The Philosophy and Practices of Nurturing Parenting

Name: ______________________________________

Today's workshop focuses on the philosophy and practices of nurturing parenting. Use this worksheet to follow along with the facilitator.

Introduction to Nurturing Parenting

Nurturing is a critical skill for all life forms on the planet. For human beings, it is the most important characteristic for all of us to treat others and ourselves with respect, compassion, caring and dignity.

When nurturing is not present, it is easy to see how human beings can be cruel, abusive and neglecting.

When you hear the word “nurturing” what do you think? What does nurturing mean to you?

____________________________

Nurturing comes from the Latin word Nu tri tura that means to nurse, to nourish and to promote growth.

Nurturing Parenting is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of raising children in a warm, caring and trusting home that guides them to be respectful, caring and cooperative children.

Nurturing Parenting is founded on the belief that children who are cared for and treated respectfully will treat themselves, others and the environment in the same manner.

The Philosophy of Nurturing Parenting

The philosophy of Nurturing Parenting is founded on seven principles:

- **Feelings of Attachment.**

  Attached parents convey a deep love to their children that is unconditional. When children feel loved unconditionally, communication, trust and respect naturally follow.
Attached parents express joy in being with their children, create a safe home to explore, and promote a sense of safety and security.

Nurturing lessons focus on teaching parents to learn how to respectfully listen to the desires, thoughts and feelings of children, to use praise and other positive reinforcements to promote cooperation, and to have fun as a family.

- **Empathy.**

Empathy comes from the Greek word empatheia that means being aware of and responding respectfully to the feelings and thoughts of others.

Parental empathy is the ability of parents to put themselves in the place of their children in an attempt to recognize children’s emotions and to understand the motives of their behavior.

Research clearly shows that children from empathic homes do better in school, are socially well adjusted, and are more emotionally stable.

Nurturing lessons focus on teaching parents and children to care for themselves, others, their environment, their pets, and their possessions, and to avoid the dangers of drugs, alcohol and other self-injurious activities.

- **Nurturing Oneself.**

Parents who take time each day getting their own needs met as men and women are more capable of understanding and helping children get their needs met.

Upon becoming parents, many adults feel that parenting is a job 24-hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Men and women who continually sacrifice their own needs will become stressed, burned-out and resentful towards their children.

Nurturing lessons focus on helping parents recognize the basic needs of adults and children, understand the importance of meeting their basic needs so they will be able to help children meet their basic needs and to make good choices to enhance their own personal self worth.

What activities do you do to nurture yourself?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What are the signs or symptoms you feel when you aren't nurturing yourself?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
• **Discipline.**

Setting limits through family rules, teaching right from wrong through family morals, and teaching respect and self-worth through family values are all critical aspects of Nurturing Parenting.

It is the philosophy of Nurturing Parenting that discipline cannot be imposed, beaten into, or forced on children, but rather develops best by the children modeling parents whose example they admire.

Nurturing lessons help parents learn alternatives to hitting, spanking, yelling and verbally degrading children through positive, nurturing disciplinary strategies and techniques.

• **Expressing Feelings.**

The ability to identify and appropriately express personal feelings, as well as the ability to recognize and appropriately respond to the feelings of others is called emotional competence.

Emotional competence helps children and parents stay in control, demonstrate respect, and foster an atmosphere of positive communication.

Nurturing lessons teach parents and children the difference between feelings of comfort and discomfort, healthy ways to express emotional energy, and ways to manage and reduce feelings of stress and anger.

• **Expectations and Self-Worth.**

Knowing what to expect of children as they progress through developmental stages of growth and maturity is an important aspect of Nurturing Parenting.

When parents make demands on children that they are unable to meet, or when they have no expectations, children’s overall feelings of worth are lowered.

Research on brain development in children indicates that home life where children experience high levels of dysfunction produces high levels of the stress hormone cortisol that contributes to the development of diseased neurological networks.

Nurturing lessons help parents learn appropriate stages of development, ways to build self-worth in children, and the importance of understanding neurological development in children.

• **Gentle Touch.**

Children who experience warm and gentle touch develop a strong and healthy sense of self.
The systematic use of gentle touch has shown to contribute to positive brain development, the ability to form trusting relationships throughout life, and a healthy perception of body image.

Nurturing lessons teach parents the positive impact gentle touch has on children’s overall development, and ways to systematically use gentle touch to enhance parent-child relationships.

Which of the previous seven principals of nurturing parenting do you feel is most practiced in your family? In what ways?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What principal is least practiced? What could you do to improve in this area?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

**Nurturing as a Lifestyle**

Nurturing is the ability to care. It is a critical skill for all life forms on the planet - especially for humans because we are such complex forms of life. To nurture is to promote the growth and development of all positive traits, qualities and characteristics.

To nurture is to treat oneself with caring, kindness, and respect. It is to keep ourselves physically and emotionally healthy, to make good choices, and to be our own best friend. Nurturing oneself is a necessary prerequisite to being nurturing parents. How can you care for someone else when you ignore your own needs?

What are some reasons parents have a hard time nurturing themselves?

__________________________________________________________________________

What happens when parents are unable to nurture themselves?

__________________________________________________________________________

**Why Don’t We Nurture Ourselves?**

Within everyone is the potential to care or to hurt.

This potential is fueled, in large part, by the experiences we’ve had during our lifetime.
Inside everyone are four distinct traits of our personality that define the way we’re capable of treating ourselves and others:

- **The Nurturer**

The part of our personality that is capable of giving care, concern and compassion. The caregiver we are with our children is our Nurturer.

- **The Nurtured**

The part of our personality that is capable of receiving care, seeking closeness and attachments, and accepting praise and positive touch.

- **The Perpetrator**

The part of our personality that can be cruel, abusive to self and others, is capable of hurting others, and generally disregards the overall goodness and respect of other living things and objects.

- **The Victim**

The part of our personality that believes the hurt and pain given by others is justified and valid. The victim believes the hurt received is for his or her own good.

Using the worksheet given to you in class, draw your personality traits and discuss them with the group. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How do the Victim and Nurtured parts of your personality differ?
- How about the Perpetrator and the Nurturer?
- When do these traits appear?
- How can you control who you want to be?

For home practice, take the home practice worksheet home to complete with your family.

**Nurturing Parenting**

A simple way to understand our abilities to nurture or to hurt is to view both abilities on the scale of 0 to 10.

A zero (0) represents the complete absence of the behavior.

A ten represents the complete presence of the behavior.

Imagine both abilities exist on a range of 0 to 10 in frequency (how often) and in severity (to what degree).
Nurturing Parenting

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequent</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>All the Time</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td>10</td>
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Hurting Parenting

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<tr>
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<th>Often</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>9 8 7</td>
<td>6 5 4</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
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The presence of Nurturing Parenting to a high degree (8 or 9) means hurting parenting is at a low degree (2 or 1).

The more you’re nurturing, the less you’re hurting, and vice versa.

Where would you describe your own parenting practices on this scale?

Where would you put your parents parenting practices?

The goal is to stay nurturing all the time (10) or at the very least, often (9 8 7) and keep hurting out of the picture altogether (0).

The reasons are obvious:

- If parents practiced nurturing all the time or a high percentage of the time children would develop a very “nurtured” part of their personality, and in turn would develop very “nurturing” ways of treating others.
- If, however, hurting parenting is practiced often, children develop the “victim” part of their personality and come to believe that being “victimized” is a natural and frequent part of life.

Life as a victim gives birth to life as a perpetrator. Perpetrators are those who victimize others. The training to be a perpetrator comes from experiences as a victim.

The nurturing philosophy of life and of parenting accepts no degree or frequency of abuse and victimization.

The inability of adults to take the time and to make the commitment to nurture themselves is housed in the belief that maybe, just maybe, we don’t deserve to be treated with respect all of the time, or maybe we can’t expect to live a good life all of the time, that a little victimization now and again helps us appreciate the good times even more.
Contact Information:

You probably met a lot of people today that you may want to contact again. Below is an area for you to write down each other’s names, phone numbers, or e-mail addresses.

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