

Family Therapy Today: Innovations and Challenges

■ Parenting Programmes – A Systemic Framework

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Parenting Programmes – Aim to promote

- attachment/parental sensitivity
- social, emotional and behavioural development
- children's language and communication skills

Systemic Framework

- In the work we want to:
- Focus on the system not the individual
- Consider that difficulties do not arise within individuals but in the relationships, interactions and language that develops between people
- See children as the 'light' that makes the family problems more visible

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- A systemic approach is in its nature sensitive to cultural context, gender, ethnicity and other social contexts
 - We are also see children's behaviour as being their attempts to have their needs met or to cope with the family environment..so their behaviour is a response to the system

Little Angels – BBC doc

Examples of Parenting Programmes

- **The Incredible Years Programme is an evidence based parenting programme written by Carolyn Webster-Stratton**

For parents with children aged 0-12 years

- A 12 week programme, meeting for two hours. A range of methods are used to help parents develop new and existing skills and build confidence in promoting positive behaviours in their child.

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- These include DVD clips, group discussions, practice activities and homework exercises.
 - Programmes are run in a fun and friendly atmosphere and allow parents to meet with others who share similar goals.
 - Young children with ADHD and Conduct Disorder are amongst the referred children.
 - Role Play is key to the programme.

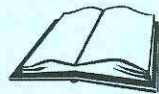
Example Video

Example of Homework



To Do:

- **PLAY** with your child being child-directed and an “appreciative audience” for 10 to 15 minutes every day.
- **KEEP TRACK** of these play periods on the Record Sheet: Play Times handout.



To Read:

- Handouts and Chapter One “*How to Play With Your Child*” from *The Incredible Years* book.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:

- **FILL IN** the two checklists for evaluating play, and bring them to the next meeting.

Handout 1A

General Guidelines For Play Sessions with Your Child

1. Don't play a competitive game, especially with a younger child.

- **Strengthening Families**

- *For parents and their child aged 10-14 years*

- A 10 week programme aimed at reducing alcohol and drug use and behavioural problems in adolescence, and strengthening the parent/carer young person relationship. It is unique in the way it works with both parents and children, bringing them together.

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- Through discussions, fun games and activities, families solve problems together, learn about rules and consequences and explore ways to show love, support and strengthening family communication. During the first hour, parents and young people meet separately with group workers and then come together for a hot meal, followed by family activities. This allows parents, young people and facilitators time to relax and get to know each other.

Our Approach with One Family

- Asian mother, Jewish father 2 children 6 (f) & 4(m)
- Receiving therapeutic support re challenging behaviour from their 4 year old
- Interactional and Collaborative Process right from the start, linking with the work that was already underway, agreed they met the criteria

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- We quickly recognised that whilst the programme provides us with the structure getting alongside parents is vitally important, helping them come up with solutions
 - Mapping the system – home visit/co creating a genogram/identifying strengths
 - The programme allows you to follow the narrative and note moment by moment comments from parents

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- Taking this approach takes the pressure to be seen as the expert or the person who has all the answers away/important not to offer direct advice
 - Looking for a formulation that will guide us in our search for further information which in turn will guide us to the 'intervention' within the programme

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- Remaining transparent
 - Keeping curiosity in the room
 - Exploring interrelationships – what is keeping things the same vs where are the exceptions
 - Bringing out into the open cultural factors

Application to this family

- They trusted us but felt they could not get their child to behave
- We tried to help them think about the various reasons they felt he might be behaving in this way
- I visited them at home and saw the vulnerability that was not seen in the group

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- Fragility in the relationship that was being enacted by the child
 - Cultural factors, a late marriage, two children within the community and the pressure associated with this for everyone
 - Expectation and Judgement impacted heavily on their functioning – some relief experienced in the group of being heard

What have we learnt

- The programme encourages change at the parents pace
- Flexibility when using the programme is key – parents feeling they have choices is important
- Home visits are often important as are weekly phone calls
- Through watching the clips new ideas emerge
- Complex family issues are often masked through the lense of parenting issues

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- The fragility of individuals needs to be attended to and a systemic approach which encourages the therapist to get alongside the family with compassionate curiosity is key.
 - At the end of the programme – a shared confidence about having noticed improved/ easier ways of communicating for everyone