

LIFE Seminars  
Living In Families Effectively  
Presented by Dr. Allison Rees

The Parent-Child Connection  
&  
Sidestepping the Power Struggle

# Introduction

Introduction written by,  
Marian Stokes

# Acknowledgments

The Parent-Child Connection & Sidestepping the Power Struggle are the culmination of many years of writing and research. In the early 1980's, Dr. Alison Miller started teaching parenting courses and putting the LIFE materials together before there were hundreds of books on the subject in bookstores. I appreciate her original vision of bringing this material into the hands of parents rather than just the experts. This material was then rewritten by me (several times) when I took over teaching so that I could make it my own. Presently, Dr. Miller and I have combined our writing and are promoting our material worldwide.

Many thanks to the parents who continue to encourage me with their willingness to use this material to learn and grow. Their commitment to learn new ways is inspiring and motivating.

Thank you to the many volunteer course facilitators whose contributions of experience and commitment make the course the success that it is. How else could we house so many parents and yet connect with everyone? The support I personally gain from the facilitators encourages me to keep going even at times when I feel weak, ineffective or just plain tired. Over the years they have watched me grow and have gently applauded my steps forward.

Of course my family is my final acknowledgment. My children are my greatest teachers and my husband is a pillar of stability and support.

Allison Rees

## Disclaimer

The Parent-Child Connection© and Sidestepping the Power Struggle© workbooks are intended for educational purposes only. This material is not intended to substitute for or replace professional guidance in cases where clinical assistance has been prescribed.

Every attempt has been made to refer equally and randomly to both genders.

Allison's stories are factual but all names, dates, and places have been changed (except for her own).

The information in this workbook supplements The Parent-Child Connection and Sidestepping the Power Struggle lecture series. It is a useful directory of the course materials and provides participants with an overview of the *LIFE* Philosophy and course content.

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# Contents

<b>Welcome .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>About the Program .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Lecture Series Review .....	7
Reading & Homework .....	8
Reading .....	8
Homework .....	8
Educational Group Discussion .....	9
Facilitators .....	9
Group Guidelines .....	9
Sharing .....	10
Participants .....	10
<b>Philosophies &amp; Principles .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Philosophies .....	12
Philosophy of Family Education .....	12
Philosophy of Family Life .....	12
Parenting Principles .....	13
Changing Gears .....	13
Search for Balance .....	14
Stay on the Trail .....	14
Be Good Enough .....	14
The Golden Rule of Communication .....	15
<b>The Parent-Child Connection .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Goals & Objectives .....	16
Workbook 1: The Search for Balance .....	16
Goals .....	16
Objectives .....	16
Workbook 2: The Intelligence of Emotions .....	16
Goals .....	16
Objectives .....	17
Workbook 3: Listening to Understand .....	17
Goals .....	17
Objectives .....	17
Workbook 4: Express Yourself .....	17
Goals .....	18
Objectives .....	18
Workbook 5: Building Bridges over Conflict .....	18
Goals .....	18
Objectives .....	18
Workbook 6: Self-Esteem in Parent & Child .....	19

Goals.....	19
Objectives .....	19
Workbook 7: Boundaries – Building Parental Borders..	20
Goals.....	20
Objectives .....	20
<b>Course Outlines.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Workbook 1: The Search for Balance.....	21
Workbook 2: The Intelligence of Emotions.....	22
Workbook 3: Listening to Understand.....	23
Workbook 4: Express Yourself.....	24
Workbook 5: Building Bridges Over Conflict.....	25
Workbook 6: Self-Esteem in Parent & Child.....	26
Workbook 7: Boundaries – Building Parental Borders .....	27
<b>Sidestepping the Power Struggle.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Goals &amp; Objectives .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Workbook 1: I Gotta Be Me! .....	28
Goals.....	28
Objectives .....	28
Workbook 2: Tell Me it’s a Stage! .....	29
Goals.....	29
Objectives .....	29
Workbook 3: Taming the Triggers .....	29
Goals.....	29
Objectives .....	29
Workbook 4: The Freedom of Responsibility.....	30
Goals.....	30
Objectives .....	30
Workbook 5: The Heart of Discipline.....	30
Goals.....	30
Objectives .....	31
Workshop 6: Love, Limits and Consequences.....	31
Goals.....	31
Objectives .....	31
Workbook 7: Act Your Age.....	32
Goals.....	32
Objectives .....	32
<b>Course Outline .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Workbook 1: I Gotta Be Me! .....	33
Workbook 3: Taming the Triggers .....	36
Workbook 4: The Freedom of Responsibility.....	37
Workbook 5: The Heart of Discipline.....	38
Workbook 7: Act Your Age!.....	40
<b>Nine Basic Traits .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Both charts can be found in The Parent Child Connection, The Intelligence of Emotions	46
<b>Practice: .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Conflict Resolution - Five Steps.....</b>	<b>50</b>
1. Define the issue. ....	50
2. What needs does each person have with regard to this issue? What are the facts? .....	50
3. List all possible solutions without judgment. ...	50

4. *Evaluate proposals and choose one to put into action*.....50
5. *Follow through and ask if it is working?* .....50

# Welcome

Allison Rees' LIFE Seminars, *Sidestepping the Power Struggle* and *The Parent Child Connection* are presented in two eight week sessions: Each course consists of an eight part series of lectures and educational workshops that focus on strengthening the relationships between parents and children. If *all living is done in relationships*, giving our children the skills to develop healthy relationships is crucial to their emotional well being.

**In the Parent-Child Connection**, the lectures and discussion groups look at how family patterns, relationships, communication, and conflict resolution skills, influence the development of a child's self-esteem and their ability to respect not only their own boundaries, but also those of others. Parents will look back at their own family of origin to see how the belief systems of their parents influenced their personal development and their beliefs about parenting.

This program looks at the parenting approaches that say: "*I was raised that way, and I turned out okay,*" and "*I'll never do what my parents did*" – and challenges parents to find balance.

**Sidestepping the Power Struggle** is a practical, hands on course for parents and professionals dealing with children. It explains why your children act like they do giving you tools to work with your own child and their unique temperament. Covering positive discipline and letting go of parental control, this course teaches you to surrender "kid issues" to the kids. Stop fighting needless battles but keep the framework of limits clear and "not up for grabs."

After completing both these courses you will have an understanding of; communication, healthy family boundaries, effective discipline, understanding normal behaviour, planning ahead with antecedent management and self-esteem.

# About the Program

These courses use several teaching styles. The programs include a lecture, power point, interactive questions, home reading, study questions, and group discussion. You hear it with the lecture, and you do it by practicing the material at home. The discussion groups give you opportunity to discuss results with peers in an educational setting managed by trained course facilitators.

## Lecture Series Review

The eight week programs are made up of seven lectures and one open forum for guest speakers and/or a question and answer period.

Allison Rees' lectures are a very time-effective way to learn about parenting. Her material is gleaned from her experience as an educator/counselor in this field, the latest parenting research, her own clinical research and the original LIFE Seminars material written by Dr. Alison Miller. As she will tell you, her greatest learning comes from her two children.

Not only is the information current and complete, it is a real-life look at the job of being a parent today. Allison's ability to look at her mistakes and the challenges she too faces with her children, give the lectures humour and compassion. She believes that we all do our best, and that mistakes are opportunities to grow! The parents who attend her courses are there because they are willing to look at new information, accept change, and do the work necessary to give their children the best possible chance at an emotionally healthy life.

The lectures include timely skits dramatized by course facilitators. They lend humor and relevance to the material. Allison believes that despite the seriousness of today's parenting issues, it is important to remember to laugh at ourselves!

# Reading & Homework

## Reading

Course notes supplement the lecture series. Notes are distributed to participants at the end of the lecture<sup>1</sup>. The lecture covers most of the material in the notes but when lectures become interactive question and answer periods, there may not be time to cover all sections. Participants are asked to read the notes as a review of the lecture, and to read any sections that were missed.

Some workbooks include questions throughout the text. They are intended to help you look at the material from a personal perspective.

## Homework

Weekly homework assignments complement the lecture and reading. Homework is discussed in the Educational Group meeting.

The homework is highly recommended. It gives you the opportunity to look at concepts and techniques discussed in the lecture. Please remember that although the discussion group works best when everyone has completed the homework, the only negative consequence for not getting it done is that you have missed a learning opportunity. You are still welcome to attend and participate in the discussion group.

If you have difficulty with the language or reading, please let your group leaders know and they will take time to explain the goals of the “Practice”. You can still participate in the group discussion when you can think of and perhaps try the concepts discussed in the prior lecture.

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<sup>1</sup> If you must miss a lecture you can ask for next week’s notes in advance or pick them up the following week.

# Educational Group Discussion

The class is divided into groups of parents with children of similar ages. The purpose of the group is educational and the facilitators are trained to keep the discussion focused on the homework. This makes the groups very different from a support group.

Group discussions are completely confidential. Please do not discuss anything shared in your small group with anyone.

Partners can attend the same or different groups. Please make your preference known at registration.

## Facilitators

This course is pulled together by the *volunteer* facilitators who come out course after course to support the work. They may be completing a practicum, hold a degree in this field, or be participants that were recommended because of their knowledge and skills. Without them, we couldn't house such a large course or be part of such a dynamic experience. Their dedication and commitment adds an incredible energy to the course.

As facilitators, they receive training and ongoing support from Allison Rees and an opportunity to keep working the material themselves. They too continue to peel back the layers to bring about a greater understanding.

Two trained facilitators guide each group discussion. Please talk to your facilitator if you have any concerns about your group.

## Group Guidelines

Facilitator guidelines keep the group on track:

- Stick to the homework or topic of the week to stay on

track. If you move onto other subjects you may miss out on what you need to learn from the present lecture.

- Take turns. Everyone gets the same amount of time to share. Facilitators will watch the time to ensure fairness.
- Don't give advice to other group members. Rarely are people's experiences the same. Leaders may provide general advice while referring to the material.
- Please try not to talk out of turn. It may mean someone else misses their turn to contribute.
- If you don't feel like participating in the discussion, you don't have to. You can pass. Keep attending though, you will learn so much from others.
- If you are in the course as a couple, please don't speak for each other or come joined at the hip. Each one of you is there as an individual. Do your own homework and share your own perceptions and ideas.

## **Sharing**

Discussions can get personal. You only need to share what you are comfortable with. You may not be comfortable at first, but as you learn how the group works you will get more out of it if you participate.

What we ask you to share is your experience applying the homework material within your family. You can talk about what worked, what didn't and what you may have gleaned from the chapter.

## **Participants**

Most participants are simply parents who want to do the best job they can raising their child/ren. Hopefully people now realize that you don't have to have a problem to take a course.

Participants of different backgrounds develop a sense of trust and community despite socio-economic and cultural differences, and find themselves sharing in small groups about common family concerns. While it may feel awkward at first, this often proves to be a very valuable part of the course. LIFE Seminars have a non-racist and non-sexist concept of personal and family health.

# Philosophies & Principles

## Philosophies

### Philosophy of Family Education

1. Parents deserve to be empowered with education so that they can understand and solve their own problems. The knowledge of effective family living does not reside only with experts.
2. Parents need to understand normal child development, the range of individual differences, and how our environment affects our behavior. Parents need a wide range of effective discipline and behavior management techniques, so that they will not resort to punitive methods out of a lack of alternatives or frustration.
3. Parents learn their family living skills in their family of origin. Education based solely on skills training is ineffective. Deep-rooted attitudes and patterns learned in childhood must be identified, challenged, and replaced to change parenting habits effectively.

### Philosophy of Family Life

1. Each child is a unique growing creature who deserves to be unconditionally loved, respected, and encouraged to develop at his or her own pace to his or her full unique capacity.
2. A healthy family is place in which each member is loved and respected for who he or she is. As they grow, members are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their own life decisions and the development and use of their unique gifts. Children's moves toward independence are encouraged and appreciated, rather than regarded as insubordination.

Roles and areas of authority are determined by individual gifts, maturity, experience, and interests rather than by gender, age or hierarchy.

- 3) The goals of effective parenting are the development of self-esteem, empathy, responsibility, and values, rather than obedience and conformity. Parents need to teach moral behavior to their children through limit setting, modeling and explicit teaching.

## Parenting Principles

*The Parent-Child Connection* is a comprehensive look at parenting. Throughout the workshops participants are reminded of the five main principles that are the backbone of the program:

- ❖ *Know When to Change Gears*
- ❖ *Search for Balance*
- ❖ *Stay on Track*
- ❖ *Be Good Enough*
- ❖ *The Golden Rule of Communication.*

## Changing Gears

The primary goal of *The Parent-Child Connection* is to teach parents to *change gears* as they approach the triggers that keep us from choosing loving behaviours. In many ways, stopping to make a decision on how you will behave with your children is like learning to ride a bike.

When we learn to ride a mountain bike, we need a lot of help with our balance, maybe even training wheels (maybe that's a good name for the program – training wheels for parents?) We seldom get this opportunity as parents. We rely on our memories and experience.

We start out extremely cautious (think of handling a new baby!). The trail is terrifying. There are so many obstacles, so many unknowns. Never mind that you are totally unfamiliar with the equipment!

How can you stay balanced riding over all of those roots and rocks? When do you need to gear up or down into each of those 21 gears?

Changing gears is about looking up and seeing that big hill ahead (remember Anger Mountain?) If you don't gear down in time, the pressure you need to put on the pedals to keep your momentum and stay balanced makes it impossible to even get the gears to work. You fall off, or need to get off, and walk the bike up the hill (pant, pant). Or you can keep pedaling in high gear until you are exhausted. Either way, its way more work than it has to be.

If you can look ahead and decide to gear down before the slope, pick the path of least resistance, perhaps stopping to move a rock or two out of the way to smooth the ride down, your ride will be so much easier. With practice, you'll know exactly when to switch to each gear and do so effortlessly. Well, maybe parenting won't ever be that easy, but you get the idea.

## **Search for Balance**

We all search for balance in our lives, parenting is no different. We need to be firm and flexible, tough and loving, honest but appropriate, caring but not care-taking, supportive but not co-dependent, not too distant, not too close, and the list goes on. The principle of balance is about knowing that there are extreme behaviours and recognizing that you have a choice about what you choose.

## **Stay on the Trail**

The principle of balance is an important one. Parenting is not a tightrope. Strong relationships leave room for mistakes – thank goodness. We need to aim somewhere in the middle. Parenting isn't about doing the right thing all of the time. It's about doing pretty good as much of time as possible. There are many paths you can choose that will still take you to the top of the mountain.

## **Be Good Enough**

Many parents drive themselves crazy trying to be the perfect parent raising the perfect child. Let's be clear - there is no such thing! Any given relationship and/or exchange can have a myriad of outcomes, all subject to an unlimited number of unknown circumstances, none of which can be foreseen. We can't possibly be right all of the time. Like staying on the trail, the principle of being good enough tells us that we need to accept that we can only do what we can do – no more, and no less.

## **The Golden Rule of Communication**

The Golden Rule of Communication is simple: *listen – as you would be listened to*. In other words: *don't say it if you wouldn't want to hear it*.

The principle of listening is perhaps the most important. We need to listen to understand the feelings of those we love. Unconditional love is based on understanding. Listening and loving go hand in hand.

Have you ever wondered if you've said the right thing, or if there was a better way to handle a situation? This principle teaches parents to respect their children's boundaries as they would have theirs respected.

**Listen – as you  
would be listened  
to.**

**If you don't want to  
hear it, you don't  
want to say it!**

# The Parent-Child Connection

## Goals & Objectives

### Workbook 1: The Search for Balance

#### Goals

In *Parental Boundary Busters*, we will focus on developing awareness of our own boundaries and learn the importance of respecting the boundaries of others, including our children.

#### Objectives

*Parental Boundary Busters* will teach you:

- about different kinds of boundaries
- what healthy boundaries look like and the importance of trusting your inner voice
- the importance of having your boundaries respected and of respecting the boundaries of others
- how parents inadvertently sabotage children's ability to develop their own boundaries and self-esteem by well-intentioned boundary busters.

### Workbook 2: The Intelligence of Emotions

#### Goals

Identifying our needs, values and things that really matter to us is accomplished by paying attention to our feelings. Feelings are there to guide us through our life so that we

can be the guardians of our own hearts, talents and desires. Being in a place of awareness allows us to negotiate with those around us. We identify our needs and the needs of others to find balance.

### **Objectives**

This chapter will focus on:

- understanding different ways to deal with feelings
- articulating feelings to articulate needs
- challenging belief systems

## **Workbook 3: Listening to Understand**

### **Goals**

This chapter focuses on understanding feelings of others and the importance they have on our general well being and self-esteem. We will learn when, how, and why to listen to the people in our lives, how to be a *safe* communicator so that our children will want to talk to us. We will learn about the role of communication in emotional health and awareness, close relationships, and developing a strong sense of self.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this workshop you will:

- understand the traits of a safe listener
- develop a broad feeling vocabulary
- learn alternative solutions for response patterns that undermine effective communication (the *Dirty Dozen* listening responses)
- develop an emotional bank account with ourselves and our loved ones

## **Workbook 4: Express Yourself**

## **Goals**

The primary goals of *The Spoken Word* are to understand the power of our messages and take personal responsibility for what we say knowing that it affects the people we love. Learn to speak your truth the way you would want to hear it.

## **Objectives**

This communication workshop teaches us how to speak to our children. We will learn:

- how to avoid blame, and be aware of the speaking don'ts
- practice speaking do's and "I" statements
- how to speak assertively and how to teach your children to speak assertively
- how to praise your child without evaluating (verbal appreciation)
- how to take turns when communicating..

# **Workbook 5: Building Bridges over Conflict**

## **Goals**

This chapter outlines some of the reasons that conflict can become so hard to work through. How can parental needs be represented while meeting the needs of our children? Where are the limits and how do we enforce them? How do we resolve conflict?

## **Objectives**

In *Building Bridges Over Conflict* you will learn:

- why conflict can arise
- how we protect ourselves and remain closed
- how to get clarity around limits
- where a child's responsibility begins and the parent's ends
- the steps to conflict resolution

## **Workbook 6: Self-Esteem in Parent & Child**

### **Goals**

In this workbook we will:

- develop awareness of how our communication with ourselves affects our self-esteem. Do we use our inner voice to weaken and/or strengthen our sense of self?
- look closely at how to nurture our children's self-esteem and remove the fear and self-doubt that haunt so many parents.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this workshop you will:

- understand what self-esteem is, and why it is so important.
- understand what creates the development of our sense of self as children, and as adults, and understand how we as parents influence the development of our children's self-esteem.
- be able to recognize the signs of low self-esteem and what to say to influence positive changes in our own and our children's inner voices.

## **Workbook 7: Boundaries – Building Parental Borders**

### **Goals**

The chapter on boundaries looks at all areas of life from parenting, marriage and friendships. Shining a light on our blind spots means that once we identify a boundary, we don't lose sight of it. We can only build and benefit from the clarity. This story explains how that might look in day to day life.

### **Objectives**

- examine healthy personal boundaries
- develop practical ways of enforcing boundaries
- help our child identify their own areas of responsibility

# Course Outlines

## Workbook 1: The Search for Balance

### About Boundaries

...Closeness and Distance

...Too Much Closeness

### Boundaries in Healthy Families

### Boundaries in Unhealthy Families

...Enmeshment

### Children's Boundaries in Healthy Families

### Children's Boundaries in Enmeshed Families

### Boundary Busters

Control

Intrusiveness

Respect Children's Choices

Respect Children's Space and Possessions

Becoming Less Intrusive

Over-protectiveness

How to Unplug from Over-protectiveness

Over-indulgence

Over-indulged Adults

### The Parent's Struggle for Independence

Undoing Indulgence

### Punitiveness

### Jumping Out of Anger

# Workbook 2: The Intelligence of Emotions

A Movement for Growth and Health  
More Stress and Pressure

Ways of Handling Feelings

Lust - Putting Self First

Denial - Putting Others First

...Loss of Ability to Feel Needs

...Build-Up of Repressed Feelings

...Leakage of Stored-Up Unacceptable Feelings

...Sudden Unloading of Feelings

...Negative Attitudes

...Depression

...Emotional Pain-Killers

...Past Feelings Triggered by Present Situations

Feelings and Needs:

...Boredom and the Need for Challenge

...Confusion and the Need for Meaning

...Stress and the Need for Self-care

...Tiredness and the Need for Recreation

...Worry and Fear and the Need for Reassurance

...Loneliness and the Need for Love

...Guilt and the Need for Moral Integrity

...Anger and the Need for Safety and Justice

...Old Triggers Contribute to Anger

...What is the Meaning of a Bad Mood?

**The A-N-G-E-R of Anger**

A = Attention

N = Negotiate Your Anger

G = Gear Down

E = Express Yourself

R = Resolve the Issue

# Workbook 3: Listening to Understand

The Importance of Communication

A Child's Experience

The Dirty Dozen - A Mom's Response

How to Listen

Shh...I'm Listening ( a story )

Questions and Answers on Listening

Listening Toolkit

...Paying Attention

...Mirroring Back content & Feelings

...Body Language

...Practicing Empathy

...Clarifying

...Fine Tuning

Increase your Feeling & Need Vocabulary

Safe and Compassionate Listening Review

Never Too Young to Reflect

...Setting Limits First

...When There are no words

# Workbook 4: Express Yourself

## How Not to Speak

....Your Experience as a Listener

## Speaking Do's & don'ts

Say What You want to Say

Stick to the Here and Now

Stick to the Point

Be Brief

## Preserve the Other's Self-Esteem

Respect the Other's Emotional Privacy

Respect the Other's Independence

Talk at the Other Person's Level

Describe Your own Perceptions

State What You See and Hear

## Watch Those Fighting Words

Express Your Own Feelings

State Your Needs

## Make Your Nonverbal Communication

Consistent With Your Verbal Message

## "I Statements"

1) Observation

2) Feeling

3) Need

4) Request

## Taking Turns

- When the Speaker Feels Understood

- When the Speaker is Finished

- When the Speaker Feels Stuck

- When the Speaker Wants to Hear the Other  
Person's View point

- When the Listener's Own Thoughts and Feelings  
Make Him Unable to Listen

# Workbook 5: Building Bridges Over Conflict

## How Conflict Goes Unresolved

Roles Have Changed

## Why Does Conflict Go So Wrong?

Bypassing - Words Have different Meanings

## Protections

Protections to Defend

Stepping Out of Protection

## Limits and Needs

Equality sets the Tone for Conflict Resolution

Giving Choices is the Simple Form of Conflict Resolution

If you wouldn't talk to an adult that way - don't talk to a child that way

## A Request or a Demand?

## Is There an Issue

Be Nice N = Negotiate I = Insist C = Consequence E = Exit

## The Process of Conflict Resolution

## The Framework of Limits:

Safety, Respect, Responsibility and Values

## The Mealtime Blues

Encourage Self Help

Helping with Homework

# Workbook 6: Self-Esteem in Parent & Child

Unconditional Love

Self-Esteem Pitfalls

The Perfectionism Pitfall

The "Winning Is All" Pitfall

The "est" Syndrome

What Happens to Winners

What About Losers?

The Being Good Pitfall

Vulnerable Self-Esteem

A Closer Look at Healthy Self-Esteem

Signs of Low Self-Esteem

The Three A's of Self-Esteem

Affirmation vs. Rejection

Affection vs. Neglect

Acceptance vs. Conditions

The Voice That Heals for Parents

Affirmations

Love is an Action

What Love Looks Like

Self-Esteem Checklist

# Workbook 7: Boundaries - Building Parental Borders

Setting Your Own Boundaries

Letting Children Deal with the Pain of Growing Up

Blindness to Own Boundaries

The Cycle

Not Like I was Raised

Dealing With the Boundary Blind

Co-dependency

Letting go of What Doesn't Work

Oversensitivity to Own Boundaries

Jumping Out of the Guilt-Anger Cycle

It's Okay to Say "No"

It May Hurt You - But it won't Harm You

Manipulative Guilt Inducing

Friends Need Fences Too

Crisis Addiction

Parental Children

Sometimes You Need Some Distance

Triangles

Children Taking Parent's Sides

Parent's Interfering with One Another's Discipline

Sibling Rivalry

Marge's Triangles

The Family System

Reaping the Reward Boundary Eroders

The Learning Curve

Parental Rights

# Sidestepping the Power Struggle

## Goals & Objectives

### Workbook 1: I Gotta Be Me!

#### Goals

Our goals for this workshop are to outline temperament to give us a more accurate picture of our kids, their strengths, and areas that present challenges. This knowledge will enable us to provide help and teach us to notice the positives. Because parents also have these nine basic traits, we may come to understand some of our own challenges and strengths as well. We may discover that “the apple doesn’t fall far from the family tree”. When we understand our children and ourselves we can *respond* rather than *react*. This knowledge will help us change gears and choose a loving behaviour.

#### Objectives

At the end of this workshop we will:

- identify the nine basic traits in our children
- identify the nine basic traits in ourselves
- discover tools and skills to assist specific traits
- notice the strengths that are often ignored from these traits.
- watch for parental habits that reinforce our children’s weaknesses and therefore affect self-esteem.

## Workbook 2: Tell Me it's a Stage!

### **Goals**

The goal of this workshop is to teach parents the stages of maturing. When a parent has this awareness it changes their reaction to their child. Parents learn to respond with fairness and love rather than react with anger. This can only come with understanding.

We need to appreciate what normal is before trying to punish or change behaviours. If children are allowed to go through the various stages of moving forward and pulling back within a healthy framework of limits, they mature with confidence and self-esteem intact.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this workshop you will:

- understand the stages of development
- identify behaviours in your child relating to the subject
- deal effectively with the behaviours

## Workbook 3: Taming the Triggers

### **Goals**

This part of the course opens up another dimension to discipline. After looking at behaviour and consequences we focus on triggers or temptation that might create challenging behaviours. If this antecedent has a strong influence on behaviour, consequences will be ineffective. Here we will examine possibilities ranging from hunger to our own triggering behaviour as parents.

### **Objectives**

In this chapter you will learn:

- to appreciate that there is often a reason for behaviour in our children

- that it is ineffective to consequence a behaviour when the antecedent is too strong
- that antecedent management can be much more effective and esteeming than consequenceing for our children and ourselves

## Workbook 4: The Freedom of Responsibility

### **Goals**

In this workshop we will provide parents with an approach to giving responsibilities that will empower both the parent and the child. Responsibility needs to be given slowly and with explicit teaching. Children need to be given choices around when and how to do things while understanding what they need to do.

### **Objectives**

- learn to use a clear language relating to levels of responsibility
- define just what our children can do at the age level
- find ways to maintain chores without nagging
- create a healthy atmosphere as tasks are shared appropriately
- enhance our children's sense of belonging and ability

## Workbook 5: The Heart of Discipline

### **Goals**

The goal of this workshop is to empower children with opportunities to think for themselves. Parents will learn to let go of areas of control that belong to their children. This is the true spirit of natural consequences. Letting go while maintaining loving support.

In this workshop, we will identify some ineffective habits that can interfere with the self-esteem of our children and ourselves. With this knowledge, we won't stop these behaviors but rather, visit them less frequently.

### **Objectives**

The Heart of Discipline will look at:

- The origins of our beliefs about discipline.
- Ineffective discipline techniques .
- Effective discipline through natural and logical consequences.

## **Workshop 6: Love, Limits and Consequences**

### **Goals**

This workshop outlines the purpose of limits and how we teach them to our children. Expressing limits with respect is a parent's loving behavior to the child. We all respect limits in our lives. Eventually our children develop an inner reference for discipline. This is the process of becoming a mature and healthy self.

We *can't* make our children do anything. Changing our own behavior and attitude is where our power lies. Our goal is not control over the child but rather control over ourselves, which is exactly what we want to develop in our children. Our children do as they see.

### **Objectives**

In this workshop we will look at:

- the purpose of limits.
- how to determine and state a limit.
- how to reinforce a limit.

## Workbook 7: Act Your Age

### **Goals**

This workshop looks at the intellectual and moral development of children. It outlines typical behaviours that can leave parents feelings bewildered. In this chapter we will review a number of behaviours and emotions in children such as fears, telling untruths, being able to make messes but not able to clean them, a child's mis-use of time, mistaken ideas about the world and much more.

### **Objectives**

- To look at how children learn
- To understand typical behaviours from tots to teens
- To understand the development of moral values

# Course Outline

## Workbook 1: I Gotta Be Me!

Discovering Our Individual Self

Temperament

Nine Basic Traits

Recognizing the Positives

**Activity Level**

Understanding activity Level

About Hyperactivity

Understanding Low Activity Level

Parenting Pointers

Watch the Messages

**Distractibility**

Watch the Messages

Understanding Distractibility

Understanding Non-Distractibility

Parenting Pitfall - Nagging

Parenting Pointers

The Plus Side

**Persistence**

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

Parenting Pitfalls - Arguing & Giving In

Parenting Pointers

The Plus side

The Non-Persistent Child

Learning Difficulties & Persistence

**Approach/Withdrawal**

Understanding a Cautious Approach

Parenting Pitfall - Push or Pull?

Parenting Pointers

The Plus Side

Adaptability

Parenting Pitfall - Forcing Change

Parenting Pointers

The Plus Side

### **Emotional Intensity**

Parenting Pitfall - Reacting

Parenting Pointers

The Plus Side

### **Bodily Regularity**

The Irregular child

Parenting Pitfall - Mismatched Parents and Kids

Parenting Pointers

Bedtime

Meals

### **Sensory Sensitivity**

Parenting Pitfall - disbelief

Parenting Pointers

Meals & Refueling

### **Mood**

Parenting Pitfalls - Overreacting

Parenting Pointers

Temperament, Life Experience & Personality

Temperament & Expectations

Personality Clashes

## **Workbook 2: Tell Me it's a Stage!**

## **What's Normal?**

### **Transition Stages**

#### **The Struggle for Independence**

- Feeling Resistant
- Changing Their Minds
- Refusing Help
- Don't Take it Personally
- Stubbornness, Defiance & Talking Back

#### **Fear of Independence**

- Needing Parents at Night
- Babyish Behaviour
- Working Through Transitions
- Understanding & Managing Feelings
- Am I Hungry or Tired?
- Taming the Tiger
- Dealing With Tantrums

#### **Understanding & Managing Feelings**

- Knowing what is Wrong
- Identifying Feelings Incorrectly
- Hurting Others Physically
- Wanting Something Right Now
- Temper Tantrums
- Moodiness, Moping and Sulking
- Touchiness

#### **Helping Teenagers Understand their Feelings**

- When is it Depression?

#### **Egocentric Behaviours**

- Demands Attention
- Please Don't Hang the Hamster!
- Empathy Rules
- Provoking and Bugging
- Fight and Argue
- Group Cruelty

# Workbook 3: Taming the Triggers

## Family Matters

Repetitive Family Patterns

## Time Well Spent

Behaviour is Communication

Quality Time in the day to Day

Presence Not Presents

Time Matters

The calendar

Time of the Month

Time of Year

## Beat The Clock

Getting Out in One Peace

Planning Ahead

When - Then

Recognizing Positive Behaviour

Natural consequences

Logical Consequences

Make Your Feet Listen to Your Mouth

## Hunger

## Temptations

Checkout Sections

To Buy or Not to Buy

## Events

Making changes

## Acknowledging is Loving

# Workbook 4: The Freedom of Responsibility

## Understanding Responsibility

Responsibility Checklist

Don't be a Martyr

## Teaching Responsibility

Level 0

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

## Household Responsibilities

### Contributing Feels Good

*Consider Age & Workload*

## What to Expect at What Age

Preschoolers: 3 to 5

The Mid-Years: 6 to 12

Homework

Lunches

Laundry

Beds

Meal Preparation

## Choices, choices, choices

## About Rewards

Allowance; Reward or Right?

## Chores & Teens

What's in it for me?

## Understanding Loving Behaviour

# Workbook 5: The Heart of Discipline

Parenting Styles  
Looking Back

Submissive Parenting - No "No's"  
The Child Who Can't Hear "No"  
A Blast From the Past

Punitive Parenting - Too Many "No's"  
Belief Systems to Challenge  
To Obey or Or rebel  
A Blast from the Past

Nice & Nasty Habits  
Idle Threats - Angry Lies  
Loving Promises

Punishment - Beyond the Threat  
In the Heat of the Moment  
Limits Need to be Clear

Nagging - Negative Attention Giving  
Nagging vs. Reminding

Natural Consequences  
Is my child old enough to get this?  
Will it pose a threat?  
Will the outcome be devastating in any way?  
Will anyone else suffer a consequence?  
Will the outcome have a positive natural consequence?  
Is the consequence too far away?  
Kid Issues and Family Issues

Letting Go of Control

# Workbook 6: Love, Limits, & Consequences

## Sorting Through Issues

Children Keeping Parents Responsible

## Family Issues

The golden Answer

## Limits that Respect Others

It's "What we do"

Obeying out of Fear

Teaching Values

The Key to Cooperation

## Respectful Adults, Respectful Kids

## Consistency Matters

Common Family Issues

Limits Feel Safe

Consistent vs. Rigid

About Boundaries

## Taking Action

Logical Means Related

## About Time Out

The Place of Time Out?

How long?

Time Yourself Out

How About a Time In?

## When Parents Disagree about Limits

Take a Positive Approach

It May not be About Limits

## Workbook 7: Act Your Age!

Learning to Understand the World  
Developing an Understanding

Children Have Mistaken Ideas

Children embarrass their Parents

Realistic Fears

Intellectual Development

Children Say Things That Aren't True  
Children Ask Lots of Questions  
Children Forget Instructions

Children Don't Understand Time  
Children Make Messes But Can't Clean Up  
Dealing with Children's Limitations

Moral Development

Conscience

How Parents can Assist Children's Moral  
Development

# Nine Basic Traits

Activity Level	How active is the child generally, from an early age?
Distractibility	How easily is the child distracted? Can he/she pay attention?
Persistence	Does the child stay with something he/she likes? How persistent or determined is he/she when he/she wants something?
Approach/Withdrawal	Does the child have a positive or negative response to new places, people, foods, clothes, or toys?
Adaptability	How does the child deal with transition and change? How long does it take the child to get used to changes in routine?
Emotional Intensity	How much emotional energy does the child put into his/her responses, whether happy or unhappy?
Bodily Regularity	How predictable is the child in his/her patterns of sleep, appetite, and bowel habits?
Sensory Sensitivity	How does the child react to sensory stimuli: noise, bright colours, smells, pain, warm weather, tastes, the texture and feel of clothes? Is he/she easily bothered? Is he/she easily over stimulated?
Mood	What is the child's basic mood?

## From Sidestepping the Power Struggle, I Gotta Be Me!

We look at how children move back and forward with struggles and fears of independence.

<b><i>Symptoms of the Fear of Independence</i></b>	<b><i>Symptoms of the Struggle for Independence</i></b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• needing parents at night</li> <li>• crying when parents leave</li> <li>• “you do it for me”</li> <li>• “I can’t”</li> <li>• self-criticism</li> <li>• touchiness</li> <li>• babyish behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negativism</li> <li>• changing their minds</li> <li>• refusing help</li> <li>• stubbornness</li> <li>• defiance and talking back</li> <li>• criticizing parents</li> <li>• shutting out family members</li> <li>• doing this to irritate you</li> <li>• arguing</li> </ul>
<b>Egocentric Behaviours</b>	<b>Children’s Problems With Feelings</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demanding undue attention</li> <li>• refusing to share</li> <li>• cruelty to animals</li> <li>• cruelty to people</li> <li>• provoking and “bugging”</li> <li>• fighting and arguing</li> <li>• group cruelty to those who are different</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not knowing what is the matter</li> <li>• identifying feelings incorrectly</li> <li>• hurting others physically</li> <li>• hurting others verbally</li> <li>• wanting something right now</li> <li>• temper tantrums</li> <li>• moodiness, moping and sulking</li> <li>• touchiness</li> </ul>

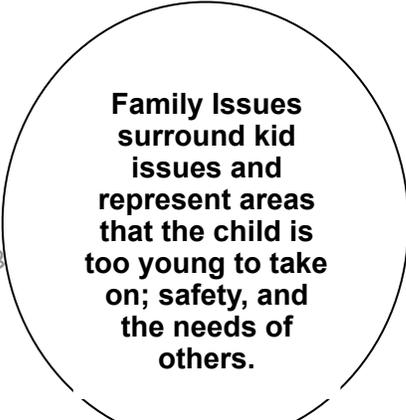
**From Sidestepping the Power Struggle, Tell Me It’s a Stage.**

These charts show various areas of behaviour that challenge parents. Now look behind all of these behaviours. What needs are related to various traits? Active children need movement, recreation and play. Distractible children need organization, creativity and space to focus. Persistent children need choices and the emotional safety of limits. Cautious children need support. Children who aren’t adaptable need routine and predictability. Sensitive children need a calm atmosphere, reassurance and comfort. Regular children need routine and all children need understanding and compassion. These needs are present in everybody but the needs may be greater in some, or more important at various times.

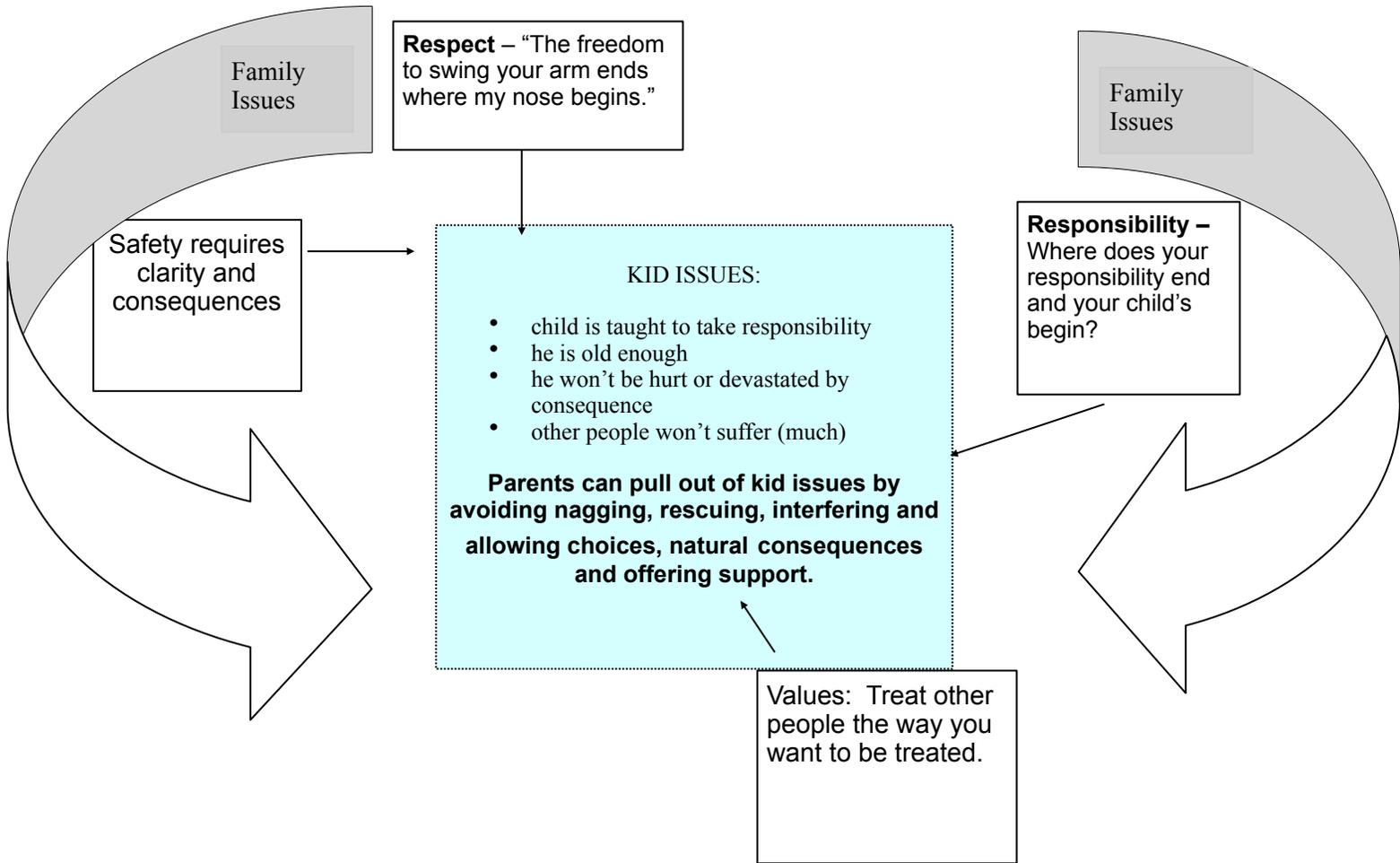
When children are struggling for independence they need autonomy. When they are feeling stressed, they need closeness, nurturing and care. Identifying these kinds of needs helps us take an approach to parenting that focuses on antecedents (triggers to behaviour) rather than relying completely on consequences. Once we identify the needs that are driving our children’s behaviour we can develop strategies to help them.

Finally, when it comes to behaviour, we must understand children's limitations and see that they are immature, not selfish, rude or mean. It is upsetting to see our children behave in ways that seem to lack kindness but developing kindness takes time and requires an understanding of emotions in both self and others. Children have problems with their feelings simply because they are young, yet raising children with a focus on feelings and needs takes discipline to a higher level of moral development. It enables children to become self-directed and to develop true respect for others rather than obeying through fear.

The second category of our seminars is discipline; teaching our children to become responsible, caring people who can grow to be capable adults. Again, in Sidestepping, we discuss practical ways of teaching our children responsibility and representing our own boundaries. We examine natural and logical consequences. We also focus on how to teach children to take on responsibility, how to deal with difficult behaviour and how to manage triggers to negative behaviour. We identify **The Framework of Limits**, which we will also be discussing in this course.



**Family Issues surround kid issues and represent areas that the child is too young to take on; safety, and the needs of others.**



The previous chart shows that there is a framework of limits that represents safety, responsibility, values and respect. In Sidestepping the Power Struggle we look at practical ways to maintain family limits and teach responsibility. In the Parent Child Connection, we look at the deeper issues and establish an awareness of boundaries. This helps the parent look at their own behavior and guides them through their parenting.

	Steps to awareness:	How this can be effective:
<b>A</b>	Attend to your early signals of anger. What do you feel in your body? How do you behave?	You can catch anger before it escalates. When you increase your awareness of the early signals, you can create choices around your behaviour.

N	Negotiate with those around you about your anger, not about specific issues. Choose distance and time.	Discuss this strong emotion with your family. Come up with a signal that means you need time out: <i>Give me five, Grumpy guy alert, Bag lady alert</i> . Or negotiate with yourself and just choose distance until you have calmed down. Even turning your back and breathing can be effective.
G	Gear down from behaviours to exploring feelings, and identify them if you can. Pay attention to your own triggering thoughts that may provoke anger.	G = Get alone E = Express your emotions A = Analyze your thoughts R = Recognize your needs. Catch negative trigger thoughts and replace them with healing ones. Use your feelings to explore what your needs are.
E	Express your feelings and needs assertively.	When you _____, I feel _____ because _____. I want/would like you to _____.
R	Resolve issues if possible. It may be as simple as making a positive request. It may mean engaging in conflict resolution. It may mean resolving the issue within yourself.	Resolving conflict stops the circular motion of old issues and patterns from constantly recurring. Resolution doesn't have to be complicated, but it can't exist without the preceding steps. Often we need to feel anger to know there is a boundary that needs to be addressed.

**From The Parent Child Connection, The Intelligence of Emotions**

<b>Second Chance Ticket</b>
<p>I feel _____ about (what I did or said) _____.</p> <p>I realize that _____.</p> <p>If I had a Second chance I would do/say _____          _____ instead.</p>

Both charts can be found in The Parent Child Connection, The Intelligence of Emotions

<p><b>Feeling</b></p> <p>afraid, aggravated, agitated, alarmed, angry, annoyed anxious, apprehensive, bewildered, bored, brokenhearted, concerned, confused, dejected, depressed, despairing, despondent, detached, disappointed, discouraged, disgusted, dismayed, distressed, embarrassed, exasperated, exhausted, fearful, frightened, frustrated, furious, guilty, helpless, hesitant, horrified, horrible, hurt, impatient, indifferent, intense, irate, irritated, jealous, lonely, mad, mean miserable, nervous, overwhelmed, panicky, passive, pessimistic, reluctant, resentful, restless, sad, scared, sensitive, shocked, skeptical, sleepy, sorry, startled, surprised, suspicious, troubled, uncomfortable, unhappy, unsteady, upset, uptight, weary, withdrawn, worried</p>	<p><b>Need</b></p> <p><b>Relationship:</b>          acceptance, affection, appreciation, clarity, closeness, community, company, consideration, distance, empathy, equality, fairness, honesty, inclusion, love, protection, reassurance, respect, support, trust, understanding, warmth</p> <p><b>Personal:</b>          achievement, accomplishment, autonomy, choices, comfort, contribution, creativity, dreams, emotional safety, freedom, goals, integrity, justice, meaning, order, peace and quiet, physical safety, play, self-worth, sense of self, time alone.</p>
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<p><b>Listening Tools</b></p> <p><b>Pay attention to the speaker.</b></p> <p><b>Try to understand both the content of the message and the feelings expressed.</b></p> <p><b>Attend to body language (non-verbal signals) as well as words.</b></p>
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	<b>Questions:</b>	<b>My child's experience:</b>
	How was my child behaving?	Example: My child was frowning and complaining about a chore.
	Did I need to set limits on the behaviour?	I needed to stay calm and restate an agreed upon limit.
	Was I able to reflect feelings at any time around the behaviour?	Yes. I reflected back her body language and said that I imagined she felt annoyed and frustrated.
	Did they voice any feelings?	Not right away but after some time she cried and said she felt overwhelmed with school.
	What were they needing?	She needed acknowledgment and support. (We both needed the same thing!)

## The Speaking Circle

- a) When you walk away while I am talking
- b) When you commented on my weight ....
- c) I see milk on the counter.
- d) When the baby-sitter didn't show up....
- e) When I walk into this room and see things put away in their place.....
- f) I see you crying....

- a) I feel hurt and annoyed.....
- b) I felt embarrassed and hurt....
- c) and that makes me feel annoyed
- d) I felt so disappointed
- e) I feel so relaxed and grateful....
- f) and imagine you are feeling hurt.

**1. Observation:**  
Only specific examples  
of what  
you see or hear.

**2. Feelings:**  
What you feel,  
not what you think.

**4. Request:**  
Make a specific,  
positive request or  
offer a choice.

**3. Needs:**  
What you need– What is  
important to you.

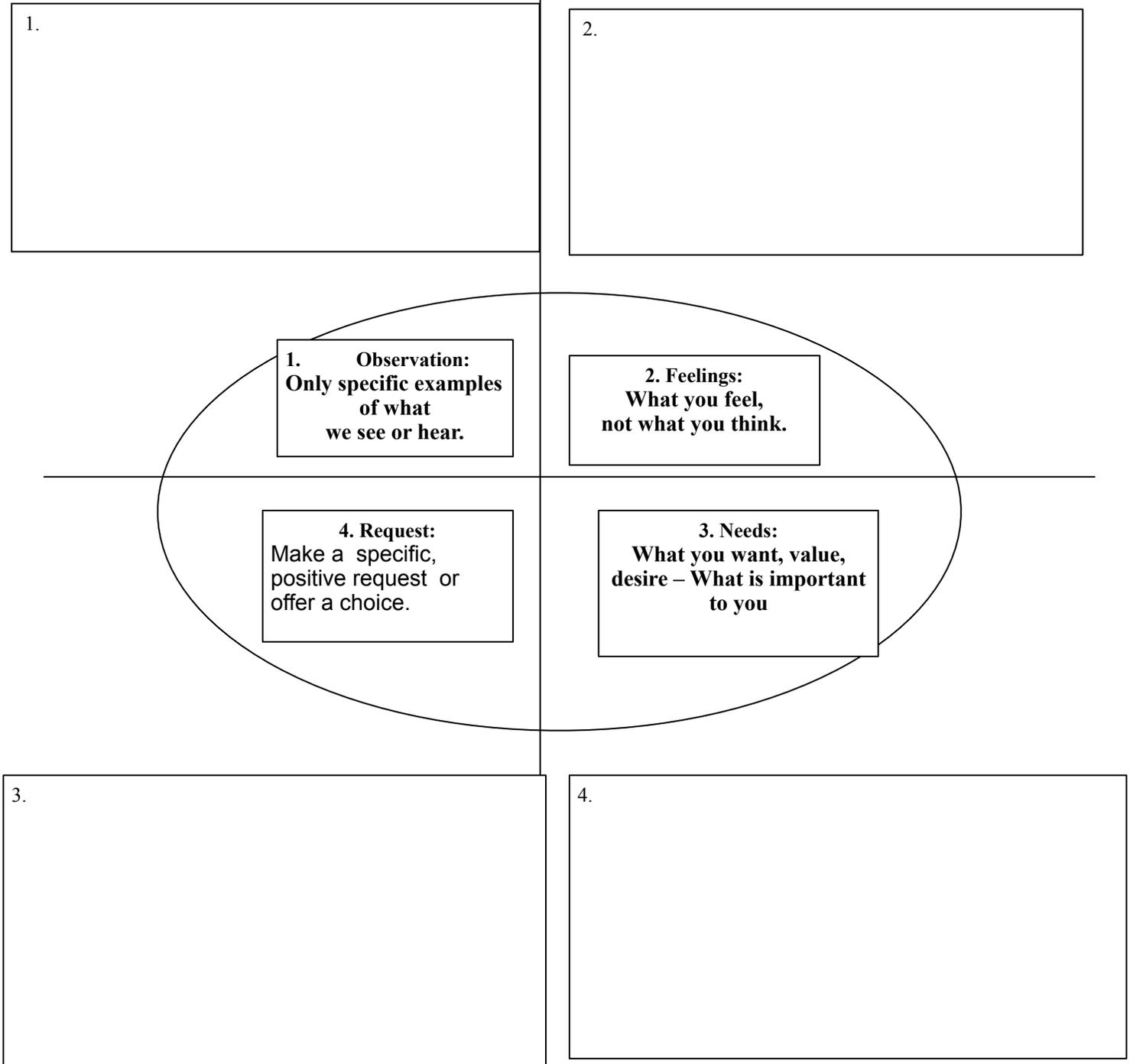
- a) Can you sit with me for a minute?
- b) Would you please stop commenting on my weight!
- c) Please put it in the fridge.
- d) I am going to call someone else.
- e) Thanks.
- f) Would you like me to sit with you or would you like to be by yourself for a while?

- a) because its important to me that we can communicate (understanding)
- b) because I need to be accepted for who I am and to be free of judgment. (acceptance)
- c) because I don't like to waste food (integrity)
- d) because I was really looking forward to an evening out! (closeness & play)
- e) I enjoy a tidy house. (meaning and order)
- f) do you need to talk? (support)

### I-messages:

a) help us set limits b) teach people how to treat us c) allow us to express values d) give us clarity to get our own needs met e) help us express sincere praise f) allow us to express empathy

## The Communication Circle



### **I-messages:**

**a)** help us set limits **b)** teach people how to treat us **c)** allow us to express values **d)** give us clarity to get our own needs met **e)** help us express sincere praise **f)** allow us to express empathy

# Conflict Resolution – Five Steps

## 1. Define the issue.

When a boundary or limit has been crossed perhaps more than once (depending on the seriousness of the boundary) it often means an issue has developed. At the first stage of conflict resolution, define the issue specifically. Stick to that issue only. This is a great safeguard against *gunny-sacking* (storing up complaints and then dumping them all at once.) Define the issue by writing it down or stating it out loud. “housework” - “curfew” – “finances” – “parents disagreeing on limits” – “privacy.”

## 2. What needs does each person have with regard to this issue?

### What are the facts?

This is a time to speak only for yourself in terms of your observations and what needs of yours are important with regard to this specific issue. Gather the facts of the issue and needs of each person involved. Let each person have a turn to talk without interruption for a set or reasonable period of time.

## 3. List all possible solutions without judgment.

This is often where people get into difficulty. Each person involved can propose as many different solutions as possible. Every idea counts, no matter how silly, expensive, or impossible it may be. This is *brainstorming*. Write them all down. Don't put down or judge another suggestion. Avoid saying things like “I have a better idea.” - “No, that wouldn't work.” - “We can't do that!” Just make a note and gather in all the solutions.

## 4. Evaluate proposals and choose one to put into action.

Now it is time to find that middle ground. That means considering all ideas with an openness and flexibility that considers everybody's needs. Discuss the pros and cons of the ideas and make a choice as a group. Parents can still support the framework of limits while giving freedom and choices within. Attitude is important here and this process can simply be shut down if flexibility and willingness get lost.

## 5. Follow through and ask if it is working?

After some time, gather again and ask: Is this plan working? If not, why?

Repeat the process if you have to.