

THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL TRAINING COURSES ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND PARENTING STYLES: A PRESENTATION

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1. Introduction

Thank you for coming this evening. I know its not easy organising baby sitters and coming out to the school after a long day at the office.

On August 20th, the *West Australian* newspaper described the public reaction to young car thieves who killed a young motorcyclist. Twenty thousand demonstrators marched to demand longer prison sentences. Concern over the possibility of delinquent behaviour by our children affects the dreams of many responsible parents. Parents wish to know the causes of delinquent behaviour and steps to take to assist their children. Tonight I'll suggest some causes of delinquent behaviour, and ways that parenting styles

Strengths

Established some rapport with audience by recognition of their feelings. Look at audience and engage their attention through eye contact. Project warmth and friendliness through eye contact and conversational style.

Topical and grabs attention. They may have read article and have familiarity or strong views on issue. Process engages the audience. The topic of delinquency is a current one receiving media attention. The recent article published today stresses relevancy of the topic.

Clear outline of the major topics for the evening, giving the audience a sense of direction.

Overheads use large type and are readable and uncluttered. Only the most essential points are included. Overheads are addressed in the presentation. They are relevant. Overheads not concealed in a way that causes resentment. Continue to

Weaknesses

Perhaps elaborate by including joke or personal example of problem getting there.

Try to maintain conversational approach, or narrative style without going into a less personal lecture mode. Include audience by saying, 'you, as parents...' or 'we, as adults...'. *Jan*

The connotation at home or the office may be seen as sexist.

The page turnings were a bit obvious. *not really a problem*

affect your children. I'll then discuss how parenting styles can be improved through parenting courses. Finally, I'll demonstrate some of the skills that are taught in parenting courses.

face and engage audience in eye contact during discussion of overheads rather than turning back on the audience.

2. Causes of Predelinquent and Delinquent Behaviour

There are three causes of delinquent behaviour; those identified within the adolescent, with society and causes resting with the family.

Causes of delinquency residing in the individual are usually identified as a lack of social, academic and survival skills. 'At-risk' students lack a sense of identity, and personal power. Such youth have poor goal-setting and decision making skills, and low self-esteem; they feel alienated from society. They are less able to cope with interpersonal difficulties than their nondelinquent peers. Lack of junior high school achievement

Perhaps anecdotal information to illustrate delinquent behaviour caused by unemployment. e.g. A student of mine, Fred couldn't get a job. He ... " Grabs attention because adults may have children like Fred and identify with him. Concrete approach is better than abstractions in holding attention.

Lecture mode perhaps was too closely tied to the script for this portion of the presentation. It tended to be abstract and lecture-like in its approach. There is the danger of losing the audience's attention.

predicts delinquent behaviour.

Some blame society for youth delinquency. Teenagers, because they are unable to obtain or maintain continued employment, represent a large segment of the poor in our society. Jobs offer socially accepted identities and meaningful lives. Without jobs there is a loss of self-esteem, identity, and future goals, resulting in aggressiveness, boredom, financial hardship, loneliness, feelings of worthlessness and uncertainty about the future.

The parental role is crucial in the prevention of delinquent behaviour. Parents give routines, security, and opportunities for the child to develop responsibility. Other important home factors include realistic parental expectations, valuing of education, support for comple-

tion of school work, and a safe, orderly environment.

3. Use of Authority

Psychologists have identified 3 parenting styles: the authoritarian, democratic and permissive. Authoritarian or autocratic parents use power to set limits by using direct commands, and punishment such as spanking, or withdrawal of pleasurable activities to enforce obedience from their children in all important matters. There is little consultation or negotiation prior to setting limits.

Democratic parents use influence to obtain adherence of their children to limits. They discuss important decisions with their children, negotiate limits and rely on their children's love and respect for them to obtain cooperation. They foster participation, and build their chil-

One over head could be spaced out somewhat.

Perhaps interaction with the audience would increase attention by asking them why democratic parenting styles were more successful than other styles. Answers would allow the speaker to judge how well the message was being received.

dren's skills to solve their own problems.

Permissive parents use a *laissez-faire* approach. These parents abdicate responsibility and place no limits on their children's activities. They generally accept their children's decisions without discussion or questioning.

Psychologists have found that children living in democratic homes are less subject to delinquency than children living with authoritarian or permissive parents. Reasons relate to opportunities by youth to develop their independence, to make their own decisions and to face the consequences of their decisions. By obtaining freedom slowly youth learn to cope with their freedom and to act responsibly. Authoritarian parents deny their teenagers deci-

sion making opportunities and the possibility of developing self-reliance. Permissive parents offer their children excessive freedom too quickly, setting them up to fail and to feel neglected.

4. The Value of Parenting Courses in Teaching Parenting Styles

Some parents need to be made aware of life as an adolescent in modern times with the pressures of new sexual roles of puberty, career options, unemployment, and pressures to succeed in a competitive environment. Parents need to be aware of the means to influence their children to make responsible decisions. Parent education programs can provide parents with a range of skills needed to help their children.

I first became aware of the importance of skills in Spain. I was asking the way to the train

The second half had less pauses than the first, flowed more naturally, and was better overall. A warm up effect may have been present.

There were a couple of grimaces in the presentation. Facial expressions must be controlled.

*I don't
recall them*

station. I heard 'no hablo ingles'. I asked again, more loudly. Again, the reply more loudly, 'no hablo ingles'. We often do this. We use a skill. If it doesn't work, we try it again more forcefully. If punishment doesn't work, we punish our children more severely. Yet this is counter-productive. What we need is a range of skills. If one skill doesn't work, we try another and another until we hit one that does work. The purpose of parent training courses is to give us that range of skills, so we may have a technique that does work.

The field of interpersonal relations is like a minefield. There are many opportunities to damage the self-esteem of your children and your relations with them. Parents need a map to guide them through this minefield. Parenting courses provide

The experience in Spain injected humour and reengaged attention by being concrete and relevant to the audience. It was personal, narrative, anecdotal and revealing aspects of the speaker, making the speaker less remote.

Use made of the story was relevant to the presentation overall. A clear point was made with which the audience could identify and remember.

Use of similes and metaphors add colour and interest to the story. i.e. 'like a minefield...' 'need a road map...' The audience can associate abstract concepts 'field of interpersonal relations' with objects that are commonplace and familiar such as a road map.

this map. I want to let you experience the type of learning that goes on in a parenting course.

Imagine these situations. What would you say if:

You notice your son and/or daughter seems persistently sleepy around the house and seems unable to do any school work.

Your son has received top marks in year 12, but now tells ^{"I am"} you ~~he is~~ taking the next year to go surfing!

Your daughter says, 'I'm bored with life. It all seems so meaningless. Sometimes I wonder why I go on.'

The answers that parents give often fall in these 12 categories. (Overhead). Lets see if this is true.

Use made where possible or direct speech by other people to vary pace, tone of voice and engage attention. i.e. 'no hablo ingles...' 'Can you show me...'

Interaction with audience engages attention and allows the lecturer to assess the degree to which the audience is following the lecture. Responding on paper engages the audience in a different mode.

Examples of home problems were simple and were those with which parents could identify, ~~with~~. This creates interest and fosters participation by the audience.

Having the audience write and discuss their responses in pairs increases enjoyment by the audience because it gives opportunities to share experiences, empathise and laugh over responses.

The good news is that we now know how we go about helping our youngsters when they are having problems. The bad news is that none of these responses are particularly helpful in helping kids with problems. In fact they are called roadblocks. The tragedy is that although we use them with the best of intentions, they often have the opposite effect to what we intend. They foster misunderstanding, a lack of trust, and a breakdown in relationships.

For fun, but also to let you feel what it's like to be on the end of a roadblock, let's reverse roles. Imagine you are your son. He's having an important exam tomorrow. You are busy at home and he says to you, "I'm having trouble understanding this material." I want you to say this to me, and I will re-

A roadblock is a 'jargon' term. Perhaps this term is overused. Similarly, 'laissez-faire' may not be understood.

spond as the parent with road blocks. Ask yourself. How do I feel? How would I feel about my relationship with my parent if he or she always responded like this.

ORDERING. Please sit there and get on with your work. You'll never succeed if you don't study.

THREATENING If you don't stop interrupting this TV programme, I'll have to ask you to go to your room. You're just a nuisance.

MORALISING If you were a considerate son, you wouldn't be taking up my time after I've finished a hard day at work. Please see me another time.

ADVISING, OFFERING SUGGESTIONS OR SOLUTIONS What I suggest you do is ask yourself questions then

The role play was a powerful technique to support the statement that roadblocks do not work to help other people with problems. It allowed the audience to experience directly the feeling aroused by roadblocks. Opportunities were provided for the audience to describe these feelings. The overall effect was to demonstrate to the audience that they did not already possess all the skills which were needed to help their teenagers if their teenagers were experiencing problems.

Use of language is clear, simple, direct and jargon free. No use was made of words such as 'I messages', 'active listening' and so on. Sentences were kept short and direct. An active rather than passive tense was used, engaging attention of the listener.

Good use was made of eye

I treated the good responses, such as John's active listening responses without acknowledgements. I should have praised accurate responses as a teaching technique and pointed out why the responses were sound.

the important

try to answer them. This should prove helpful.

LECTURING The best way to learn is to read all the material first to get the overall picture. Then you should have a better chance of solving that problem.

JUDGING, CRITICISING, RIDICULING Your always doing this aren't you. Interrupting your parents when their busy.

How did you feel being on the end of a roadblock? How would you relate to me if I continued to treat you like this? What indirect or hidden messages am I communicating to you? (Avoidance, Discounting, Solutions, Judgments). When can you use these responses safely?

In parenting courses, parents are taught to avoid these re-

contact, looking directly at the audience for the last half of the presentation. The pace was rapid and the speaker was clearly familiar with the content of his presentation. Minimal reference was made to lecture notes. Consequently interest of the audience as strong.

Speaker spoke clearly, loudly, with authority and punch to create a sense of 'aliveness'.

Overall timing of the talk at 23 minutes was good. Audience attention seldom lasts more than twenty minutes without a change of activity. The talk included opportunities for the audience to write and talk.

The role reversal used a situation which was relevant to parents of teen age children. Reference was again made to this example later in the talk

The audience was setup to look incompetent. The description of how roadblocks were harmful is too harsh, after showing the audience that they used roadblocks. Be gentle here. One must be careful not to embarrass or humiliate the audience by showing how stupid their responses were. Responses could be shared in pairs and not given to the whole audience. This avoids embarrassment.

sponses. They are seen as potentially damaging and destructive rather than helpful and constructive. They communicate a desire to change your child rather than basic acceptance of the other person. They take responsibility away from the adolescent and leave him or her feeling diminished. They condition helplessness, defensiveness and resistance, leading to deterioration in a relationship.

What does work? Parenting courses teach that when you're in a relationship with your children, they must experience three essential qualities: empathy, genuineness and acceptance.

Empathy means trying to understand others in their situations. It means putting yourself in their shoes. It means asking yourself, 'how

under the discussion of empathy. The example was used as a theme.

Need to develop empathy with the audience that parenting is hard work for all of us. Use statements like 'It's not easy, is it. I remember my experience when...'

Personal anecdotal examples of being empathic told narratively add interest and cause the audience to identify with the speaker. E.G. 'I remember

would I feel if I were having trouble learning on the night before an important exam?’

Acceptance means accepting your children for what they are, not for what you want them to be. Paradoxically, teenagers only change when we accept them for what they are. Ironically, they resist us when we define the sort of person we want them to be.

Genuineness means relating one person to another without playing a role. It means revealing your fears and weaknesses as well as your strengths. It means not playing a role as the ideal parent, or boss.

If you have these qualities you’ll get by. If you lack them, a parenting course may help you learn the necessary skills. You will learn skills which will facili-

when I was a swimming instructor at a boys camp and all my six year olds were shivering with the cold. I was too concerned with ... etc’ to illustrate empathy, and acceptance. Reference could be made to ‘unfinished business’ in the speakers life which got in the way of his being empathetic.

tate your children to take more responsibility for their own lives. As adults we move from dependence in a new job to independence. So our children also gradually move from dependence to independence. Parenting courses teaches processes to enable your children to assume more responsibility and to take greater control of their own lives through solving their own problems. Parenting courses also teach skills to deal with your children when they exhibit unacceptable behaviour. Parents learn how to alter behaviours in such a way that is not harmful to your kids' self-esteem or the quality of your relations with them. If you hit someone with a big enough club, it will change their behaviour. But it will also damage your relationship with them. The parenting course avoids this by teaching conflict resolution, confrontation and

problem solving skills.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, juvenile delinquency has been linked to certain child-rearing styles as well as to other causes such as unemployment. Excessively authoritarian parenting styles in which parents overly control and children fail to learn to make decisions and to take responsibility have been shown to underlie delinquent behaviour of adolescents. Excessively permissive parenting in which children are given excessive freedom to make decisions has been blamed for delinquent behaviour. Parents are one of the strongest influence on youths' behaviours and possess the best opportunities to guide the development of youth in positive directions. The key to

Strong conclusion repeating all the main points of the talk to refresh them in the memories of the audience. The importance of parents is empathised to encourage positive action by parents. Emphasis on the advantages of practising skills in a group situation further encourages parents to opt for a parenting course. Use of a metaphor in the final sentence adds punch.

The presentation has a logical flow from causes of delinquency to parenting styles, to the role of parenting courses in altering parenting styles and consequently to preventing delinquent behaviour by teenagers. Throughout the presentation a theme is consistently emphasised, 'parenting courses give you a range of skills which will

exercising this influence effectively has been shown to be the exercise of a democratic child rearing style. This style requires distinctive skills in communication with youth and in teaching children to problem solve, make decisions and take responsibility. As with learning any skill, skills in listening, assertion and problem solving require regular practice over an extended period of time. Skills need to be practised in a safe environment, monitored and corrective feedback provided.

Parenting courses have been shown to be successful in improving parenting skills, reducing conflict, decreasing deviant behaviour and increasing cooperation, cohesion and trust. The development of family cohesion and rapport are bulwarks which withstand the tempests of delinquent behaviour.

help you guide your teenager in a positive direction.' Parents would come away from the talk convinced.

Use of a process which exposes parents to the types of learning and processes which occur in parenting courses was a more useful technique than giving statistics of research studies into the relative efficiencies of parenting courses. The appeal is to the emotions of the audience rather than the intellect. They get to feel what others feel when they hear a roadblock.

It would be useful to ask the audience if they had any questions.

Perhaps an overhead showing the skills taught by a parenting course and the situations in which these skills are used, i.e. child experiences problem or parent experiences problem would be useful.

Handouts describing the time and date of the courses would be useful.

Excellent
Criticisms