

RAISING A THINKING CHILD



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Teaching parents how to teach their children to solve everyday problems.



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Introducing Raising a Thinking Child

The optional activity below is meant to begin discussion about how people learn to parent or grandparent. You will need (4-6) towels to complete the activity.

Folding Towels Activity (a.k.a. Why We Do What We Do)

Ask for 4-6 volunteers (based on number of towels) willing to fold a towel. Ask volunteers to come to the front of the room, or stand/sit where everyone can see them. When leader says “go,” volunteers will fold the towel as they would at home.

Ask the volunteers why they folded the towel the way they did. Discuss.

Common answers include:

- “My mother taught me to do it this way.”
- “I fold it this way because my mother didn’t fold it this way.”
- “It fits in my closet this way.”
- “I like the way it looks.”

“There are reasons why we do what we do.” Thank volunteers and ask them to be seated. Ask other participants for any other reasons why we would fold towels a certain way.

Discuss why folding towels and (grand)parenting are similar.

- We parent the way we were taught.
- We purposely don’t parent as our parents did.
- Certain parenting skills fit in certain situations.
- We feel comfortable parenting a certain way.

There are always reasons for what we do. We need to consider why we do what we do and ask ourselves- Is this the best way or strategy? Are there some best practices that might work better? There are different strategies for different needs.

We hope that each time you are folding towels or see folded towels, you will remind yourself that there is a reason for why I parent/grandparent the way I do. Then, ask yourself- does my strategy fit the need?

We are going to talk more about our (grand)parenting styles throughout our lesson today.

The next activity helps participants identify their (grand)parenting styles. This activity can be done as a group or can be an optional activity for participants to take home.

What's Your Parenting Style?

Identifying your style

As a parent/grandparent, do you relate more to A, B, or C?

A

- I know what's best for my child because I am the (grand)parent.
- My (grand)child should obey me and be punished if they do not.
- When my (grand)child misbehaves, I yell and threaten.

B

- I give my (grand)child choices and their own sense of individuality.
- I have high standards and enforce the rules consistently.
- I serve as a role model for my (grand)child by modeling the respect that I expect them to give me.

C

- I do as much as I can for my (grand)child because he/she is only a child for a short time.
- If I discipline my (grand)child, I'm afraid he/she won't love me.
- I typically let my (grand)child do what he/she wants because I dislike conflict.

Although you may have identified with more than one group, based on the one you related closest to, your parenting style is likely:

- A. The Enforcer
- B. The Negotiator
- C. The Yielder

Practical tips for positive parenting:

- Give children choices, even if the decision seems small. Preschoolers can help decide what color socks to wear or between two vegetables, for example.
- Use words like "good" or "bad" to describe behavior, not to describe the child.
- Set limits based on the child's development and consistently follow through on consequences.

Positive (grand)parenting begins with a balanced approach of nurture, discipline, and respect. By giving your (grand)child freedom of thoughts and expression, enforcing limits, and practicing positive communication, you can work together to solve problems and promote responsibility in your (grand)child.

Using your strengths

You may use a mixture of styles at various times, but striving to be a Negotiator (grand)parent (type B) is best to help children develop inner discipline by combining love, limits and respect with consistent, fair expectations. Research shows that this parenting style is the most positive and produces the best outcomes for children's health and well-being, including:

- Responsibility
- Compassion
- Problem-solving skills
- Self-control
- Acceptance of self and others

Enforcer (grand)parents (Type A) often use strict punishment and allow very little freedom. Yielder (grand)parents (Type C) often view their (grand)children as friends and have few limits or demands for their (grand)children. If you relate to either of these parenting styles, don't feel bad! You have great strengths as a (grand)parent, but remember that balance is important for (grand)children. For instance, Yielder (grand)parents' strength is love and acceptance—but it's important to think how giving in might affect the (grand)child long term. Will your (grand)child feel entitled? Or learn patience? Enforcer (grand)parents have the strength of clarity and high expectations. However, showing sensitivity to your child will be key in helping your (grand)child understand that "tough love" is rooted in "love" and not just "tough".

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Reviewed by: Anne Samuelson Clarkson, Lori Zierl, and Kristen Bruder

References:

- <http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/partnering-for-school-success/modeling/parenting-styles/>
- <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/pdfs/fcs456.pdf>
- <http://fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler/>

I Can Problem Solve (ICPS) & Word Pairs

The information below is helpful to leaders in explaining the concepts of the ICPS ladder and word pairs. These materials are meant to elicit discussion about the topic. Please use any or all of the pieces in your trainings.

As children, we sometimes had a very different perspective on the same event/experience from that of our parents or other adults. Think about a time when you were about your (grand)child's age and saw things very differently than your parent - for example, a time when they were angry with you or punished you unfairly. If you are comfortable sharing this experience with the group, please do. Facilitator can share own brief experience like this to help get people thinking and sharing. Then ask:

- How might adults who try to understand a child's perspective help children to develop problem-solving abilities?

The ICPS (I Can Problem Solve) Dialogue Ladder is meant to help (grand)parents move their interactions with their (grand)children to a higher level. Hand out dialogue ladder with the (grand)parents discussing and sharing examples. Emphasize that rungs 1-3 are monologues, and only rung 4 is a dialogue. It's ok to use all rungs on the ladder. It's not realistic to always be on rung 4. Safety can require a rung 1 command, for example, if a child is running in a parking lot. Pass out the Four Rungs of Discipline and discuss how they fit on the ladder.

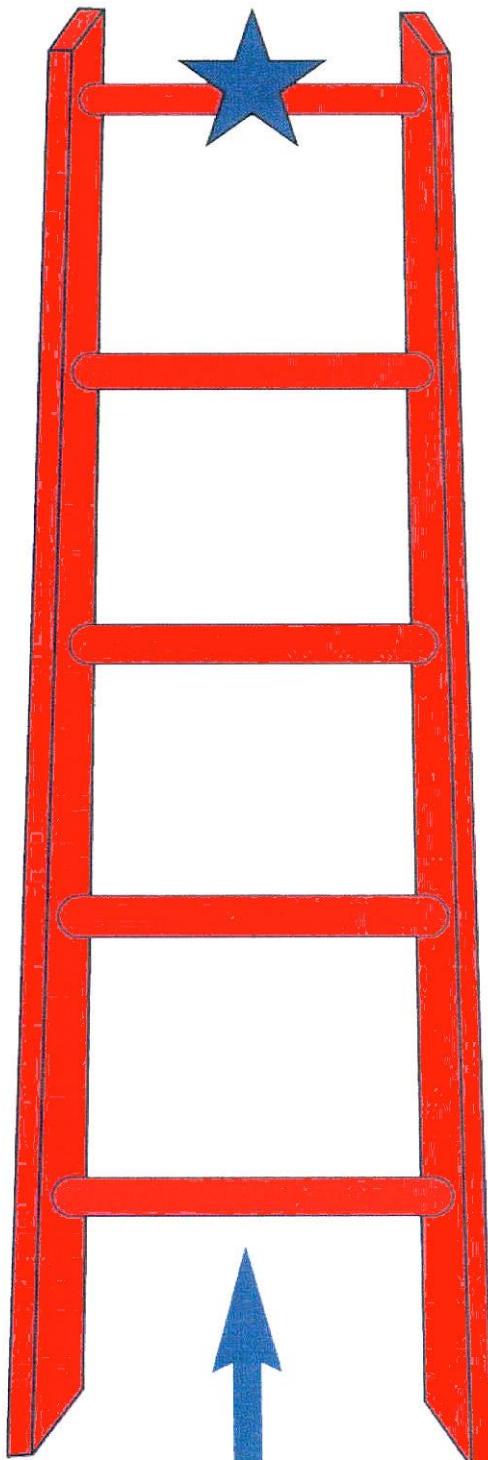
(OPTIONAL) Complete the Matching Game: Four Styles of Dialogue to see if participants can identify which rung each situation is on. (Answer key enclosed)

One tool that (grand)parents can use to increase problem solving is word pairs. The word pairs are problem solving words, and it is important to use them in fun ways. Stress the importance of using problem solving words in this fun way now so that (grand)children start to use the words and feel comfortable using them in other situations, especially later in situations where a (grand)parent is not present.

Some examples of how to use word pairs in everyday situations may include:

- “Is it a good idea or not a good idea for you to climb on the countertops?”
- “Would you like to eat some of the blueberries now and save some for later, or eat all of the blueberries now?”
- “Can I talk on the phone and to you at the same time or not at the same time?”

ICPS Ladder: Climbing to ICPS Dialogues



Rung 4: **ICPS: The Problem-Solving Process**

- Is that a GOOD IDEA to...?
- What MIGHT happen if you do that?
- How MIGHT I (you) feel if that happens?
- What can you do so that will NOT happen?

Rung 3: **Suggestions with Explanations**

- If you hit, you might hurt someone.
- I feel afraid someone might get hurt when you hit...

Rung 2: **Suggestions without Explanations**

- You should ask for what you want.
- Why don't you share your toys?

Rung 1: Power, Commands, Demands, Belittles, Punishes

- Give it back now!
- How many times have I told you...!

Adapted from "Raising a Thinking Child" Workbook,
Myrna Shure, Drexel University, 2000

Four Rungs of Discipline

	Parent Approach	Child Approach	Impact
<u>Problem Solving</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What’s the problem?” • “How do you think I (your sister) feel(s) when...?” • “Can you think of a different way to solve this problem?” • “What might happen if you do that?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent and child have same view of problem • Child tells you how he and others are feeling • Child asked to think about ways to solve the problem • Child guided to think of consequences to actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child feels empowered, not overpowered • Child is more likely to carry out his/her own ideas • Child more likely to think of empathetic consequences (“If I hurt him, I’ll feel sad”) vs. external ones (If I hurt him, I’ll get in trouble”)-good, at best for the short-term only
<u>Explanations</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If you hit, you might get hurt.” • “If you grab toys, your won’t have any friends.” • “I feel angry when...” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child may not care if he hurts someone – and that may be his goal • Immediate gratification (getting toy) more important than later consequence (no friends) • May not care how parent feels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Same as for suggestions</i> • Also, child may tune out explanations he has heard many times before, or because he is unable to understand them
<u>Suggestions</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You should ask for what you want.” • “Why don’t you share your toys?” • “If someone teases you, ignore him, or tell the teacher.” • “If someone hits you, hit him back,” or, “Don’t hit back, tell the teacher.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He said no, it’s mine.” • “I did share my toy.” • “I’m afraid to hit back.” • “If I tell the teacher, he’ll get me after school.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent is doing the thinking for the child • Child is passive recipient, not active participant • Can stifle child’s thinking • Child may not think of what else to do if solution is unsuccessful
<u>Power</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Give it back now!” • “How many times have I told you?” • “If you don’t stop that, you’ll get a spanking (no TV tonight, etc.).” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child complies, or is defiant, argumentative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child may comply to avoid punishment • Still feels angry, frustrated, powerless • May get message that it’s ok to hit/yell when angry • May become immune to getting yelled at, and “not care” as way of coping • May act out (take out on others), or withdraw (fear to act at all)

The Matching Game: Four Styles of Dialogue

Styles of Dialogue: ICPS Ladder



- Rung 4: Problem-Solving**
- Rung 3: Explanations**
- Rung 2: Suggestions**
- Rung 1: Power**

Directions: Place the number of the Rung next to each Parent Statement/Question.

Parent Statement/Question	
a.	_____ How many times have I told you!
b.	_____ I feel mad when you jump on the couch.
c.	_____ What might happen if you do that?
d.	_____ Tell him you're sorry.
e.	_____ Why don't you (e.g., share your toys/ask your brother for what you want)?
f.	_____ Go to the time-out chair.
g.	_____ Please move a little faster. I have to get to work.
h.	_____ Can you think of a different way to solve this problem?
i.	_____ I can't take you to the park now. I'll take you later. Play with your sister now.
j.	_____ How do you think I feel when you do that?
k.	_____ What happened before you did that?
l.	_____ If you (e.g., stand in front of the swing/run inside) you might get hurt.
m.	_____ How do you feel when that happens?
n.	_____ If you (e.g., hit someone, grab toys) no one will play with you.
o.	_____ Why did you hit him?
p.	_____ What happened before you did that?
q.	_____ Ask me if you want to play outside.
r.	_____ If you hit your brother, you might hurt him.

Answers to The Matching Game: Four Styles of Dialogue

Styles of Dialogue: ICPS Ladder



- Rung 4: Problem-Solving**
- Rung 3: Explanations**
- Rung 2: Suggestions**
- Rung 1: Power**

Parent Statement/Question

a.	I	How many times have I told you!
b.	3	I feel mad when you jump on the couch.
c.	4	What might happen if you do that?
d.	2	Tell him you're sorry.
e.	2	Why don't you (e.g., share your toys/ask your brother for what you want)?
f.	I	Go to the time-out chair.
g.	3	Please move a little faster. I have to get to work.
h.	4	Can you think of a different way to solve this problem?
i.	2	I can't take you to the park now. I'll take you later. Play with your sister now.
j.	4	How do you think I feel when you do that?
k.	4	What happened before you did that?
l.	3	If you (e.g., stand in front of the swing/run inside) you might get hurt.
m.	4	How do you feel when that happens?
n.	3	If you (e.g., hit someone, grab toys) no one will play with you.
o.	I or 4	Why did you hit him?
p.	4	What happened before you did that?
q.	2	Ask me if you want to play outside.
r.	3	If you hit your brother, you might hurt him.

Comments about the above responses:

- b. The "I" message is telling the child how the parent feels.
 - Similarly, saying "Your brother feels mad when..." is only Rung 3 because despite using a feeling word, the parent is telling, not asking, the child how he thinks his brother feels.
- e. Starting with "Why..." may seem like a question, but it is suggesting to the child what to do.
- i. Despite use of the ICPS words "now" and "later," the parent is still suggesting to the child what to do – "play with your sister."
- j. Now the parent is asking the child to tell him/her how he/she feels.
- o. Asking why could be Power (Rung 1) or Problem-Solving (Rung 4) depending on the tone of voice. If the word "WHY" is loud and threatening, it is RUNG 1. If it's in a genuine information-seeking tone of voice, it's RUNG 4. For Problem-Solving, it is more effective to ask: "What happened BEFORE you hit him?" Parents will get the same information, and the child, associating that question with fun from the games, will be more likely to answer.



ICPS Word Pairs

Is/Is Not

And/Or

Same/Different

Some/All

Before/After

Now/Later

Some of the Time/All of the Time

At the Same Time/Not the Same Time

Might/Maybe

Why/Because

Good Time/Not a Good Time

Good Place/Not a Good Place

Good Idea/Not a Good Idea

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Practice Using I Can Problem Solve (ICPS) & Word Pairs

The information below is helpful to practice the concepts discussed. These materials are meant to elicit discussion about the topic. Please use any or all of the pieces in your trainings.

(OPTIONAL) Share the ICPS Cheat Sheet. Think of a situation that you have gone through recently with your (grand)children and walk through the ICPS steps to determine how you might address it now.

(OPTIONAL) Show the photo of the girls jumping on the couch. Ask, “How would you respond to this behavior?”, “What rung of ICPS is that response?”

Share copies of the Relationship Bank Account. Either read and discuss, or ask participants to read and share thoughts at the next HCE Club meeting

Raising a Thinking Child ICPS Dialogue “Cheat Sheet”

ICPS Dialogue

1. Tune in. Reflect child's feeling.
 - A. You feel _____ because _____.
 - B. It sounds like you're _____ because _____.
2. State the problem ideally using ICPS word pair vocabulary.
 - A. Is that a GOOD IDEA, GOOD PLACE, GOOD TIME, or NOT A GOOD _____?
 - B. Can Mommy _____ AND _____ AT THE SAME TIME?
 - C. WHAT MIGHT happen IF you do that?
3. Ask about the feelings of others.
 - A. HOW do you think DADDY FEELS about that/right NOW?
 - B. HOW does that make your brother FEEL?
 - C. HOW MIGHT you FEEL about that?
4. Ask open-ended questions using ICPS vocabulary to ask how the child will resolve their problem.
 - A. WHAT can you do that IS DIFFERENT?
 - B. WHAT can you do so that will NOT happen?
5. Consequences: What MIGHT happen if you do that? Is that a GOOD IDEA or NOT A GOOD IDEA?

Raising a Thinking Child ICPS Dialogue “Cheat Sheet”

ICPS Dialogue

1. Tune in. Reflect child's feeling.
 - A. You feel _____ because _____.
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Girls Jumping on Couch

Niñas saltando en el sofá



Photo from lifespa.com

Relationship Bank Account

John Gottman, a renowned relationship researcher and expert has shown that adults involved in healthy couple relationships exchange five times more positive feelings or interactions than negative ones. Each time we do or say something positive for or to our partner, we add to our account balance of trust and love. Each time we do something negative, we make a withdrawal. Unfortunately, one negative interaction basically withdraws a value of 5 positive ones. Of course, this is fuzzy logic, but it's a good way to think about it.

Gottman did not intend to apply this principle to the (grand)parent-child relationship. However, it helps us frame our relationship with our kids in terms of a “relationship bank account.” Think about yourself as a kid and your own parents...

What did a relationship deposit look like?

- + Playing a family board game?
- + The time a parent spent listening to you?
- + Having a special day with just you and dad, or you and mom?
- + Learning a new joke?
- + Family dinners?
- + Bedtime stories?

These are times when trust and love are built.

What did a withdrawal look like?

- Yelling when you wet the bed?
- Telling you what a slob you were?
- Calling you names?
- Yelling about pointless things?
- Hitting or slapping you?

These are times when you lost your trust and love for your parents.

Think about the times when, in your (grand)children’s minds, you make withdrawals. What do these times look like? (For example, “When I am in a rush, I am mean and I yell.”)

Think about the times when you make relationship deposits. What do these times look like? (For example, “I stop what I’m doing and go and join my son on the floor to make a puzzle.”)

Connect with Kids, Even When Tired and Stressed

The point here is that we are GOING to have times when we are tired, stressed, in a hurry, or our kids are just pushing our buttons, and we let ourselves do or say something we shouldn't. We need to pay serious attention to making relationship deposits. This means spending time with our (grand)children, entering their worlds, and showing our love, concern, and playfulness. We must do this regularly, not just when we think we have time.

When we do this, it is surprising that what otherwise might annoy and aggravate us about our (grand)children doesn't provoke us to yell as much. (Grand)Children also behave differently and are calmer and more relaxed. This is because they feel safer and less anxious that we will respond negatively.

Some ideas:

- 💡 When you are driving the car, start a song that your (grand)children can sing with you. Make up rhymes, or play "I Spy."
- 💡 At home, include your (grand)children in parts of the housework - you'll be surprised at how much they can do!
- 💡 Or, stop in the middle of working, cooking, or cleaning, and pay attention to what your (grand)kids are doing and join them - right where they are.
- 💡 Talk about and elaborate on a shared memory or life story. Do you remember when...? Ask questions to get the (grand)child thinking about the details of the event.

When we teach (grand)kids that we consider them important, it doesn't mean giving in to their every desire. It means spending time with them as people and caring about their inner lives. This connection enhances our authority with our (grand)children. They take us more seriously because they trust us, love us, and care what we think. We also model behavior that teaches our (grand)children to become people who are capable of empathy and better relationships both within the family and with peers and other adults.

Make lots of deposits!

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