themselves. Ask how they are doing
incorporating the techniques of giving and taking feedback, accountability,
“I” messages, and boundaries.

Handout: Child Developmental Stages
Have clients determine at which developmental stages their children are in.
Discuss the impact that the separation and divorce has during each stage.

Handout: Children Learn
Discuss issues of role modeling.
Ask: What is the effect of “Do as I say; not as I do.”?

Handout: Stages of Grief and Loss
Ask: What are the losses experienced at this time for yourself, children and
ex-partner? How is grief expressed, validated and worked through? How
can using “I” messages, accountability, feedback, and boundaries help?
Handout: Letting Go
Discuss how to move from hurting to healing.

Homework:
#1. Develop and record your plan for dealing with grief and loss issues.
Session 3
Communication, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution

Session Goals
Create a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere.
Encourage openness to learning and self-awareness.
Develop positive interactions and a sense of group support.
Develop effective communication skills.
Learn techniques to create win-win situations.

Discuss homework. Encourage clients to share class information and homework assignments with children (on an age appropriate basis) and other family members. Does it help or hurt? What kinds of feedback and advice are they receiving? Does it help or hurt?

Write effective communication on the board. Ask clients to define it. Remind them that effective communication does not mean getting what you want.

Definition: Communication is a transaction of information.

Write on board: Speaker—> Message—> Listener
Explain this equation is the communication transaction.

Handout: Ten Commandments for Good Listening.

Handout: Blocking Communication

Handout: Nonverbal Communication

Ask: How do poor communication skills escalate the issues in separation and divorce for children and parents interactions; ex-partner to ex-partner interactions; communications with the courts; and dealing with extended family?
Write conflict on the board. Ask clients to define it. Is conflict always negative or is it a positive growth process.

Ask: Are conflict and change the same thing? If clients answer no, have them define change and describe the differences between conflict and change. Ask: How does our interpretation of conflict and change affect our reactions and responses to them?

Ask: How do you resolve conflict? List answers on the board. Ask: Do your current communication skills help or escalate the conflict?

Handout: Rules for Losing A Fight

Handout: Good Fighting Shape

Handout: Fight Rules

Discuss how these techniques create win-win situations.

Ask: To create win-win situations, what is your focus?

Ask: How can letting go help create win-win situations and aid the healing process?

Handout: Problem Solving

Homework: List five current parenting problems. What techniques discussed in class could be used to bring a resolution? Create a plan A and a Plan B for each problem. After completing your plans, ask your children and ex-partner for their input.
Session 4
Parenting and Co-parenting

Session Goals
Create a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere.
Encourage openness to learning and self-awareness.
Develop positive interactions and a sense of group support.
Learn effective parenting techniques.
Learn to co-parent.

Discuss homework. Encourage clients to share what’s working with each other. Allow time for brainstorming with clients who are stuck.

Write good parenting on the board. Ask clients to define it.
Write ex-partner on the board. Ask clients to define it.
Write co-parenting on the board. Ask clients to determine what is needed for an effective co-parenting relationship. Incorporate answers from the first two lists on the board.

Handout: What Do Children Need?
Handout: Styles of Parenting
Handout: Goals of Behavior

Encourage discussion of problem areas and group brainstorming for solutions using the handouts as guides.

Ask: How would good parenting skills differ from good co-parenting skills?

Ask: What are the problems one might experience co-parenting? Encourage clients to unmask the real issues.

Use the board to illustrate:

\[ \text{Details} = \text{What the fight seems to be about} \]
\[ \text{Real Issue} = \text{What the fight is really about} \]

Explain how to use emotional checks, reality checks, and thinking error checks to help unmask the issue.
Handout: Thinking Errors

Discuss parental responsibilities. Discuss commitment to the physical, emotional, intellectual, and financial needs of children. Ask: How do you plan to fulfill those commitments?

Handout: If I Had My Kids To Raise Over Again.

Homework:
#1 List 5 changes you would like to make in your parenting style. List 5 changes you would like to make in your co-parenting relationship. Use the handouts on What Children Need, Styles of Parenting, Goals of Behavior, and Thinking Errors to help evaluate problem areas.

#2 Choose one from each group of five and develop a plan and a time to implement that plan.
Session 5
Family Issues

Session Goals
Create a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere.
Encourage openness to learning and self-awareness.
Develop positive interactions and a sense of group support.
Develop awareness of personal family system.
Develop awareness of family attitudes, beliefs, and values and their impact on the current situation.

Discuss homework. Allow time for any brainstorming needed.

Handout: Family Roles

Handout: Family Rules

Handout: Genogram

Use the board to help clients develop a simple genogram of their families.

Homework:
#1. You may invite your children to participate on an age appropriate level.

#2. Use the three handouts from class to evaluate the impact your family of origin has on your current situation. What changes can be made? How will you make those changes?
Session 6
Resources and Services

Session Goals
Create a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere.
Encourage openness to learning and self-awareness.
Develop positive interactions and a sense of group support.
Develop awareness of the resources and services available for additional support.
Develop awareness of court procedures.

Discuss homework. Briefly share genograms and/or information gained. (Clients do not have to share genograms.)

Handout: Basic Domestic Relations Court Procedures.
Handout: Community Resources and Services
Handout: After A While

Graduation Ceremony
Summary

With the high incidence of divorce, it is critical that divorcing couples develop the ability to co-parent in a healthy and effective manner. In recognition of this need, many courts are requiring co-parenting education in conjunction with the divorce process. Co-parenting is simply effective parenting in the situation where the parents are no longer committed to each other as marital partners. Both parents support and honor the parent/child relationship and work to provide for the child/children physically, emotionally, and financially. Effective co-parenting allows children to fully experience the parent/child relationship without guilt. Effective co-parenting also encourages acceptance and healing from the trauma that can occur from divorce.

The purpose of this study was to develop a curriculum for a co-parenting skills program that can be used by the judicial system, legal and behavioral professionals and divorcing/divorced families that will minimize the negative effects of divorce on the children.

Current research, trends and practices as presented in the literature as well as personal observations, training, education and experience of the researcher were used as a source of data for the curriculum. The data was analyzed and categorized into a
curriculum consisting of six sessions focusing on: effective interacting; effects of parental conflict on children; communication, negotiation and conflict resolution; parenting and co-parenting techniques; family issues, and resources. This curriculum was designed to be in compliance with the guidelines provided by the Arizona Supreme Court.

Conclusion

While divorce may be the best solution for marital problems, it can overwhelm the family unit, creating both short-term and long-term difficulties. Positive parental care, interactions and guidance are necessary to help children through this critical period. Parents need help and support during this time as well. A six session didactic group program has been developed to provide parents with validation, support and effective parenting skills. The successful co-parenting partnerships are those that understand that the adults’ needs will no longer be primary to the co-parenting partner. The focus is on the parent/child relationship. An educational program supporting co-parenting skills is a valuable resource for families dealing with divorce. This program is an adjunct to individual or family counseling with a focus on the benefits to minor children.

Recommendations

It is recommended that continued research be done on the effects of divorce on families. It is also recommended that development and implementation of programs and services be given a priority in social service agencies and within the community at large.


Appendix A

Session 1 Handouts
| B | I | N | G | O |
|---|
| Plays baseball | Goes to movies | Sews | Owns a boat | Does arts and crafts |
| Likes Italian food | Works out | Goes dancing | Has a pet | Cheers for the Phoenix Suns |
| Reads books | Likes symphony | Has won a trophy | Cooked a meal for a VIP | Sings in the shower |
| Has a favorite animal at the zoo | Has a favorite TV show | Uses coupons | Drinks coffee with.... | Goes camping |

You have five minutes to circulate around the room collecting names and information to fill out the above boxes. The first one to complete a line horizontally, vertically or diagonally will win 1st place. Even after 1st place has been filled, continue collecting names and information until the five minutes are up. Save this sheet for next week’s icebreaker.
The Give And Take Of Feedback

1. Feedback is a response to an idea or course of action. It can be positive or negative.

2. Feedback is not criticism.* Feedback is not arguable or debatable.

3. Feedback provides insightful or corrective information in a non-shaming way. Feedback does not blame, but it does hold a person accountable for their thoughts and actions.

4. Feedback is about the person’s actions and ideas. It is not about the human worth or value of the person.

5. Ask the person if he/she would like some feedback. If the person says no, do not give any feedback.

6. When receiving feedback, use good listening skills. Do not interrupt the person giving the feedback.

7. Do not plan a defense, justification or excuse while you are receiving feedback.

8. Evaluate what is being said and see if it fits. Look at the information from many perspectives, not just your own. Evaluate how the feedback makes you feel. Check your reactions—thoughts, emotions, verbal and body language.

9. After receiving feedback, you may ask questions for further clarification or insight. You may ask others for additional feedback.

10. After receiving feedback, say thank you. Do not argue, make excuses, or try to change the other person’s mind.

11. You do not have to agree with or use the feedback you are given.

*Criticism is defined as finding fault. Criticism is often tied into blaming and shaming. It does not offer insight, hope or resolution.
PRINCIPLES OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. You are responsible for the outcome of all interactions. If you don't like the way people treat you, then it is in your best interest that you modify your behavior for the outcome to change.

   • This could be anything from changing your patterns of communication to leaving a relationship or job

2. If strategy doesn't work to meet your need or solve your problem, don't blame.

   • It is your responsibility to try new ways to improve your interactions.

3. The appropriate answer is not, "Who is responsible for my pain?" but, "What can I do about it."

4. The amount of support, appreciation, and help you are getting is all you can get given the current strategies you are using.

   • No one will give more than you and if you use violent behavior such as anger over a long period, you will receive less support.

5. You can't expect other people to change or be different.

   • The behaviors they are using represent the best coping skills they have given their stresses and resources. The other person will only change if they feel it will benefit them.

6. All relationships come down to two basic choices: adapt or let go.

   • If needs are not met and a relationship is painful, the only answer is change or let go. You can let go of the relationship or your expectations. The alternative is anger and chronic depression.

7. You are never a victim

   • The only true victims are children because they have so little control over the shape of their lives. As an adult, you choose your degree of involvement.
"I" Messages

I ____________________________
    describe your feeling

When _________________________
    describe the event

Therefore, _______________________
    state your request, or the consequence,

I feel angry when the dishes are not done after dinner. Therefore, we will not turn on the TV until the kitchen has been cleaned.

I feel annoyed when we don't have dinner on time. Therefore, I would like to schedule dinner for 6:30 every evening.
Boundaries

Having boundaries means that individuals can protect themselves and will not cross/abuse someone else's boundaries.

We develop boundaries as children in our family of origin. Often, as adults we have damaged or no boundaries in the areas in which our boundaries were crossed/abused. As adults we may continue the victim role (allowing others to cross/abuse our boundaries), take on the offender role (crossing and abusing other's boundaries) or fluctuate between the two.

Boundaries are permeable borders that allow appropriate and positive interactions while providing protection for self and others. Boundaries are learned. Boundaries involve four life areas: physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual. Boundaries are not barriers.

Barriers are non-permeable borders that block interaction and create isolation for self from others. Barriers are often progressive. Barriers involve four life areas: physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual.

To set a boundary, you must state clearly what the boundary is and what the consequence will be if the boundary is crossed. The consequence must be consistent and effective.

By setting boundaries, you teach others to treat you the way you want to be treated. Rather than focusing on others, asking, "Why don't you treat me better?" focus on yourself, asking, "What am I doing that teaches others to treat me this way?"
4 Areas of Boundaries

Physical- I have the right to determine when, where, how, and who is going to touch me.

Sexual- I have the right to determine with whom, where, when, and how I am going to be sexual with someone.

Emotional- I have the right to my thoughts, feelings, and opinions. What I think, feel, and do are more about me and my history than about you.

Spiritual- I have the right to believe and celebrate my own sense of spiritual life.
Appendix B

Session 2 Handouts
Children learn what they live...
If children live with criticism,
they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility,
they learn to fight.
If children live with ridicule,
they learn to feel shy.
If children live with shame,
they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with tolerance,
they learn to be patient.
If children live with encouragement,
they learn confidence.
If children live with praise,
they learn to appreciate.
If children live with fairness,
they learn justice.
If children live with security,
they learn to have faith.
If children live with approval,
they learn to like themselves.
If children live with acceptance and friendship,
they learn to find love in the world.
GRIEF WHEEL

LOSS → SHOCK

Reorganization

Disorganization

Protest

Loss

Shock

Reorganization

Disorganization

Protest

New interests and skills
Renewed confidence
Increase in socialization
Philosophical resolution to death

Denial
Blunting of emotion
Outbursts
Unreality

Increased affect
Anger
Guilt
Relief; Eating and sleeping disturbances

Confusion
Depression
Apathy
Aloneness
Lack of identity
Loneliness

Grief Wheel adapted from handout by Marin County Grief Counseling Program. Marin County, California.
LETTING GO

Letting go does not mean to stop caring; it means I can't do it for someone else.

Letting go is not to cut myself off; it's the realization I can't control another.

Letting go is not to enable; but to allow learning from natural consequences.

Letting go is to admit powerlessness; which means the outcome is not in my hands.

Letting go is not to try to change or blame another; it is to make the most of myself.

Letting go is not to care for; but to care about.

Letting go is not to fix; but to be supportive. It's not to judge; but to allow another to be a human being.

Letting go is not to be in the middle arranging the outcome; but to allow others to affect their own destinies.

Letting go is not to be protective; it's to permit another to face reality.

Letting go is not to deny; but to accept.

Letting go is not to nag, scold, or argue; but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.

Letting go is not to adjust everything to my own desires; but to take each day as it comes and cherish myself in it.

Letting go is not to criticize and regulate anybody; but to try to become what I dream I can be.

Letting go is to not regret the past; but to grow and live for the future.

Letting go is to fear less and live more.
Appendix C

Session 3 Handouts
TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR GOOD LISTENING

1. **STOP TALKING!**
   You cannot listen if you are talking.

2. **PUT THE TALKER AT EASE.**
   Help him feel that he is free to talk.
   This is often called a 'permissive environment'.

3. **SHOW HIM THAT YOU WANT TO LISTEN.**
   Look and act interested. Do not read your mail while he talks.
   Listen to understand rather than reply.

4. **REMOVE DISTRACTIONS.**
   Don't doodle, tap or shuffle papers.
   Will it be quieter if you shut the door?

5. **EMPATHIZE WITH HIM.**
   Try to put yourself in his place so that you can see his point of view.

6. **BE PATIENT.**
   Allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt him.
   Don't start for the door or walk away.

7. **HOLD YOUR TEMPER.**
   An angry man gets the wrong meaning from words.

8. **GO EASY ON ARGUMENT OR CRITICISM.**
   This puts him on the defensive. He may 'clam up' or get angry.
   Do not argue: even if you win, you lose.

9. **ASK QUESTIONS.**
   This encourages him and shows you are listening.
   It helps him to develop points further.

10. **STOP TALKING!**
    This is the first and last, because all other commandments depend on it.
    You just can't do a good listening job while you are talking.
Blocking Communication

The following strategies are used to block communication. Rather than working towards a resolution, these strategies continue and escalate the problem.

1. Yelling, screaming, and swearing.

2. Threats and bluffing.


4. Physical acting out:
   - throwing objects
   - hitting
   - destruction of property
   - intimidating body language/movements including:
     - clenching fists
     - waving arms
     - whirling around
     - obscene gestures
     - turning away from
   - slamming doors/objects
   - shoving/pushing

5. Hypochondriac's technique
   - The myth that discussing certain topics will cause physical ailments, such as, heart attacks, chest pains, migraines, ulcers, headaches, indigestion, and lack of sleep.
   - Ex. You're giving me a headache with all your talk about...
   - Ex. TV show "Sanford aand Son"
6. Manipulation and Controlling Behaviors
   synthetic tears
   whining, sulking, and pouting
   if you really love me, you'll ...........
   dramatic exits and entrances
   suicide threats (must always be taken seriously- seek professional help immediately.)

7. Set-ups
   individually designed so that whatever is said or done is the wrong thing.
Nonverbal Communication

These behaviors usually communicate openness, warmth, acceptance and encouragement.

POSTURE: Leaning forward. Face to face position. Relaxed yet moderate tension. Uncrossed arms and legs, open palms.

EYE CONTACT: Steady, casual, reciprocal.

BODY MOVEMENTS: Soft, broad gestures. Head nodding or holds slight tilt. Appropriate facial expressions to the mood of what is being communicated.


TOUCHING: Appropriate and respecting personal boundaries.

MIRRORING: Mirror nonverbal cues from the other person.

These behaviors usually communicate withdrawal, coldness, disapproval and serve as barriers.

POSTURE: Leaning away from or facing in another direction. Rigidness or slouching. Crossed arms and legs, fists.

EYE CONTACT: Minimal, shifting or frequent darting or rolling eyes in an exaggerated movement. Intimidating stare. Closed eyes.


DISTANCE: Too close or too far away. Intimidating or invasive. Implementing barriers, such as, talking from behind a newspaper or paying only half attention.

TOUCHING: Either complete withdrawal or physically abusive.

MIRRORING: Escalate the other person's intimidating non-verbal cues.
How To Lose A Fight

1. React instead of responding!!!

2. Refuse to take the fight seriously. (Use defense mechanisms and/or thinking errors.)

3. Withdraw, avoid the conflict, or surrender..

4. Use intimate knowledge to "hit below the belt."

5. Do a chain-reaction.

6. Create chaos.

7. Attack indirectly by displacing anger/rage onto what the other person values.

8. Apologize without sincerity.

9. Betrayal. Encourage or condone others to act inappropriately or abusively with your partner.

10. Arouse feelings of fear, anxiety, loss, grief, deepression, and or abandonment in your partner.

11. Analyzing or predicting your partner's thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

12. Creating "no win" situations.
Good Fighting Shape

1. You cannot refuse a fight. If it is important to one partner, it is worth fighting over.

2. You may postpone a fight for the following reasons: for a better time, to a more appropriate place, to gather information/resources or to calm down.

3. You may fight about only one issue at a time.

4. When one person states a point, the other person must respond to it, before moving on to a new one.

5. Do not use name calling.

6. No emotional blackmail.

7. Stay in the NOW.

8. Ask! Don't know or tell what your partner thinks, feels and will do.

9. Do not lecture, sermonize, or make speeches.

10. Fight to reach a solution- not a victory. Fight for togetherness- not to destroy each other.
Conflict is a part of every relationship. It can be an opportunity for positive growth and enrichment OR it can be a weapon of abuse and destruction.

Fight Rules

1. Know what the fight is really about.

2. Allow each person to present their position on the specific issue.

3. Validate the other person's feelings.

4. Each person provides suggestions, options and alternatives.

5. Objectively weigh each suggestion, option and alternative.

6. Negotiate what you are asking for with what you are willing to give up/invest. Work towards balance.

7. Choose the solution.

8. Take action and follow through.
Problem Solving

1. Define the problem.
   Be specific and concise.
   Break the problem down into manageable parts.

2. Accountability
   Whose problem is it?

3. Develop options.
   Brainstorm all the possibilities that would provide a solution to the problem.

4. Set a goal.
   Choose the option that seems most likely to work for you.

5. Develop a plan to achieve your goal.
   Break your plan down into manageable parts.

6. Initiate the plan.
   Take action

7. Evaluate success of the plan.
   Gather information and feedback.
   From this information, you may need to develop a plan B.
Appendix D

Session 4 Handouts
What Do Children Need?

1. CLEAR LIMITS SET - What is safe and acceptable and what is not? What are the consequences?

2. DISCIPLINE that is consistent and fair.

3. CONSISTENCY - rules and regulations in school, with parents, etc.

4. TOLERANCE FOR MISTAKES; don't accept negative behavior but accept the child.

5. POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

6. OPPORTUNITIES TO HONESTLY EXPRESS their feelings or thoughts.

7. OPPORTUNITIES TO LAUGH AND BE HAPPY.

8. OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SUCCESSFUL in school, at home, in the community with peers, etc.

9. STRUCTURED FAMILY ACTIVITIES - church, holidays, meals, movies, etc.

10. ENCOURAGEMENT TO TAKE RISKS.

11. ACCURATE INFORMATION about drugs and alcohol; also about crime, sexuality, and other areas which might promote fear and uncertainty.

12. COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT from important adults in their lives.

13. TO BE TRUSTED AND RESPECTED by important adults.

14. TO BE ENCOURAGED TO BE RESPONSIBLE.

15. POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE - a helpful friend.

16. A HIGHER POWER - a being greater than ourselves to whom they can pray and ask for help and guidance.

17. TO BE LOVED - genuine, real, and expressed often.
Styles of Parenting:

**Dictator**
- Makes all decisions for the child.
- Uses reward and punishment to control child's behavior.
- Sees himself as better than the child.
- Runs the home with an iron hand; grants little freedom.
- Invites rebellion with inconsistent parenting.

**Active Parent**
- Gives the child choices and formulates guidelines with him or her.
- Provides the child with decision making opportunities.
- Develops consistent, loving discipline.
- Holds the child accountable.
- Lets reality be the teacher.
- Conveys respect, self-worth, and love to the child and therefore enhances the child's self-esteem.

**Doormat**
- Is a slave to the child.
- Places priority on the child, not on his/her spouse.
- Robs the child of self-respect and self-esteem by doing things for him that the child can do for himself.
- Provides the child with the "Disneyland" experience; makes things as easy as possible--does homework for the child, etc.
- Invites rebellion with inconsistent parenting.
# Goals of Behavior

Keep in mind that for younger children you may just need to HALT and check the child to see if he or she is:

- **H**... Hungry
- **A**... Angry & frustrated
- **L**... Lonely
- **T**... Tired
- **S**... Sick

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Goal of Child’s Action</th>
<th>Child’s Positive or Negative Approach to Goal</th>
<th>Child’s Belief</th>
<th>Parent’s Typical Feeling</th>
<th>Child’s Response</th>
<th>Some Actions You Can Take</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td>My contributions are recognized. I belong by cooperating. I enjoy human contact.</td>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>Cooperation and contribution.</td>
<td>Encourage cooperation, acknowledge the child’s contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undue Attention-Seeking (-)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I belong only when I’m noticed or served. The world must revolve around me.</td>
<td>Irritation</td>
<td>Steps, but begins again very soon.</td>
<td>Ignore the behavior. Give the child full attention at other times. Use logical and natural consequences; act, don’t talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I am able to influence what happens to me. I am responsible for my life.</td>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>Responsible, self-motivated behavior, learning.</td>
<td>Give responsibilities. Continue to encourage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection (-)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I belong only when I’m the boss or when I’m showing you that you can’t boss me.</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Escalates behavior or gives in only to fight again another day</td>
<td>Remove yourself from the conflict. Talk about it after cooling off period. Don’t fight or give in. Take sail out of child’s wind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness, forgiveness (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td>When attacked or treated unfairly, I can stand up for myself and those I love. I am able to forgive and even contribute to those who have wronged me.</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Positive contact.</td>
<td>Express your own positive feelings; demonstrate assertiveness and forgiveness in your own relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge (-)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I’ve been hurt and will get even by hurting back. Then they’ll learn they can’t get away with hurting me.</td>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>To continue to hurt, or escalate misbehavior.</td>
<td>Refuse to be hurt. Withdraw from the conflict. Show love to vengeful child. Avoid temptation to hurt back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centering (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td>There are times when I need to be alone. And there are situations to be left alone.</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Resumes contact when ready.</td>
<td>Respect the child’s wishes to be alone. Don’t press. Later, use active communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance (-)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I’m a failure at everything. Leave me alone. Expect nothing from me.</td>
<td>Helplessness</td>
<td>Becomes passive; refuses to try, gives up.</td>
<td>Be patient, find ways to encourage child.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THINKING ERRORS

1. Simple Denial  I do not have a problem.

2. Minimizing    I was only __________.

3. Scapegoating  I never do anything right, so what else can you expect from me?

4. Blaming       You made me... It's all your fault.

5. Justifying    I deserve to_________ because...
                 I had to __________ because...

6. Rationalizing Any reason to ________________.

7. Intellectualizing I cannot have this problem because__________.

8. Complying     You're right. Whatever you say...

9. Manipulating  To manage or influence deviously for one's own benefit.


11. Avoiding     I do not want to talk about this. Refusing to work towards a resolution. Barriers instead of appropriate boundaries.

12. Generalizing Everybody else does it. It's a guy thing. Women always... All kids are...

13. Comparing    I am not as bad as...

14. Defiance     I can ____________ anytime I want and you can't stop me.
15. Projection  
Taking my own negative thoughts, beliefs and or behaviors and projecting them onto others.

16. Distracting  
Changing the subject to avoid an unpleasant one.

17. Bulldozing  
Overwhelming the other person using escalating loudness, switching topics and /or masking the issues and ignoring reality. Can involve a wide variety of defense mechanisms.

18. Joking  
Covers up what's really occurring. Invalidates feelings. Effective method to control situations and others by freezing interactions at a superficial level.
If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again

If I had my child to raise all over again,
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.
I'd finger-paint more, and point the finger less.
I would do less correcting and more connecting.
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less and know to care more.
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.
I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often.
I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.
I'd model less about the love of power,
And more about the power of love.

Diane Loomans
## Family Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hero</th>
<th>Scapegoat</th>
<th>Lost Child</th>
<th>Mascot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Success/Failure or Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-achiever</td>
<td>Under-achiever</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Success/Failure or Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-oriented</td>
<td>Short-cuts or unrealistic plans</td>
<td>Goes own way</td>
<td>Goal-oriented or goes own way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes family and self look good</td>
<td>Black sheep</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Clown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sacrificing</td>
<td>Self-destructive</td>
<td>Makes no demands</td>
<td>Attention getting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls by doing</td>
<td>Controls by undoing</td>
<td>Avoids control</td>
<td>Controls by distracting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family roles are often assigned by birth order and gender. However, many factor can impact who the role is assigned to. These roles may be held exclusively or may overlap or make be traded around the family unit.

Family roles often are carried throughout adulthood. For example, the family mascot is often the class clown and the office cut-up.
Family Rules

Family rules are rarely written or

The family members are linked together by the family rules which determine:

- each member’s role
- the relationships between members
- what is required to be/stay a member
- what is to be done
- how things are to be done
- what is forbidden/taboo
- what can be communicated, to whom and by whom
- what feelings and behaviors are acceptable

The family rules establish:

- the value system
- the belief system
- the world view
- expectations of members and non-members
- goals

The family rules determine:

- who is powerful/has authority
- what to do, when to do it and who “has to” or “gets to” do it
- who is valuable and who is not
Name_____ Age____
Birthdate_____________
Education ____________
Job/Career___________
Military______________

Bad temper
Hitter
Yeller
Break things
Name caller

Perfectionist
Slob
Always Broke
Hoarder

Drink a lot
Use drugs
Gamble
Over-eat
Codependent

Infidelity
Multiple relationships
Smoker
Compulsive spender
Pornography

On welfare/disability
Quit or get fired frequently

Never worked
Workaholic

Arrests- for what?
Prison

Illness- Chronic, terminal, or mental
Suicide
Violent deaths (homicides, accidents, war)

Family role- Hero, scapegoat, lost child, mascot
Care taker, golden child

FOO enmeshment- very close/exclusive relationship with parents, siblings, etc.

Other:
Genogram

Males

Females

Marriage
Husband on the left with current wife on the right

Living together

Divorced
Place ex-wives to the left of husbands and ex-husbands to the right of wives

Children
List in birth order beginning with oldest at the left

Adopted

Deceased

Adpt
Appendix F

Session 6 Handouts
After a while you learn the subtle difference between holding a hand and chaining a soul,

And you learn that love doesn’t mean leaning, and company doesn’t mean security,

And you begin to learn that kisses aren’t contracts and presents aren’t promises,

And you begin to accept your defeats with your head up and your eyes open, with the grace of an adult, not the grief of a child,

And you learn to build all your roads on today because tomorrow’s ground is too uncertain for plans.

After a while you learn that even sunshine burns if you get too much. So plant your own your own garden and decorate your own soul instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers.

And you learn that you really can endure... that you really are strong,

And you really do have worth.

-Anonymous
Flowers

I have seen the children flower—
Burst into blossom and blaze
Their brilliant colors
Against the sky.

I have seen the children suffer—
Withering in gardens unattended,
Their colors faded—
Roots trembling to cry.

I have seen the gardeners wonder
What to water, what to weed?
Hoping that their hands
Would grow flowers.

I have seen you guide their hands
With heart and mind
Among the precious petals
Sharing all your power.

You give so they may grow
Beyond the safety of nurseries—
Alive and thriving, towards the faces
Of sons and daughters yet unborn.

Your work is perennial:
It generates from bloom to bloom.
And though not of your seed,
These flowers are for you.

by Michael H. Popkin
Appendix G

Minimum Standard for Domestic Relations Education on Children’s Issue Programs
Parent Information Program
Maricopa County

NOV 1 5 1996
MINIMUM STANDARDS
FOR
DOMESTIC RELATIONS EDUCATION
ON CHILDREN’S ISSUES PROGRAMS

In accordance with Section 25-351, Arizona Revised Statutes, program plans for domestic relations education on children’s issues programs, adopted and implemented by the Superior Court in each county, shall be consistent with the following minimum standards.

In addition, community provider programs in Maricopa County shall meet the local standards and requirements indicated.

I. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of these standards the following definitions apply:

A. "Presenter" means a person who conducts domestic relations education on children’s issues programs.

B. "Provider" means a court or a political subdivision or private entity that contracts, or is approved by the court, to provide domestic relations education on children’s issues programs. A provider may also be a presenter.

II. LENGTH AND NATURE OF THE PROGRAM

A. The program shall be a minimum of two hours.

It is suggested/desirable that programs:
> Be four to six hours in length to adequately cover the program material.
> Be available at flexible times, i.e., evenings and weekends.
> Be offered as early as possible in the domestic relations litigation process.

**Community provider program:** The local standard in Maricopa County shall be a minimum of three hours of class time. Class times and locations will be determined by the provider. Upon filing of the appropriate court action as specified by statute, parties will be notified by court order of the requirement to participate in the Parent Information Program, and provided information on how to register for classes.

B. While additional topics may be covered, all programs shall include information on the following topics as they relate to the impact divorce or separation, the restructuring of families, and judicial proceedings have on children:

1. Common reactions by children and parents to divorce and separation.
2. Helpful and harmful parent behaviors.
3. Communication and co-parenting skills.
4. Harmful effects on children of parental conflict, including domestic violence.
5. Children's reactions to divorce and separation at different developmental stages and warning signs of serious problems.
7. Factors which contribute to healthy adjustment for children, including the value of parenting plans.
8. Basic domestic relations court procedures.
9. Issues surrounding continued access to maternal and paternal relatives.
10. Resources in the community to obtain additional services.

Community provider program: Providers will submit a registration form and additional information to the court program supervisor for review of the program curriculum so that compliance with the standard will be assured. (See Addendum A - Sample Curriculum Outline).

C. Videotape Presentation

Educational classes may be presented by means of videotape. The Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts shall provide to the court in each county a list of videotapes approved for use in educational classes. Any other videotape intended for use in an educational class must be submitted to, and approved by, the Administrative Office of the Courts prior to use.

Community provider program: Providers will submit a registration form and additional information to the court program supervisor for review of the program curriculum, including any videotaped materials to be used, so that compliance with the standard will be assured. Use of a videotaped presentation, or use of any videotaped information as part of a presentation, will be in compliance with the standard.

III. QUALIFICATIONS OF PROGRAM PRESENTER

Each program shall be conducted by at least one presenter having a graduate degree from an accredited college or university in child development, family life education, marriage and family therapy, psychology, social work, counseling or a closely related field. Additional presenters, if used, shall have a minimum of a bachelors degree and have majored in one of the previously stated fields or one closely related. Each presenter shall have experience working in the areas of domestic relations, family restructuring, child welfare, family dynamics, and training in domestic violence issues.

It is suggested that:
> Programs take into account the language and cultural needs of the students.
> When two or more presenters are used, at least one be male and one be female.

Community provider program: Providers will submit a registration form and additional information to the court program supervisor for review of the qualifications of presenters so that compliance with the standard will be assured. Providers will be encouraged to utilize presenter teams consisting of one male and one female.
IV. GENERAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A. Security/class location

Each provider shall make reasonable efforts to provide a comfortable and safe environment for participants while attending the program.

Community provider program: Providers will submit a registration form and additional information to the court program supervisor for review of security arrangements so that compliance with the standard will be assured.

B. Insurance

Non-court providers shall demonstrate proof of continuing professional and public liability insurance, and shall name the court as an additional insured.

Community provider program: Providers will submit a registration form and additional information to the court program supervisor for review of proof of professional and public liability insurance, including naming the court as an additional insured, so that compliance with the standard will be assured.

C. Participants with disabilities

Providers shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act to enable persons with disabilities to participate in the program.

Community provider program: Providers will submit a registration form and additional information to the court program supervisor which will affirm their intention to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

D. Certificate of Completion

A certificate of completion shall be provided to the participant by the provider. The court may prescribe requirements necessary to facilitate proof of attendance to the court. The certificate of completion shall be in a form acceptable to the court and, at a minimum, shall include: the court case number, the date(s) of attendance, the participant's name, and the name (including address and phone number) of the provider.

Community provider program: The provider will provide the attendee the original certificate of completion for filing into the case file with the Clerk of the Court, and a copy of the certificate. The provider will utilize the same certificate of completion form as used by the court based program. (See Addendum B - Certificate of Completion)

E. Attendance records

For a period of five years from the date of program completion, the provider shall maintain records that can be accessed by participant's name, case number and date of class completion.
Community provider program: The provider will keep a record of the attendance as specified in the standard.

F. Assignment of litigants to different classes

Participants from the same court case shall attend different classes unless both participants request to attend the same class. In this instance, the court, or someone on behalf of the court, shall verify that both requests to attend the same class were made voluntarily.

Community provider program: Participants will attend separate classes from the other party to the case. This may be excepted if each party independently requests joint participation and there is no domestic violence and each party reports there is no current Order of Protection. The provider will verify that both requests to attend the same class were made voluntarily, and that there is no reported domestic violence nor current Order of Protection. Picture identification will be required of each attender.

G. Solicitation of participants as clients for other services

Providers and presenters shall be prohibited from soliciting participants as clients for other services.

Community provider program: Providers may make participants aware of services of various community and court providers but may not solicit clients in any manner.

H. If contracted, education services shall be competitively bid following applicable state and local procurement laws and requirements. Competitive bidding is not required if the court is the provider.

Community provider program: Services will not be contracted. A list will be maintained of providers who meet the Arizona Supreme Court and Maricopa County standards and any other requirements, and who attend the required court orientation program and remain in good standing.

I. Fees and surcharges collected from persons ordered to attend education classes shall be receipted, deposited, accounted for, and disbursed pursuant to statutory requirements and the Minimum Accounting Standards for Arizona Courts.

Community provider program: Program participants will pay fees directly to the provider.

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION

A. Commencing September 30, 1997, the Superior Court in each county shall conduct an annual evaluation of the educational program and the presiding judge or designee shall forward the report to the Administrative Office of the Courts.
Community provider program: Each provider will send an evaluation report by September 1 each year to the Presiding Judge of the County or designee.

Providers will send the name and address of each attender to the court program supervisor so that consumer satisfaction surveys can be sent to those attenders. Consumer satisfaction surveys will include provider and program codes for identification and oversight purposes.

B. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall provide minimum program evaluation criteria to the Superior Court.

VI. EXCEPTIONS TO STANDARDS

Upon request by a Superior Court presiding judge, the Administrative Director of the Arizona Supreme Court may, for good cause, grant an exception to any of these standards not required by statute.

Community provider program: Any request by providers for modification of Supreme Court or local standards is to be submitted to the court program supervisor.
ARTICLE 5. DOMESTIC RELATIONS EDUCATION ON CHILDREN'S ISSUES

§ 25-351. Domestic relations education; plan; administration

A. On or before January 1, 1997, the superior court in each county shall adopt and implement an educational program for the purpose of educating persons about the impacts that divorce, the restructuring of families and judicial involvement have on children.

B. The supreme court shall adopt minimum standards for educational programs. The presiding judge of the superior court in each county shall submit an educational program plan to the supreme court for approval. The plan shall be consistent with the minimum standards that are adopted by the supreme court, including the length and nature of the program, the qualifications of program providers and the means by which the program will be evaluated and maintained.

C. The presiding judge of the superior court or a judge who is designated by the presiding judge shall administer the program in each county and may provide or contract with political subdivisions in this state or private entities to provide the program to participants who are required to attend.

§ 25-352. Applicability of program; compliance

A. In an action for dissolution of marriage or for legal separation that involves a natural or an adopted minor, unemancipated child who is common to the parties or in any paternity proceeding under title 12, chapter 7, article 3 in which a party has requested that the court determine custody or specific visitation, the court shall order the parties to attend an educational program as prescribed by this article, unless any of the following applies:

1. on its own motion or the motion of either party the court determines that participation is not in the best interests of the parties or the child.

2. A party is or will be enrolled in an education program that the court deems comparable.

3. The court determines that a party previously has completed an educational program adopted pursuant to this article or a comparable program. The court may order a party to attend a program more than once.

B. In an action or proceeding involving child support or the modification or enforcement of visitation or custody, the court may order either party or both parties to attend an educational program as prescribed by this article.

C. If the parties have a history of domestic violence as defined in section 13-3601 the court may enter appropriate orders that set forth the manner in which the parties shall participate in the program and shall make reasonable efforts to protect the safety of the participants.

D. Each party shall attend the educational program within the time ordered by the judge. The judge may extend the deadline for compliance.
§ 25–353. Failure to comply

Unless the court excuses a party's participation, the court shall not grant relief in favor of a party who fails to complete the educational program as ordered by the court pursuant to section 25–352.

§ 25–354. Children's issues education fund; report

A. A children's issues education fund is established in each county treasury to implement an educational program as prescribed by this article. The presiding judge of the superior court in the county shall administer the fund.

B. The fund consists of monies collected pursuant to section 25–355.

C. The county treasurer shall disburse monies from the fund only at the direction of the presiding judge of the superior court.

D. On notice of the presiding judge of the superior court, the county treasurer shall invest monies in the fund and monies earned from investment shall be credited to the fund.

E. Monies that are expended from the fund shall be used to supplement, not supplant, any state or county appropriations that would otherwise be available for programs that are established pursuant to this article.

F. On or before August 10 of each year, the county treasurer shall submit a report to the presiding judge that shows the amount of monies in the children's issues education fund.

§ 25–355. Fees; exemption

Each person who attends the educational program required by the court pursuant to section 25–352 may be required to pay to the clerk of the superior court a fee not to exceed thirty dollars that covers the cost of the program. A person who demonstrates indigence by any of the criteria prescribed in section 12–306 is exempt from this fee. Notwithstanding any other law, fees paid under this section shall be used exclusively for the purposes of domestic relations education programs that are established pursuant to section 25–351. The clerk shall transmit monthly the monies the clerk collects pursuant to this subsection to the county treasurer for deposit in the children's issues education fund established by section 25–354.
VIDEOS APPROVED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
FOR DOMESTIC RELATIONS EDUCATION ON CHILDREN’S ISSUES
01-29-97

List supplied by Dr. Cheryl Lee, Administrative Office of the Courts, Arizona Supreme Court, Tel. 542-9253.

"ACES" (group that advocates for child support payment--video on how the group began)

"Battering"
60 Minutes (CBS)

"Caught in the Crossfire--Children of Divorce"

"Children Coping with Divorce"
20/20 (ABC)

"The Children of Divorce"
NEWIST - Studio B
University of Wisconsin
Green Bay, WI 54311
Tel. 414-465-2599

"Children First"
ABC News Special

"Children--The Experts on Divorce"
Family Connections Publishing Co.
575 E. 4500 South, Ste. B-250
Salt Lake City, UT 84107
Tel. 801-268-2800

"Children in the Middle"
Center for Divorce Education
P.O. Box 5900
Athens, OH 45701
Tel. 614-593-1065

"Dad’s House, Mom’s House"

"Dads Made a Difference"
Minnesota Extension Service - Ramsey County, St. Paul, MN

"For the Children" (video on paternity)
Baltimore, MD

"Healing Wounded Hearts"
Family Connections Publishing Co. (previously listed)

"It’s Still Your Choice"
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts
29 W. Wilson St.
Madison, WI 53703
Tel. 608-251-4001

"Kids’ Turn for Kids’ Sake"
AOC Approved Videos (01-29-97)

"Listen to the Children"
Victor/Harder Productions, Inc.
Tel. 810-661-6730

"Pain Games"
Ms. Carol Roeder-Esser
Johnson County Mental Health Center
6000 Lamar St., Ste. 130
Mission, KS 66202

Pima County Paternity video
Dr. Fred Mitchell
Pima County Conciliation Court
32 N. Stone Ave., Ste. 1704
Tucson, AZ 85701
Tel. 520-740-5590

"The Single Parent Family"
Ohio Judicial Conference
88 E. Broad St., Ste. 1100
Columbus, OH 43215-3506
Tel. 614-466-4150

"Violence Hurts"
Ohio Judicial Conference (previously listed)

"What Kind of Parent Will You Be?"
Arizona Department of Economic Security

"When Mom and Dad Split Up"
20/20 (ABC)

"You're Hurting Me, Too" (video on domestic violence and its effects on children)
Intermedia, Inc.
1300 Dexter Ave. North, Ste. 220
Seattle, WA 98109
Tel. 1-800-553-8336

"You're Still Mum and Dad" (from New Zealand)
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (previously listed)
Following is a partial list of resources available for establishing and conducting education and information programs for parents regarding the effects of divorce and separation on children.

Program: **Children Cope with Divorce**  
Source: Families First  
P.O. Box 7948, Station C  
Atlanta, Georgia 30357-0948  
Tel. 404/853-2800  FAX 404/853-2889

Program: **Children of Divorce - An Educational Program for Divorcing Parents**  
Source: Kenneth H. Waldron, PhD  
Capitol Square Associates  
660 West Washington, Suite 305  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
Tel. 608/256-5176

Program: **Children of Divorce Workshop**  
Source: Wichita Guidance Center  
415 North Poplar  
Wichita, Kansas 67214-4595  
Tel. 316/686-6671

Program: **Children in the Middle**  
Source: Jack Arbuthnot, PhD and Donald A. Gordon, PhD  
Center for Divorce Education  
P.O. Box 5900  
Athens, Ohio 45701  
Tel. 614/593-1074, 1065

Program: **Cooperative Parenting and Adaptive Divorce**  
Source: Thomas F. Kinsora, PhD  
Center for Cooperative Parenting  
2129 Cimarron Hill Drive  
Henderson, Nevada 89014  
Tel. 702/382-1960  FAX 702/382-4993

Program: **Divorce Education for Parents**  
Source: Elizabeth Hickey, MSW  
Mediation and Divorce Center, Inc.  
575 East 4500 South, Suite B-250  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84107  
Tel. 801/268-2800

Program: **Focus on Children**  
Source: Ms. P.K. Parker, JD  
Focus on Children Program  
32 West Randolph Street, Suite 2100  
Chicago, Illinois 60601  
Tel. 312/609-3771  FAX 312/609-3777
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program:</th>
<th>Helping Children Succeed After Divorce</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source:</td>
<td>Children's Hospital Guidance Centers Divorce Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>595 Copeland Mill Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westerville, Ohio 43081</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tel. 614/794-2145</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Parents, Children and Divorce</th>
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<tr>
<td>Source:</td>
<td>The Training Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 51424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fort Myers, Florida 33905</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tel. 800/767-8193  FAX 813/693-2337</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Parents Forever - Coparenting After a Divorce</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source:</td>
<td>The Divorce Center</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>620 North Carrollton Avenue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>New Orleans, Louisiana 70119</td>
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<td>Tel. 504/488-9924</td>
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