

Fathers And Mothers

OBJECTIVES:

1. Describe the importance of fathers and mothers
2. Discuss ways to better involve both parents in a child's life

HANDOUTS:

1. *Why Moms and Dads Are So Important*
2. *My Family's Movie Part I*
3. *My Family's Movie Part II*
4. *My Children and I Star in a Movie Together!*
5. *Take Home Message for This Session*

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

- Handout materials for participant workbooks
- Workbook or scrapbook materials
- Flipchart and markers
- Pens and pencils

GETTING STARTED

Please re-introduce yourself to the rest of the group. Think of one thing that other people tell you remind them of your mother or father. Be prepared to tell the group this characteristic.

ACTIVITY: Positive Parental Involvement

You have many decisions to make regarding your involvement with your child's other parent. Will you be together (in a romantic relationship) or not? Will you get married or live together or separate? How will you be able to work together as co-parents?

Your child has no opportunity to decide if he or she gets to have both of his or her parents in his or her life. Yet, based on what we know about outcomes for children, it is likely that if they could, they would choose both of you.

Children are more likely to have problems when one parent, often the father, is not in contact with them. For example, they are more likely to drop out of school and get involved with drugs or alcohol. Girls are more likely to get pregnant while teens, and boys are more likely to commit crimes and/or violent acts. Overall, children with only one parent are more likely to live in poverty.

Fathers and mothers both do important things and researchers think they parent in very different ways. Sometimes this means that they don't understand each other. It's often easy to become angry with each other when it seems one parent is not putting in equal effort. One parent may become defensive in order to protect his or her child.

Think of the ways you and your co-parent might think of parenting differently. For example, mothers are likely to focus on nurturing tasks like physical care of babies, emotional nurturance, and encouraging language development. Fathers might be more likely to do well at setting disciplinary boundaries and encouraging motor (muscle) development. No matter what, the more kinds of parenting a child has, the stronger he or she will become. How can you create opportunities for each other to parent?

Parents are likely to parent according to how their parent of the same gender parented. The example this parent set for us is the strongest message we can receive about how we should parent. If this message is positive, it's good for our children when we duplicate it. However, if it was a negative message, like one created by an abusive or absent parent, it is clearly not good for our children if we parent the same way. It can be very difficult to change the message we pass on to our children without sincere effort and support from our co-parent and other family members.

Remember, children benefit when:

- Both parents are involved in the day-to-day lives of their children.
- Fathers and mothers alike show love, talk to their children, smile and make them feel special.
- Fathers and mothers work together to provide support for their children (money, care, time).
- Each parent spends time with his or her children on a regular basis—remember, a child gets different things from each parent, so it's important he/she has consistent time with both.

ACTIVITY: **Moms and Dads are Important**

After small groups complete their handouts, ask them to share their thoughts and write them on the flipchart. Then discuss the questions, summarizing the answers on the flipcharts.

*In groups of two or three, brainstorm about the ways mothers and fathers parent their children at different ages. Use the handout **Why Mothers and Fathers Are So Important**.*

Discussion Questions:

1. How does what a mother or father does change as a child grows older?
2. How are what mothers and fathers do similar to each other?
3. How are they different?
4. Based on our discussion, how would you summarize what fathers and mothers do?
 - Both parents are involved in the day-to-day lives of their children.
 - Both parents show love, talk to their children, smile and make them feel special.
 - Both parents provide support for their children (money, care, time).
 - Both parents give positive and appropriate discipline.
 - Both parents spend time with their children on a regular basis.
 - Both parents are a consistent part of their children's lives.

ACTIVITY: **My Family's Movie**

How many of you have said that things are going to be different in your family? Most of us do not want to repeat the mistakes our mothers and fathers made. But without even thinking about it,

we often do. We tend to repeat what we learned during our childhoods.

These memories are like family movies or videos that we play over and over again. Sometimes the movies are good and helpful; sometimes the movies are best not replayed. We want you to think about your family movies.

For example, you might remember your mother singing you to sleep or your father rough-housing with you in the backyard. These movies are pleasant to remember. But other movies aren't so pleasant. For example, you may have been constantly criticized by one of your parents and felt that you were never good enough. Or you might remember a parent who was sick.

We can benefit from thinking about these family movies from the past so we don't repeat the same mistakes with our children. We can learn to make better choices about the family movies our children have.

*Complete the handout **My Family's Movie**. Think about the roles your mother and father played. Your own family (you, your child, your child's other co-parent, and the other family members important to your child) has the chance to not repeat the mistakes and to build on the good memories.*

When participants complete the Parts I and II of the handout, discuss the following with the participants:

1. *In what ways will you re-write the movies? What scenes do you want to delete? Did you discover any bloopers in your movie?*
2. *How did you feel when the movie got scary? What might be a different ending? What can you do calm yourself down and rewrite the movie?*
3. *What goals can you set for yourself to make the movie you want for your children? Who can help you reach your goals?*

[Adapted from BEES Curriculum for Early Head Start, Holly Brophy-Herb]

HOMEWORK:
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Have participants identify one action step they will take this week to apply what they have learned in this lesson. Have them write this step on the insert for their refrigerator magnet.

CLOSING:
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In this lesson we described the importance of fathers and mothers, and we discussed ways to involve both parents in a child's life. We also discussed the kinds of family movies we want our children to remember. Whenever possible, seeking ways to give your child a good movie is a special gift.



Why Moms and Dads Are So Important

For each age and stage write down ways that fathers and mothers can be involved with their children.

Age of Child	How Mothers Get Involved with their Children	How Fathers Get Involved with their Children
During Pregnancy and the First Year		
Toddlers (1-2 Years)		
Preschoolers (3-5 Years)		
Kids in School (6-12 Years)		
Teenagers (13-19 Years)		
Young Adults (19 Years and Older)		

My Family's Movie

Part I: Here is a Favorite Scene from my Family's Movie

One scene I like is called:

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I like this scene because:

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.....
.....

When I replay this scene with my child or children, it will look like:

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My Family's Movie

Part II: Here's How I'll Rewrite a Bad Scene from my Family Movie

One family scene I don't like is called:

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This scene makes me feel:

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I want to rewrite this scene because:

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One way I can rewrite this scene is to:

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My Children and I Star in a Movie Together!

To start this movie with my children, I will:

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When I start to bring out an old movie, I will:

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Prepare a scrapbook page that shows the new family movie you want to create for your child or children.

Take Home Message for This Session

Directions: Think of one step you will take before the next session and write it down in the space provided. In addition, write down the time, date, and location of the next session.

As parents we are always making new family movies for our children. Will the movie be good or bad?

My Action Steps:

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The Next Session:

.....
DATE

.....
TIME

.....
LOCATION

