

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

More Than Discipline: The Adverse Effects of Spanking African American Children

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Marriage and Family Therapy

By

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my Black and Brown people who have dealt with generational hardships and are continuing to dismantle the negative perceptions of people of color. We are beautiful, intelligent, resilient, and ever changing. Never forget that.

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## ABSTRACT

### MORE THAN DISCIPLINE: THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF SPANKING AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN

By

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Master of Science in Counseling,

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Spanking within the African American community is a complex issue that needs to be discussed within the community. Although literature has explored important factors to consider when examining parent use of corporal punishment on children, and research has proven that African Americans use other forms of discipline techniques before resorting to spanking, African American parents are not exempt from utilizing physical punishment to address disobedient behaviors. The historical component, cultural considerations, and the pros and cons to spanking children need to be addressed. This project is designed to encourage a conversation and begin a dialogue about corporal punishment. It is important for families to understand why spanking is used in the community. African American people should understand where spanking originated, why it was a necessity, and acknowledge the current effects of its use today. In the past, spanking may have been necessary, but this project is designed to discuss whether spanking's immediate result of obedience can take precedent over developmental challenges that may develop overtime. The projects psycho-education component, role-play activities, weekly discussions, and process group format are aimed to challenge the acceptance of spanking, and address the acceptance of the perpetuating cycle of violence on African American children.

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

To understand the deeply rooted acceptance of spanking within the African American community, one must acknowledge the historical and generational patterns that permeate the parents view for their child's survival and the underlining messages for societal acceptance. For decades, spanking has been used to increase societal acceptance by altering the child's misbehavior and decreasing unruly conduct (Szuch, 2006). African American parents utilize spanking to teach their children the difference between right and wrong, which will in turn increase the child's ability to showcase obedience and respect of higher authority (Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce, 2000). Today, African American people are flooded with fear and are exposed to images of brutality and death through news and social media. African American people have been subjected to torture and brutality since slavery and have continued to endure traumatizing images that have left people in America feeling scared. These feelings have been embedded in African American people for years, which may have led to our acceptance of generational patterns of physical punishment to promote immediate change in behavior in a deep psychological way.

The African American parent may be trauma driven in their efforts to utilize corporal punishment to ensure that their children learn the lesson of obedience (Patton, 2017). To comprehend the thoughts and feelings of what an African American parent experiences when challenged with parenting an African American child in America, one must understand the external factors that influence parenting. The current belief in the African American community is the ideology and expression "spare the rod; spoil the child," which originates from a Bible passage (Proverbs 13:24: New King James Version). The external and historical factors that reinforce this belief impact how African American parents respond to child defiance.

African American parents can benefit from learning alternative disciplinary techniques that will help them achieve their primary goal for their child's survival and the learned characteristic of obedience. Parents who display positive parenting techniques are more likely to have children with positive social initiating skills (i.e. socialization and self-regulating skills) (Assel, Landry, Swank, Steelman, Miller-Loncar, & Smith, 2002). Alternative techniques of discipline may be important techniques to obtain for African American parents to maintain their parental teachings while offering warmth and patience.

The purpose of this project is to gather and examine research, which will provide the basis to conduct a process group that examines the adversities that affect the African American parent and how these adversities affect the child and the parents' choices to use corporal punishment on their African American children. This thereby opens the opportunity for a secondary phase to continue examining these issues through in-person groups and training.

### **Personal Investment**

As an African American woman, I have witnessed and personally experienced "spanking" in my family. This form of punishment was my family's primary means of discipline when I was a child. Spanking is administered with either an object (i.e. belt, wooden spoon, switch, etc.), by the adult's open hand, or either naked or clothed. As I grew older, I accepted spanking as an essential element of parents and disciplining. I recall thinking that I would spank my future children as well. I thought, it must be effective because "look at how I turned out, I am not so bad." I remember noticing friends of mine, not of African American or Black descent, that would often or occasionally speak to their parenting disrespectfully. Those friends would use curse words around or at their parents, and would not listen to their parents' requests of them. I assumed their behaviors were the result of a lack of parental discipline. I assumed that their

parents did not spank them, and as a result of their lack of physical discipline they raised children that did not respect authority.

When I realized how easily spanking could cross the thin line between discipline and child abuse, my stance on parental discipline changed after I witnessed spanking go too far. The rhetoric of child abuse is introduced when at any moment the belt that lashes the child's body can leave a physical and noticeable mark. As I grew older and more educated in child abuse criteria, I learned each day how similar the disciplinary choices resembled what I was learning in my field of marriage and family therapy. Things became even harder when I became a mandated reporter and was required to report incidences that were once done to me so casually. How does someone take this information back to his or her family? How does someone take the knowledge, that spanking or physical punishment can cause adverse effects to their child, and inform the elders in the community that the method they chose to use to punish their child is harmful? How do we let go of a method that is so imbedded in the cultures history? Historically, African Americans used spanking, or what is classified as corporal punishment, to promote obedience. I thought, "Who am I to denounce my elders and other family members methods of parenting." I was conflicted.

In marriage and family therapy, health care providers and professionals are obligated to report incidents of child abuse (Lau, K., Krase, K., & Morse, R., 2009). Being a current marriage and family therapy trainee, I have a responsibility to protect people from harm. Does this role end when I am no longer on the job? During family cookouts, do I have the responsibility to educate my family members whom have been conditioned to accept this form of discipline? Spanking has become a generational cycle imbedded in African American culture (Patton 2017). In my family, to challenge spanking is to undermine the adult exhibiting the act. To challenge

spanking means I am casting judgment on my parents parenting and the many generations before them.

Spanking within the African American community is a complex issue that needs to be discussed within the community. The historical component, cultural considerations, and the pros and cons to spanking children have to be acknowledged. This project is not only designed to spark a conversation and begin a dialogue about corporal punishment, but it is purposeful for families to understand why spanking is used in the community. African American people should understand where spanking originated, why it was a necessity, and acknowledge the current effects of its use today. In the past, spanking may have been necessary, but this project is designed to discuss whether spanking's immediate result of obedience is as effective overtime. Can the African American community stray away from corporal punishment and solely rely on other means of discipline or will the community maintain the generational cycle of violence?

### **Statement of Problem**

Spanking is the most commonly used form of corporal punishment (American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018). Eighty-five percent of children have experienced corporal punishment by the age of 14 years old (Gershoff, 2010). While spanking is most often defined as hitting a child on their buttocks with the use of a person's hand, it can be defined differently to many others. Corporal punishment can take many forms and spanking can involve slapping a child on their hand, hitting a child across the face, or hitting a child with various objects (Gershoff, 2010). According to American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2018), physical discipline can result in child acts of bullying, aggression, defiant behavior, fear, low self-esteem, hitting, and risk of depression and anxiety. Corporal punishment

can be both mild and severe, which can lead to the blurred lines and inconsistency of what is classified as an appropriate means for parental discipline.

There is a continuous debate on what is considered an abusive act of discipline versus non-abusive disciplinary practices. The variances of what is deemed as appropriate discipline leaves space for parents to primarily rely on generational parenting practices. Additionally, African American parents face specific cultural challenges in America that contribute to their decisions on their parenting practices. Parents who experienced corporal punishment as a child are more likely to perpetuate the cycle of violence on their children. Based on African American history, African American people have experienced decades of harsh torture during and after slavery, which has influenced the social acceptance of physical punishment (Patton, 2017). While many life lessons have been learned from our parents and the many generations before us, one can only wonder what it will take for people to recognize the effects corporal punishment has on the children at large.

Within the African American community corporal punishment is used as a means of consequence of misbehavior. Historically people have used various forms of corporal punishment such as pinching, spanking, whipping, and forcing children to consume unpleasant substances (i.e. soap, hot peppers, etc.) (American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018). The acceptance of spanking within the African American community not only adversely affects the child but it adheres to the socially acceptable issue of parent-child violence. The American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2018) have identified multiple ways parents can establish rules and consequences for misbehavior (i.e. positive reinforcement, withholding of privileges, time-outs, etc.). While researchers and health professional may be informed of the modern research and evidence- based programs designed to help parents manage

problematic behaviors in children, these resources and research may not be accessible to diverse and ethnic communities (The American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018). African American parents would benefit from learning how to effectively communicate with their child during conflict, utilize positive reinforcement, and incorporate positive parenting techniques to achieve short-term and long term positive behavior in their children. Some African American parents have grown up in a household where they witnessed physical punishment occur. Without the community's awareness of the effects of corporal punishment on children, African American people will continue to reinforce physical methods of discipline for generations to come.

### **Statement of Purpose and Nature of the Project**

Attitudes surrounding the use of corporal punishment in childrearing have shifted throughout recent decades (Gershoff, 2010). The purpose of this project is to gather information on African American parents' influences for spanking and the effects spanking has on African American children as well as the larger African American community. "The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting" process group is designed to create a space that will encourage African American parents to discuss external and internal factors that contribute to the acceptance of physical punishment on children. The purpose of the group is to encourage African American parents to examine how culture and history influence parenting practices. By creating a group geared toward African American parenting and their societal challenges, African American parents can have an opportunity to join with one another, and produce change by discussing society's impact on parent child-rearing.

The goal of "The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting" is to highlight parents' protective factors and strengthen their knowledge and parenting skill. The group will

utilize a collaborative approach with group members to ensure that their experiences, thoughts, and ideas for establishing alternative discipline are reflected in weekly discussions. “The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting” group will focus on addressing parent concerns and encouraging parents to utilize the space to explore potential underlying issues for both the parent and the child that may be fueling parenting choices and child misbehavior. The psycho-educational process group offers the African American parents an opportunity to explore better ways to react, respond, and relate to their child in hopes of building a secure attachment.

### **Terminology**

- *Corporal punishment*: The intended use of physical pain as a method to changing behavior. This can include hitting, slapping, punching, pinching, shaking, and the use of various objects (i.e. wooden spoon, sticks, belts, etc.) (Greydanus, Pratt, Spates, Blake-Dreher, Greydanus-Gearhart, Patel, Ad Hoc Corporal Punishment Committee, 2003).
- *African American*: An African American or Black person is distinguished by having origins in any Black racial groups of Africa (United States Census Bureau, 2010). This project will focus on the African American population, distinguished by having historical origins in Africa and a nationality of American.
- *Spanking*: A disciplinary method whereby the child is hit on the buttocks either bared or clothed, with an open-hand or a tool (i.e. wooden spoon, belt, etc.).
- *Child abuse*: Physical maltreatment; acts of authority by a caregiver that cause physical harm or potential harm to a child’s health or welfare (Children’s Bureau, 2010).
- *Cultural consideration*: Awareness of key elements (i.e. ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, language, values, goals, and life experiences) that define and differentiate people.

- *Jim Crow laws*: Legalized racial and segregation state and local statutes to marginalize African Americans. Defiance against Jim Crow laws often led to accounts of violence and death (Patton, 2017).
- *Risk factors*: Something that increases risk or vulnerability to negative issues.
- *Protective factors*: Characteristics of child, family, and environment that decrease the risk or susceptibility of negative adversities (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008).
- *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)*: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an empirically supported therapeutic method that aims to minimize distress by helping parents develop “adaptive cognitions and behaviors” (Fenn & Byrne, 2013, p. 579).
- *Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)*: Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is an evidence-based therapy that decreases problematic behaviors in children (Beveridge et al. (2014).
- *Nurturing Parenting Programs*: Nurturing Parenting Program is a program designed to teach families how to apply protective factors to increase child and family safety (Bavolek and Rogers, 2012).
- *Attachment Theory*: “Attachment theory confirms the importance of human relationships and their consequences for individual’s development” (Schneider, 1991, p. 251).
- *Erikson’s Psychosocial Developmental Stages*: Erikson’s model of psychosocial development is a guide to assess the developmental functioning of individuals as they transition through life stages (Erikson, 1997).

### **Summary**

Today, more research has surfaced indicating the effects of corporal punishment on children. While the use of corporal punishment on children has been up for much debate,

research has shown pros and cons to the primary use of spanking on children. Spanking is the most commonly used form of corporal punishment, and has been reported in literature to be both effective and ineffective on children's development (Frechette, Zoratti, & Romano, 2015). For this project, a psycho-educational process group entitled "The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting," was designed for African American parents to increase their knowledge of spanking and discover alternative practices to corporal punishment.

The goal is to create a collaborative process group that educates African American parents on the effects of spanking while discussing and processing the underlying reasoning behind the punitive discipline. This process group is designed to link the historical component of physical discipline to the generational perceptions of learned obedience. While this group will utilize psycho-education to increase parent awareness and knowledge the effects of spanking on children, it is designed as a collaborative and safe space for the African American community to explore deep-rooted values and feelings on child rearing and societal influence on parenting.

## CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Society continues to debate the benefits and disadvantages of corporal punishment on African American children (Berlin, Ispa, Fine, Malone, Brooks-Gunn, Brady-Smith, Ayoub, & Bai, 2009). Spanking is the most commonly used form of corporal punishment, and has been reported in psychology and counseling literature to be both effective on children's immediate obedience but ineffective for long-term development (Frechette, Zoratti, & Romano, 2015). Despite minimal research regarding the role parental stress plays in parent choice to use corporal punishment, some evidence does exist which links culture and socioeconomic status to the propensity of parents to use corporal punishment (Assel, Landry, Swank, Steelman, Miller-Loncar, & Smith, 2002). The literature also indicates that corporal punishment may present risk factors that challenge child developmental milestones (Frechette, Zoratti, & Romano, 2015). The purpose of this literature review is to gather and examine research which will provide the basis to conduct a project that examines the adversities that affect the African American community and how these adversities affect the choice to use corporal punishment and the effects of spanking on children within the African American household. The following review will specifically discuss parental stress and risk factors associated with the use of corporal punishment.

As previously mentioned, punitive practices such as spanking, which are used by African Americans, are grounded in the history of slavery (Patton, 2017). Related to physical disciplinary practices is the role of African American slavery and its influence on parental stressors and African American trauma. This chapter is organized to help the reader conceptualize the historical context as it relates to parental stressors and the risk factors of punitive practices among African American children. As such, the chapter is divided into four sections: (a) African American history with corporal punishment, (b) parental stressors and the use of corporal

punishment, (c) African American parental discipline and corporal punishment, and (d) risk factors of spanking. An overview of literature on cognitive behavioral therapy, examples of evidenced based parenting programs, and attachment theory will be discussed as a guide toward alternative disciplinary practices. Erikson's psychosocial developmental phases will be briefly discussed to offer a developmental component to parenting expectations. Finally, throughout the review and due to the mix of terms and research in the evidence base, the terms corporal punishment and spanking will be used interchangeably to link significant findings.

### **African American History with Corporal Punishment**

Millions of African people were taken across the Atlantic in the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Vasconcellos, n.d.). According to Vasconcellos (n.d.), about twelve million African people arrived to America vulnerable and fearful for their lives. The average age of adults taken from Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was between 15 to 20 years old. Adults and children experienced brutal living conditions and harsh treatment, and many found themselves ripped away from everything familiar. According to Patton (2017), slaves were forced to remain docile and show proper deference to the master and the master's family despite deaths, sexual abuse, brutal whippings and torture of their own selves and family members.

A majority of the Africans were captured as young adults, which may have influenced African American disciplinary practices (Patton, 2017). According to Patton (2017), without the knowledge or understanding of their West African childrearing practices, traditional parenting styles were replaced by European standards of corporal punishment of African American slaves. Initially, West Africans maintained spiritual rituals that reflected a deep belief in gods and an afterlife filled with their ancestors. These spiritual beliefs were a significant source of comfort as well as simple cultural practices. After years of slavery, the strength of these beliefs, along with

African languages, faded away. Finally, in 1865 emancipation was granted to all slaves in the United States Emancipation however was not the end of repression for African Americans. Jim Crow laws, ritual hangings and lynching continued for years after emancipation, and fear of violence became America's new method of punishment for African Americans to hold them in positions of obedience (Aguirre, A., & Baker, D., 1999). The violence inflicted upon African Americans during slavery and the Jim Crow era resulted in African American communities interpreting cruelty as acts of love and protection, and the primary method to teach child obedience and respect of authority (Patton, 2017).

### **Parental Burnout, Stress, and the Use of Corporal Punishment**

According to Pinderhughes, Dodge, Bates, and Pettit (2000), disciplinary methods are influenced by ethnicity, parents' child history, family structure and social support. Research has found that parents of lower income more frequently use spanking, along with single-family households, and those who are more depressed and stressed (Berlin et al., 2009).

#### **Parental Burnout**

According to Mikolajczak, Raes, Avalosse, and Roskam (2018), parent burnout (i.e. parent exhaustion) develops into three categories of exhaustion: tiredness and emotional draining, emotional distancing with the child, and a sense of ineffectiveness as a parent. Tiredness and emotional draining accumulates from parents' active involvement with their child and a loss of identity outside of parenthood. Mothers with high levels of emotional stress are less able to maintain warmth and flexibility when interacting with their children. Emotional distancing occurs when parents become exhausted by their role as a parent (Mikolajczak et al., 2018). According to Mikolajczak et al. (2018), emotional distancing indicates whether mothers are able to show their love towards their children.

Literature has shown that these parents report low levels of self-care, which increases their risk for burnout and results in anxiety and avoidance (Mikolajczak et al., 2018). Anxiety and avoidant parent traits were associated with parent burnout. When burnout accumulates it depletes the ability to cope with stressors, thereby increasing the frequency of mistakes and neglectful behaviors toward the child (Mikolajczak et al., 2018). Emotional exhaustion, emotional distancing, and the increase of neglectful parenting behaviors can develop into feelings of ineffective parenting. Parents may feel that they lack the ability to provide a warm and calming presence for their children when faced with emotional problems (Mikolajczak et al., 2018).

In addition to emotional exhaustion and distancing which can result in feelings of ineffectiveness, Pinderhughes et al. (2000) note that parental history, financial stress, single-family households, and environmental dangers such as unsafe neighborhoods are all additional stressors that undermine the parents' ability and willingness to offer negotiation and immediate understanding of child behaviors. Based on Joe, Shillingford-Butler, and Oh (2019), six themes were highlighted within their study that illustrated the experiences of African American mothers who were exposed to media coverage of police brutality, and community and state violence. The six themes included, "psychological distress," "physical manifestations of stress," "parenting behaviors," "empathic isolation," coping strategies," and strengths" (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019, p. 67). Multiple exposures to life stressors such as lack of financial support, emotional exhaustion, economic strain, and social and emotional support are more likely to affect parent ability to use empathic responses to children (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019). Overall, parental stress, no matter the source, affects the emotional and cognitive abilities of parents thus

hindering their ability and willingness to present warmth and patience to their children (Pinderhughes et al., 2000).

### **Parental History**

Assel et al. (2002) conducted a longitudinal study with 180 preterm and 112 full-term preschool children and their mothers to determine if pre-school children's behavior can be predicted based on: (a) direct and indirect relations since birth (b) maternal parenting history, (c) maternal emotional stress, and (d) parenting behaviors. For the purpose of this review, only maternal parenting history, parenting behaviors, and maternal emotional stress will be discussed. Assel et al. (2002) found that maternal parenting history (i.e. childrearing experiences) indirectly influenced child developmental milestones. Assel et al. (2002) also found that maternal parents' memory of their childrearing history affected emotional stress. Results indicated that (negative, distant, detached) childrearing memories resulted in lower levels of maternal warmth, and indirectly affected children's social initiating skills (i.e. socialization and self-regulating skills). Mothers who recalled harsh and neglecting parenting reported higher levels of emotional stress. Mothers with higher levels of emotional stress correlated with children with fewer attempts to seek adult attention. Thus, children with higher levels of stressed parents may learn over time that their needs may not get met with warmth and positive parenting responses. Children who experience this parenting style may choose to decrease social initiating attempts, thus affecting children's socialization and self-regulating skills. Children that lack warm responses and acceptance may become parents that lack the same skill. The generational cycle of stress should be considered when discussing parenting styles and childrearing views.

Conversely, Assel et al. (2002) found that warm parenting responses such as warm responsiveness and warm acceptance were related to greater social initiating skills in children.

Warm responsiveness was based on mother's sensitivity when responding to the child's needs. Mothers with maternal warmth were alert and sensitive to child cues, and made appropriate attempts to respond to their children's needs. These mothers were able to maintain a degree of flexibility when tending to their children. Warm acceptance was contingent upon mothers' ability to accept their child's interests and needs without altering or dismissing the child's requests. Praise, physical affection, and the use of positive tone of voice were considered warm acceptance traits. Children who experience warm and attentive parenting will be better able to implement similar parenting traits within their household. Based on Assel et al. (2002), warm parenting responses will likely lead to a generational cycle of learned attunement and parental warmth. The generational cycle of stress should be considered when discussing parenting styles and childrearing views.

### **Financial Distress**

Financial distress develops from cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses to financial hardships (Starkey, Keane, Terry, Marx, & Ricci, 2013). Financial distress occurs when bills and other expenses exceed income, thereby resulting in one's inability to meet financial responsibilities (Starkey, Keane, Terry, Marx, & Ricci, 2013). Financial distress is a mental or physical discomfort influenced by one's financial well-being (Starkey, Keane, Terry, Marx, & Ricci, 2013). According to Gutman, McLoyd, & Tokoyawa (2005), income and financial responsibilities ratio influence African American parents psychological distress as a result of financial strain and neighborhood stress (Gutman, McLoyd, & Tokoyawa, 2005). Fathers who have experienced financial loss become more irritable and short-tempered which influences discipline toward inconsistent and punitive disciplining styles (Gutman, McLoyd, & Tokoyawa, 2005). Based on Threlfall, Seay, and Kohl (2013), African American fathers discussed the

financial burden of child support. Some fathers expressed their experiences with paying child support and dealing with challenges of repeatedly being behind with payments, and feeling a sense of hopelessness due to their inability to make enough to cover the costs of their financial responsibilities (Threlfall, Seay, & Kohl, 2013). Additionally, the African American fathers felt that child support payments took the majority of their resources and left them with little to pay for child visits or gifts (Threlfall, Seay, & Kohl, 2013).

According to Gutman, McLoyd, and Tokoyawa (2005), the difficulties in meeting financial responsibilities and maintaining financial stability creates worry. Parents experiencing financial difficulties may ask themselves “how am I going to pay this bill?” or “will I make ends meet this month?” The constant state of financial worry develops into parent psychological distress (Gutman, McLoyd, and Tokoyawa, 2005). As mentioned previously, parent emotional stress indirectly affects child behaviors and directly affects parents’ ability to maintain warmth and provide non-punitive methods of discipline (Gutman, McLoyd, & Tokoyawa, 2005).

### **Environmental Stressors**

Literature on environmental stressors aimed discussions regarding the influence of neighborhood stress on parenting behavior (Gutman et al., 2005). Risk factors of neighborhood stress include difficulties accessing local services (i.e. health and social services), neighborhood problems and neighborhood safety (Gutman et al., 2005). Gutman et al. (2005) found that when parents were asked questions concerning local access to health and social services, these parents showed significant psychological distress. Neighborhood characteristics may influence parent mental health such as, irritability, physical health, coping skills and efficiency. Perhaps parents’ distress stemmed from worries about social support and lack of resources available to them.

Neighborhood problems such as unemployment rates, drug usage, and vandalism were assessed to determine a link between environmental factors and parent stress. Parents may become stressed because of a fear of job loss or develop fears around the lack of safety because of neighborhood drug use. Neighborhood characteristics are likely to increase the challenges associated with parenting. Barriers to health and mental health services, vandalism, and the likelihood of success within the neighborhood determine how neighborhood stress impacts parents' mental health. Literature found correlation between reports of stress with reports of neighborhood problems (Gutman et al., 2005). Neighborhood conditions influence African American parents' strategies for parenting (Hoskins, 2014). Parenting characteristics such as, restrictiveness and strict rule setting have been beneficial for children living in high-risk, high crime neighborhood (Hoskins, 2014). Considering neighborhood characteristics and its correlation to parental stress will help conceptualize parenting behaviors that may lead to coercive parenting styles. Maintaining parental mental health can be difficult when mental health services are not in proximity to the home. Without easy access to social support and resources, parents' levels of stress may increase resulting in irritability, short temper, and angry outbursts.

### **African American Parenting and Corporal Punishment**

Parents develop parenting behaviors based on factors such as social experiences, familiar practices, and cultural history (Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce, 2000). African American parents teach respect for elders and authority figures, resiliency, hard work ethic, and value freedom of expression through authoritarian parenting styles (Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce, 2000). The need to teach these lessons is apparent in African American history. Jambunathan et al. (2000) point out that respect, resiliency, hard work, and expression are necessary to survive in hostile environments due to slavery, Jim Crow laws, and generational racism. Perhaps due to past

disadvantages for African Americans in American history, African American parents have enforced authoritarian parenting styles to ensure that their children meet developmental and behavioral expectations of western culture.

According to Bradley (1998), findings suggest that parents used discussion, warning facial expressions, demands, and withdrawal of child privileges as initial disciplining techniques used to promote behavioral change within the child. Research has demonstrated that in general, parents utilize spanking or other forms of corporal punishment when children display externalizing behaviors such as aggression or deviancy (Gershoff, Lansford, Sexton, Pamela Davis-Kean and Arnold J. Sameroff, 2012). Bradley (1998) aimed to examine the disciplinary techniques most frequently used by African American parents. Bradley's research found that African American parents resorted to ordering the child to stop unwanted behaviors, and across all age groups slapping the child in the face and ignoring the child was the least used disciplinary method (Bradley, 1998). Results showed disciplinary methods were significantly different based on contextual factors. Based on the research, African American parents used less coercive disciplinary methods for mild situations and used coercive techniques during severe situations. More specifically, African American parents reserved spanking (with belt or with open hand) for defiant behaviors by their children. When children defied parental authority African American parents resorted to more coercive consequences. Based on Bradley (1998), one can conclude that severe situations, such as disobedient behavior, resorts in more coercive disciplinary techniques (i.e. spanking, slapping child on face, spanking with belt, spanking with hand).

Findings suggest important factors to consider when examining African American disciplining styles. The discovery of defiant behavior influencing the frequency of corporal punishment on children provides reasons to consider why African American parents resort to

coercive discipline styles. Bradley (1998) has demonstrated that African Americans use other forms of discipline techniques before resorting to spanking. However, African American parents reported more frequent use of punitive discipline practices (Pinderhughes et al., 2000). Perhaps the generational component to teach children respect and obedience stems from the survival need to display obedient behaviors to maintain existence in America. For example, parents may think that corporal punishment is necessary to ensure that their child learns the consequences of defying authority. This theory indicates parents prefer to teach obedience within the home with the use of corporal punishment to prevent the harsher outcome of incarceration or death in America. The multiple factors that reinforce the belief in physical disciplinary practices within African American culture challenge the attempts to dismantle the perception to use corporal punishment to alter child behaviors. While understanding why African American parents use corporal punishment is important, it is equally important to consider the risk factors associated with using corporal punishment on African American children.

### **Risk Factors of Spanking**

The intended motives for corporal punishment is to correct child misbehavior (Gershoff, 2010). According to Gershoff (2010), the short-term goal associated with parents' use of spanking is to stop child's misbehavior and increase the child's compliance. Long-term goals of parents' use of corporal punishment are to decrease unacceptable behaviors and increase socially accepted behaviors. Parents have reported that they use spanking to prevent their children from engaging in unsafe behaviors or socially unaccepted behaviors or norms. Parents' main goal is to increase their child's obedience and decrease child aggression and antisocial behavior (Gershoff, 2010). Ironically, parents' intention of using corporal punishment to decrease aggression and future social problems has been linked with child developmental risk factors (Frechette, Zoratti,

& Romano, 2015). Although spanking serves a purpose for parents, researchers have studied the effectiveness of short and long-term use of corporal punishment on children.

According to Gershoff (2010), a study examined the short-term and longer-term effects of spanking and non-spanking parental disciplines on children. The children in the study initially exhibited defiant and behavior-related problems, and were referred to a research clinic at Idaho State University to examine the effects of alternative discipline. Results found that after spanking occurred children were more obedient immediately after spanking than the alternative “time out” method (Gershoff, 2010, p. 35). Results found that barrier-enforcements (i.e. child restrictions) produced equal short-term compliant results just as the spanking method did. For long-term compliance, “thirteen of fifteen studies” found that corporal punishment was associated with less compliance over the course of time (Gershoff, 2010, p. 37).

Alternative disciplines such as taking away privileges, ignoring misbehavior, reasoning and other forms of barrier enforcements proved equally effective at increasing short-term compliance, as well as increasing long-term compliance in children (Gershoff, 2010). Children learn to make positive decisions based on consistent lessons of moral reasoning. Corporal punishment shows less success in establishing “moral internalization” of child misbehavior, thereby decreasing the child’s ability to connect their misbehavior to societal moral values (Gershoff, 2010, p. 38). Therefore, the intended purpose for parents use of corporal punishment seems to be dismissed by the long-term effects of spanking on children due to its exclusion of moral reasoning throughout the child’s development - effectively showing its ineffectiveness as a form of discipline.

According to Gershoff (2013), child aggression frequently elicits parental use of corporal punishment on children. A Berlin et al. (2009) study of 2,500 children who experienced spanking

between 1 to 3 years old, concluded that at preschool age, spanking predicted an increase in externalizing behaviors in these children after one year. Parents' use of corporal punishment to decrease child aggressive behaviors is *less* likely to decrease aggressive behaviors (Gershoff, 2010). Based on social cognitive theory, children who experience physical discipline will develop a predisposition to a hostile trait that may inappropriately affect social interactions (Gershoff, 2010). Perhaps the reason why the use of physical discipline to reduce aggression in children is more likely to maintain or increase aggressive behaviors is because children may internalize their parents use of aggressive discipline and associates it with parental approval for utilizing physical force as a means to communicate a want or need.

### **Guidance Toward Alternative Discipline**

According to Križ and Skivenes (2011), African American parents are encouraged to use alternative discipline to prevent potential risk of child abuse. African American parents utilize parent-child discussions, withdrawal from child privileges, and facial expressions as initial disciplinary methods, however the secondary disciplinary method (i.e. spanking, hitting, etc.) is more severe when addressing continued misbehavior (Bradley, 1998; Adkison-Bradley, Terpstra, & Dormitorio, 2014). While research has found that African American parents use various methods of discipline, other alternative strategies stemming from Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Nurturing Parenting Programs, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, somatic empathy, Attachment Theory, and Erikson's Psychosocial Developmental Stages will be described to offer a balanced and comprehensive view of other alternative discipline.

### **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy**

Cognitive-behavioral approaches are based on an integration of the two distinct counseling approaches of behavioral and cognitive. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is one

of the predominant approaches to psychotherapy (Eckberg, Barnes, Kessler, Malpass, & Shaw, 2014). These interventions are based on the premise that distress is sustained by cognitive factors (Hofmann, Asnaani, Vonk, Sawyer, & Fang, 2012). Cognitive behavioral therapy is a short-term treatment consisting of 10-12 weekly sessions (Lee and Edget, 2012). Initial sessions are usually based on assessing client presenting problems and situations, allowing for the therapist to explain to the client what therapy will be like, which helps involve them in their own treatment (Eckberg et al., 2014).

Cognitive behavioral strategies aim to help clients acknowledge and analyze thoughts, emotional reactions, and behaviors (Edget & Lee, 2012). The goal of treatment is symptom reduction while also improving client functioning (Hofmann et al., 2012). In order for this to occur, the client is an active participant and collaborates in the problem-solving process (Hofmann et al., 2012). Finding consensus between the client and counselor regarding goals of the relationship increases likelihood of commitment to the tasks of counseling (Eckberg et al., 2014). Together, the counselor and patient challenge maladaptive cognitions and work to modify these dysfunctional behavioral patterns to more appropriate ones (Hofmann et al., 2012). CBT has been considered an effective choice for working with the African American population because it aims to disrupt problematic core beliefs that may stem from social opinions.

**Cognitive distortions.** The CBT approach helps African Americans identify and challenge family schemas and core beliefs that have been internalized by stereotypes and cultural expectations (McNair, 1996). According to Dattilio (1993), eight types of cognitive distortions are present within family beliefs or beliefs about the family. Five of the eight cognitive distortions will be discussed to identify family schemas and beliefs that challenge the parenting

experience. The five cognitive distortions include: (a) parenting arbitrary inference, (b) selective abstraction, (c) overgeneralization, (d) dichotomous thinking and (e) labeling and mislabeling.

***Arbitrary inferences.*** Arbitrary inferences occur when a belief is developed from minimal evidence. For example, parents can showcase arbitrary inference by assuming their child is exhibiting attention seeking behavior to be disruptive. Alternatively, a parent can acknowledge the attention seeking behavior as a means for the child to obtain a personal need (i.e. emotional need or physical need).

***Selective abstraction.*** Selective abstraction occurs when one detail is the primary focus over other important details (Dattilio, 1993). Selective abstraction can be seen when a parent primarily focuses on dysregulated behaviors (i.e. attention seeking behaviors) of the child and overlooks the positive actions that the child may perform. Focusing primarily on dysregulated behaviors may teach the child that acting out will give them some form of attention from adults.

***Overgeneralization.*** Overgeneralization is when a person equates a previous incident to all future situations. For example, parents may experience overgeneralizations when they express feelings of hopelessness when disciplining. Parents may state, “I have tried everything” in regards to trying multiple disciplining techniques for their child. “Everything” is an overgeneralization for their commitment to trying “multiple” disciplining methods.

***Dichotomous thinking.*** Dattilio (1993) explains dichotomous thinking as the belief of either all or nothing. This is otherwise seen as black or white thinking. Polarized thinking in a family system can be seen as the “good” verses the “bad” child.

***Labeling and mislabeling.*** Dattilio (1993) explains labeling and mislabeling as a cognitive distortion that can develop from stereotyping future behaviors based on past mistakes and imperfect behavior.

*A-B-C model.* One of the many interventions utilized in CBT is the A-B-C model developed by Albert Ellis, which allows clients to make sense of confusing events through Socratic questioning in order to clarify the distinction between one's emotions and thoughts about a situation (Hansen, Kingdon, Turkington, 2006). Once the client identifies the activating events (A) that lead to particular consequences (C), the therapist then assists the client in realizing the lack of personal meaning in the connection of these two factors (Hansen et al., 2006). For example, a mother found herself angry and on edge after spanking her child because of his constant misbehavior at school. Based on the example, the activating event is the child's constant misbehavior, and the consequence for the behavior became the spanking and the emotional consequence of anger. The counselor helps the mother (i.e. client) to identify the beliefs and thoughts that are the true cause of the consequences (Hansen et al., 2006). The mother would then identify a core belief such as, "misbehaving in school means that he is disrespecting and undermining authority." "Realization and modification of the belief (B) is the primary goal of the A-B-C model" (Hansen et al., 2006, p. 2). Realization and modification of the belief is beneficial for parents to be able to recognize the underlying feelings and meaning behind the events, which therefore will help them understand why they immediately reacted to their child's actions (i.e. consequences).

### **Nurturing Parenting Programs**

According to Bavolek and Rogers (2012), parenting programs such as, Nurturing Parenting Program is designed to teach families how to apply protective factors to increase child and family safety. Protective factors are elements within families that increase the well-being of children and family systems. The protective factors identify family strengths that allow families to exhibit resiliency within their communities. Nurturing Parenting Programs aim to increase

protective factors and decrease risk factors that hinder families from seeking out social support. The six protective factors include: (a) nurturing and attachment, (b) knowledge of parent and child development, (c) parent resilience, (d) social connections, (e) concrete support in times of need, and (f) social and emotional competence of the child. African American parents would benefit from learning about the importance of the six protective factors to assist them in increasing and acknowledging their resiliency despite parental stress and generational adversities (Murry, Bynum, Brody, & Stephens, 2001).

Nurturing Parenting Programs incorporates six of the protective factors to reinforce strength based; family focused and evidenced based treatment. Each of the twenty-five Nurturing Parenting Programs is population specific and geared towards acknowledging culture and developmental capabilities with families. Nurturing Parenting Programs identify abusive and neglecting parenting practices and work with families to: (a) increase knowledge of inappropriate expectations of their child based on their developmental stage, (b) increase empathetic responses and level of awareness of child needs, (c) decrease non-violent means of parental discipline and offer alternative forms of punishment, (d) reverse parent-child roles, (e) increase techniques to build self-esteem, self-worth, and resiliency skills, and (f) increase bonding and attachment through fun family interactions (Bavolek & Rogers, 2012). Parenting programs similar to Nurturing Parenting Program would be beneficial for African American parents to increase their knowledge on developmental expectations for children, protective factors for the family, and techniques to decrease non-violent methods of discipline and increase the use of alternative forms of discipline.

### **Parent Child Interaction Therapy**

According to Beveridge et al. (2014), Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is an evidence-based therapy that decreases problematic behaviors in children. Trained PCIT therapists utilize the program to observe parent and child interaction (Santini & Williams, 2016). During their observation and assessment of the interaction, the therapist will coach the parent on how to engage with their child. Santini and Williams' (2016) research found that PCIT methods decreased child behavioral problems, and parent and child stress. In addition, results indicated an increase in parent-child interaction from 5 months to 16 months after PCIT treatment. Studies have utilized PCIT for parents with young children whom have experienced excessive verbal abuse and corporal punishment by their parents. The study held one hour and thirty minute sessions for 26 parents over ten weeks.

Based on Fernandez, Butler, and Eyberg (2011), 18 socially disadvantaged African American families reported significant improvements in their children's behaviors after receiving Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). The African American mothers reported improvement in their child's disruptive behaviors, but expressed no improvements in their levels of stress. The program included four phases of treatment: (a) increase coping skills to deal with anger and parental stress; (b) providing psycho-education about child developmental phases; (c) implementation of "positive parenting practices" (i.e. warmth, nurturing, etc.), and (d) guidance towards alternative discipline practices (Santini and Williams', 2016, p. 125).

According to Santini and Williams' (2016), their results indicated that verbal abuse and corporal punishment acts against children; parent and child stress; and child behavioral problems decreased post PCIT treatment. The PCIT program teaches parents how to engage in relaxation techniques, anger management skills, self-regulation skills, social and problem-solving skills, and modeling to promote positive parent child interactions and attachment (Santini & Williams,

2016). According to Fernandez, Butler, and Eyberg (2011) this study suggested that completion of PCIT decreases disadvantaged children's disruptive behaviors, but does not produce a secondary gain for decreased parental stress.

### **Somatic Empathy**

Somatic empathy is the ability to understand, acknowledge and remain sensitive to someone's sensations, thoughts, feelings, and experiences without taking on the feelings, thoughts and sensations (Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association, 2002). According to Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association (2002), a person can acquire this skill by becoming aware of their personal bodily responses such as, attention to breathing, heart rate, and muscle tension. Being aware of these bodily sensations will increase a person's somatic empathy and attunement to another individual's feelings. This somatic form of empathy can assist people in acknowledging nonverbal and unconscious cues of others (Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association, 2002). Somatic empathy allows for people to understand the experiences of another person by using their own body sensations and cues as a signal for identifying the other person's experiences (Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association, 2002). For example, a mother can utilize somatic empathy by tuning into her bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings to identify what may be the cause of her child's tantrum. If the mother assesses her own heart rate, muscle tension, and intuition she may find that her child's tantrum is a result of discomfort, nervousness, or possibly fear.

Limited financial resources have been found to increase parent stress thus draining African American parents' emotional capacity and ability to empathetically respond to their children (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019). African American parents are more likely to direct their focus to managing and meeting financial responsibilities, which influences parenting

behaviors and attitudes toward their children (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019). Joe, Shillingford-Butler, and Oh (2019) found that African American parents described experiences of “empathic isolation” (p.74). Based on their findings, African American parents described empathic isolation as receiving minimal empathy from others outside of the home, and internally masking their emotions within the home (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019).

Empathizing is an important phased of communication process that allows for parents and their children to understand one another’s point of view (Bean & Roller, 2005). Within an African American parent focus group, the teenaged children discussed the importance of parent understanding of the teen perspective (Bean & Roller, 2005). The African American teens discussed how parent age, generation, and the parents’ parental history (i.e. how they were raised) influenced parents’ ability to understand things from the teen’s perspective. Within the focus group the African American parents expressed their need to inform their teens that they themselves were once teenagers that had experienced similar obstacles and stressors (Bean & Roller, 2005). Parents’ attempts to utilize empathy, through the form of claims of similar experiences, produced negative responses from their teens (Bean & Roller, 2005). The lack of somatic empathy and focus on the parents’ experiences and feelings harvested negative reactions and misunderstanding from the teens (Bean & Roller, 2005). Utilizing empathy is an important component of understanding. Empathy requires the skill of active listening to both verbal and nonverbal cues of the other person (Bean & Roller, 2005). African American parents and their children may benefit from activities that assist them in increasing the skill of empathy (Bean & Roller, 2005). Utilizing empathy to gain understanding of the child’s feelings and experiences is a form of intimacy, which can lead to an increased sense of parent-child connectedness (Bean & Roller, 2005).

## **Attachment Theory**

According to John Bowlby's, damaged parent-child relationships within the first three years of the child's life leads to social withdrawal in children (Van Rosmalen, Van der Horst, Van der Veer, & Weidman, 2016). John Bowlby's attachment theory proposes that humans need consistent nurturing from at least one caregiver relationship to grow into secure individuals (Van Rosmalen et al., 2016). Children need caregivers to not only nurture them, but to assist them in building skills necessary to maintain social and emotional competence. Based on William Blatz's security theory, a feeling of security can develop in someone when another individual takes ownership of consequences for that individual's decisions and actions (Van Rosmalen et al., 2016). Similarly, children can develop a sense of secure dependency with their parents when the parents show consistency in their parenting behaviors, thereby producing a sense of security and certainty within the child that the parent will "be there for them no matter what" (Van Rosmalen et al., 2016, p. 26). Once the child feels the sense of secure dependency from their parent or caregiver, the child begins to feel safe to explore and begin the continuous exploration through their life. As the child explores, the child will be driven by his desire for "independent security" (i.e. autonomy) (Van Rosmalen et al., 2016, p. 26).

Parents attachment needs can influence his or her ability to respond to the needs of their child (Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015). If a parent experiences a sudden death or had experienced significant loss, is it likely that the loss will impact their parenting behaviors? Imagine experiencing the sudden loss of your partner and not wanting to show your grief to your family and child, hiding your sadness, tears, and pain from the people you love in order to maintain the image of strength for your family. Imagine holding this loss, in addition to the daily doses of stress, and the expectancy to provide emotionally for your child during your stages of

grief. Imagine how hard parenting may be during this time. Attachment related events on caregivers, such as loss, influence the child's "quality of care" (Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015, p. 46).

Jones, Cassidy, and Shaver (2015) reviewed Mary Ainsworth's concept of separation distress. The literature reviewed Ainsworth's study on child attachment responses after briefly being left alone and then reuniting with their mother. According to Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver (2015), 12 to 18-month old infants were separated from their mothers, and 60% displayed normal separation distress (i.e. secure attachment). Upon reunification, those children became happy and showed signs of wanting mother's attention. Children with secure attachment exhibit signs of trust between mother and child that when mother returned, child would be able to regain closeness with their parent (i.e. attachment figure). Twenty percent of infants, during the study, did not display signs of distress when left alone. After their mothers returned, the children did not acknowledge their mothers or actively turned away (i.e. ambivalent/resistant), the other infants showed distress after separation from their mothers, but refused mothers closeness upon return (i.e. insecure/avoidant).

According to Dan Siegel, parents repetitive act of eliminating the child's fears, anxieties, and sadness, allow the child to feel safe when experiencing uncomfortable feelings (Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015). The safeness and sense of calm developed by children, as a result of their parents nurturing behaviors, produces an internal sense of security in their life (Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015). In contrast, parents who dismiss the child's needs and are emotionally or physically unavailable will result in insecure attachment (Goodman, Robert, & Scott, Stephen, 2012). Children with insecure attachment learn that dramatic behaviors elicit caregiver attention to respond to their needs. Behaviors such as aggression, dysregulation, frustration, isolation, and

other dramatic behaviors may be the child's primary way of communicating their needs to their parents.

According to Booth and Jernberg (2010), parents and children can mend and build secure based relationships through attachment play activities such as thumb wrestling, mirroring games, hide and seek, peek-a-boo, patty-cake, bubbles, singing and dancing, and so many more. Booth and Jernberg (2010) recommend utilizing play to increase children's patience, humor, and social skills through the use of structured, fun, and interactive games. Play is an effective way to connect with young children and teens through games that encourage laughing, eye contact, playful interactions, and nurturing touch. Booth and Jernberg (2010) note that human behavior is influenced by connection and social interactions, therefore interpersonal interactions such as play are likely to impact child behaviors. For an example, Theraplay is a treatment approach that aims to address emotional issues, behavioral issues, developmental issues, and improves parent-child relationships through play (Booth and Jernberg, 2010). Structured play activities can help increase children's organization skills and foster self-regulation. Structured play is useful for hyperactive children and children who lack focus (Booth and Jernberg, 2010). Calming activities can promote a sense of safety, calm, and comfort between the parent and child (Booth and Jernberg, 2010). With the use of structured play, nurturing interactions, challenging tasks, and engaging activities theraplay or play-based therapy can teach children social skills, self-regulation, increase focus, and promote feelings of competence and self-confidence (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).

The primary goal of attachment is to create a foundation of security in order to be able to explore and become independently secure (Bowly, 1969). The purpose of the attachment process is to develop a secure base that will elicit children to grow into adults with social and emotional

abilities to organize meaningful relationships with people. Parents' attachment experiences heavily influence their ability to respond to their children's needs (Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015). As a child continues to experience emotional discomfort and uncomfortable feelings without the interjection of their parents' protection or healing, the child may form ambivalent/resistant or insecure/avoidant attachment styles (Dexter, Wong, Stacks, Beeghly, Barnett, 2013). These attachment styles may impact the child's development and alter their sense of trust in learning psychosocial developmental principles

### **Erikson's Psychosocial Developmental Stages**

Erik Erikson (1997) extended the works of psychoanalytic theory by developing a lifespan approach to personality development. Erikson's work differed from prior stances on psychosexual development, by proposing psychosocial developmental stages that occur from infancy to older adulthood. Erikson's model of psychosocial development is an important guide to assess the functioning of individuals as they embark through life. As individuals go through challenges and enter into life crises from infancy to older age, they learn foundational lessons that become the benchmark for the next developmental phase of their life. Erikson (1968) proposed a culturally inclusive identity model of his developmental stage theory that included culture and group values as key components of understanding minority group identity development. Erikson's identity model considered the impact culture, spirituality, history, and education plays in understanding minority group developmental stages (Erikson, 1998). Erikson proposed that in order for people to understand African American identity development they must look at influential elements of their lives such as their religion, academia, history, and social and cultural realities (Erikson, 1998).

According to Erikson (1997), the developmental stages each challenged with adversities consist of a positive and a negative outcome that determines identity. The eight stages include: (1) trust vs. mistrust; (2) autonomy vs. shame and doubt; (3) initiative vs. guilt; (4) industry vs. inferiority (5) identity vs. role confusion; (6) intimacy vs. isolation; (7) generativity vs. stagnation; and (8) integrity vs. despair. Each stage fosters cognitive and social learning that arise from societal pressures that prepare you for the next stage of development. While Erikson developed the eight stages of psychosocial development, the research in this paper will shed light on the first five stages aimed toward children from infancy to adolescence.

According to Erikson (1997), a person evolves when they successfully solve the crisis. The first stage, trust versus mistrust, proposes that warmth, affection and consistent care can create a secure attachment (i.e. trust) between caregiver and the infant. Inconsistent, neglectful, and inadequate care results in fear and mistrust. This initial relationship is the first example for forming relationships. Mistrust and inadequate care may result in future developmental problems that impact the infants ability to form close relationships. The second stage, autonomy versus doubt and shame, suggests that children ages one to three need encouragement to try to do things on their own in order to develop independence. Without the encouragement and opportunity for children to explore their abilities, they may develop self-doubt and dependency on adults. Stage three, initiative versus guilt, encourages children age three to six to explore their curiosity. Positive parent responses to this stage leads to a sense of initiative and curiosity. Stage four, industry versus inferiority, occurs during elementary years ages six to twelve. During this stage, self-confidence and competence develops from school and social success. Repeated failures lead to feelings of inferiority and unwillingness to venture to new tasks. Lastly stage five, identity versus role confusion, aims to develop a consistent sense of self. Within this stage, adolescents

experiment with new behaviors, roles, and identities to determine which fit best for them as an individual.

According to the Wolraich, Aceves, Feldman and Hagan (1998), discipline at birth to 12 months should involve consistency, structured routines, and attunement to the child's needs. Structured routines and schedules promote predictability and a sense of safety. During this infancy stage discipline should not include spanking, or consequences (Dobson, 1992). While in stage two, age 1 to 3 years old, children begin to explore their environment and develop their own sense of independence. Blum, Williams, and Friman (1995) state that children during this stage are susceptible to fear of abandonment in which time-outs serve to heighten the feelings of fear when kept away from their parents. Therefore at the toddler stage, time-outs and explanations are likely ineffective. At stage three, during preschool to kindergarten age, limitations can be incorporated into parental discipline. During this age children are able to accept limitations that will help them achieve parental or others' approval (Pediatrics & Child Health, 2004). Verbal rules can be utilized to teach direction and maintain child safety during their exploring moments. For children with defiant behaviors, Dobson (1992) states to utilize spanking at the last resort proceeding with a time-out. Dobson (1992) states that spanking should stop around 6 years old. At stage four, age 6 to 12 years old, parental discipline should involve a withdrawal of desired privileges, consequences, restrictions and time-outs (Wolraich, Aceves, Feldman and Hagan, 1998). Lastly, stage five, 13 to 17 years old, physical discipline should not be used and can be deemed potentially harmful. Withdrawal of privileges or restriction from desired activities or hobbies is most effective in changing adolescent behavior (Daves, McMahon, Flessati, Tiedman, 1984).

## **Cultural Considerations**

Cultural background should be considered when determining whether alternative discipline is practical for the African American parents (Whaley, 2000). According to Whaley (2000), a parent-training program illustrated the importance of cultural sensitivity within an African American parent group for inner city African American parents (Whaley, 2000). The parenting group aimed to establish a culturally sensitive environment that included cultural elements of African American culture such as, “black professionals, discussions of ethnic/racial pride, and strategies for coping with racism” (Whaley, 2000, p. 9). According to Whaley (2000), the outcome of the African American parent group resulted in improvements in child behaviors, parenting, and family dynamics for one year. Findings suggested, after a year of improvements from the parenting group the African American parents resorted to previous methods of discipline and engaged in coercive parenting practices. Perhaps the absence of behavior management strategies resulted in the short-term outcomes, and behavioral management strategies are necessary for the long-term effects of parenting improvements in the African American family. The underlying importance discovered from the parenting program is the program’s cultural sensitivity. Based on the findings, the inclusion of cultural sensitivity in the African American parenting group is the important component to sustaining parenting improvements for at least a year (Whaley, 2000).

## **Conclusion**

Literature has suggested important factors to consider when examining African American disciplining styles. The discoveries of defiant behavior influencing the frequency of corporal punishment on children provide reasons to consider why African American parents resort to coercive discipline styles (Bradley, 1998). Bradley (1998) has shown that African Americans use

other forms of discipline techniques before resorting to spanking. However, African American parents reported more frequent use of punitive discipline practices as compared to the general United States parent population (Pinderhughes et al., 2000). To this thought the generational component of teaching children respect and obedience stems from the survival need to display obedient behaviors and maintain existence in America. For example, parents may think that corporal punishment is necessary to ensure that their child learns the consequences of defying authority. Perhaps parents prefer to teach obedience within the home with the use of corporal punishment to prevent the harsher outcome of incarceration or death, a real and common threat for African Americans in America.

The multiple factors that reinforce the belief in physical disciplinary practices within African American culture challenge the attempts to dismantle the use of corporal punishment to alter child behaviors. In addition to the historical and social context of corporal punishment in the African American culture, it is equally important to consider the risk factors associated with using corporal punishment on African American children. Parental stress, no matter the source, affects the emotional and cognitive abilities of parents and weakens their emotional stability. As a result, African American parents would benefit from the evidence-base practice of cognitive behavioral therapy program and attachment theory to increase knowledge of alternative disciplinary techniques and acknowledgment of parental stressors.

The literature provided in this chapter sets the framework for an African American parenting psycho-educational process group. Overall, the purpose of this literature review was to gather research to conduct a group curriculum that acknowledges the adversities that affect the African American community and identifies how these adversities influence the use of corporal punishment, as well as its effect on African American children.

### CHAPTER III: Overview of Project

This psycho-educational process group was designed to strengthen parent and child attachment and connection, and increase the recognition of parental stress and its ability to influence parenting choices. The concept behind the process group is to examine parental stress and the adversities that affect the African American community, and how those adversities influence the use of corporal punishment in the African American household. The initial step in designing the group proposal was to determine the intended audience, development of project, personal qualifications, and environment and equipment necessities for the group. The psycho-educational component of the group will offer effective alternative discipline strategies that can replace corporal punishment and enhance cohesive disciplinary styles.

This group will teach parents alternative ways to respond and interact with their children during dysregulated behaviors (i.e. angry outbursts, throwing objects, inability to self-regulate, tantrums, etc.), which will likely produce parent-child attachment and behavioral change overtime. While psycho-education will be given, the purpose of the process group is to provide a safe and confidential environment for African American parents to gain insight and process the information with other parents. Cognitive behavioral therapy and attachment theory will be used to offer evidence-based theoretical orientations and an attachment component for behavioral management strategies for parenting group interventions. The process group will provide a unique opportunity for parents to receive various perspectives, support, encouragement and feedback from other individuals and professionals in a safe non-judgmental environment.

#### **Development of Project**

This project was developed to address the taboo topic of spanking within the African American community, in order to address the underlying issues regarding corporal punishment

that may result in adverse effects in children. Various considerations were examined to understand the complex nature of human behavior as a result of culture and parental expectations, and how psycho-education and processing would be best suitable for the well-being of each member of the group.

### **Intended Audience**

The purpose of this project is to address African American community adversities and its influence on parenting by creating a culturally inclusive therapeutic group for African American parents.

**Inclusion criteria.** Inclusion criteria includes at least 16+ aged parents that identify as Black American or African American parents of children ages 1 to 17 years old. During the screening process, parents who present with distress or stress as a result of their child's dysregulated behaviors can be included in the group. During the screening process parents with untreated mental illness may be best served by alternative mental health services and will be referred elsewhere.

**Screening procedure.** This process group will be marketed to African American or Black parents that are currently attending therapy, intending to attend therapy within a non-profit mental health agency, or parents solely interested in the group's purpose to increase understanding of the origins of spanking and its effect on children. A facilitator, the prospective member's social worker, or marriage and family therapist trainee will screen the potential group members, or the licensed marriage and family therapist associated with the individual client's case. The marriage and family therapist trainee (i.e. MFT trainee) or licensed marriage and family therapist (i.e. LMFT) will offer their clients the opportunity to participate in the parenting group. Department of Child and Family Service (DCFS) social workers would also be informed

of the parenting group within the mental health agency to refer potential group members to the parenting group. The purpose of the screening process is to ensure parents meet criteria (i.e. African American parents with African American children ages 1-17 years old) and are committed to attending the group.

**Cost and logistics.** As a result of the non-profit mental health agency's resources and funding, participant costs would be free. The agency's resources will provide the printing materials (i.e. paper, pens or pencils) for participants and group leaders, and the facility. The psycho-educational process group will be a 10-week closed group consisting of 10 parents and 2 therapists or mental health providers. Group members will meet once a week for one hour and 30 minutes (Santini and Williams', 2016). During the 10-week process, the parenting program will work with families to: (a) recognize the impact of stress and generational trauma on brain and body, (b) increase empathetic responses and level of awareness of child needs, (c) increase knowledge of inappropriate expectations of their child based on their developmental stage, (d) decrease non-violent means of parental discipline and offer alternative forms of punishment, (e) increase knowledge of positive and negative effects of spanking, (f) increase grounding techniques, awareness of stressors, and resiliency skills, (g) increase bonding and attachment skill through play, (h) increase knowledge and use of protective factors skill, and (i) increase comfort and ability to ask for help.

### **Facilitator Qualifications**

Facilitators of this group should be currently attending or have a master's level degree in a mental health profession such as Marriage and Family Therapy, Social Work, Clinical Counseling, or Psychology, etc. The mental health professionals should be a part of the Black or African American community and have personal or professional experience (at least one year)

working with African American or Black population of both low and medium or high economic status. The facilitators of the educational process group should be thoroughly familiar with African American history and the generational trauma of racism that has impacted the Black community. Group leaders should have group experience and have had experience working with children. Mental health professionals should be aware of their bias in regards to the topic of childrearing and understand that their own personal opinions should not be forced on the group members. The mental health professionals must have done their own personal work to heal or manage their personal triggers related to the topic of corporal punishment.

### **Marketing and Referral Procedures**

This project will be referred to African American parents with African American children ages 1 to 17 years old. Parents referred can be currently attending therapy at a mental health agency. The facilitators will email the flyer and a screening questionnaire to mental health agencies, and post flyers in participating community spaces such as barbershops, schools, and churches. Prospective group members who discover the process group outside of a mental health agency can contact the number provided on the flyer. The facilitators will contact those prospective group members to set up an individual meeting in office, or in home to complete the screening questionnaire. Once the prospective group member fills out the screening questionnaire the parent or their mental health provider will fax the screening questionnaire to the facilitators for review. During the screening questionnaire, the prospective group member (i.e. the applicant, parent, counselor) will include their name, preferred contact number, home address, parent birthday, child's birthday, and other questions that will determine their readiness to participate in a process group that will unpack the generational and cultural complexities of

spanking within the African American community. The screening questionnaire will include the criteria for involvement within the process group, and the group rules and goals.

### **Environment and Equipment**

The environment of the process group should be able to accommodate ten parents, comprising of a variation of parenting couples or single parents, and two group facilitators. The environment should be able to provide space for a computer; projection screen or television to display the PowerPoint presentation used for psycho-education use, handouts and icebreaker activities. The room should allow space for parents to engage in group icebreaker activities or dyad partnering during process group. Additionally, chairs should be available for all participants and facilitators.

### **Formative Evaluation**

This project was influenced and molded by the countless people in my life. While receiving feedback from Dr. Pemberton, Diana Losey, and Alejandra Truillo-Arevalo, LMFT, I reached out to Assistant Professor in the Social Work Department at California State University, Northridge Allen Lipscomb, PsyD, LCSW to receive feedback and advice on what to consider when creating a process group for the African American population. I wanted to gain insight and perspective on what elements of the group should be considered when conducting a parenting group for the African American community. Another excellent therapist that I was fortunate to interview was Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Tia Brisco, who has worked primarily with the Latino and African American population in Lancaster, California.

Tia Brisco, LMFT and Allen Lipscomb, PsyD, LCSW have both studied the Black male experience, which has given them the professional knowledge of understanding cultural impact on clinical treatment for the Black community. It was important for me to gain insight from

people of color on specific considerations when creating guidelines for the process group. I wanted to derive information on how to address parental discipline and how to create a space where the societal influences and nuances of parenting can be discussed in a non-judgmental environment. It was also important for me to receive feedback from other African American peers and family members to ensure that their questions and hesitations are reflected in this projects design.

### **Project Outline**

The group will consist of 10 parent group members. Each group member will sign an agreement form that will confirm their agreement and commitment to the group expectations, rules, and goals. Group members will be reminded of group rules during the initial group meeting (i.e. week one). Facilitators of the group will review rules and expectation for group member commitment to attending all meetings. Group members will have a two-absence requirement, which will be accepted based on facilitator review of the extenuating circumstances such as illness, or death of a family member. Additional absences may result in-group disruption caused by excessive reviewing of previous themes and discussions. A group member's disruption will result in their discontinuation from the group.

The group will meet weekly for 90-minute (i.e. one hour and thirty minutes) for a total of ten weeks. Group facilitators will spend additional times prior to group recruiting and screening for prospective group members. The group will be held after work hours from 6 pm to 7:30 pm. Group location will be determined based on agency's access, however the facilitators will consider the environment of the process group, which will accommodate ten parents, comprising of parenting couples, single parents, and two group leaders. The facilitators and the agency will consider an environment that has space for a computer; projection screen or television to display

any PowerPoint presentation used for psycho-education use or icebreaker activities. Facilitators will ensure that the space provided will allow for parent engagement in group activities and dyad partnering. Creator of the group suggests, at minimum, to access a room with chairs and space to accommodate the group participants and group leaders.

Each week, group leaders will start the group with an icebreaker or relaxation techniques to build group cohesion, increase relaxation and connection within the group. Then the leaders will introduce the topic and objective of the week. Group members will be given weekly handouts or will be shown a digital or projected copy of the handouts on a projector screen or television. The handouts presented will include the week's agenda, activities, psycho-education materials, and assigned homework. Each week the group leaders will facilitate a discussion pertaining to a quote related to the week's topic, psycho-education material, and the overall experience of the meeting. Psycho-education will be presented to provide additional information to conceptualize the experiences of the parent and child while increasing understanding of cognitive behavior techniques to cope with family conflict. Activities and discussions will be utilized to practice newly learned concepts and skills, to share their thoughts and experiences related to the information presented, and to address group member concerns and hesitations. The icebreaker activities, activities and discussion questions will be drawn from various sources throughout the week and will be referenced on handouts.

Group structure and time can be found in Appendix C through Appendix E. Group facilitators can incorporate additional materials and resources, but must be mindful of material content and consideration of the materials effect on group participants. Additional materials or references used will be used at the expense of the group facilitators, and consent of resource should be sought after and provided by originator of the resource.

## CHAPTER IV: Results

### **Summary of Project**

“The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting” process group is designed to address the topic of spanking within the African American community. The process group is tailored to foster a dialogue between African American parents to address societal and generational influences of parenting and discipline. Parents will learn how to identify the socio-cultural factors that may have influenced their parenting choices with disciplining children ages 1 to 17 years old. Essentially, the parenting choices taken from past experiences of corporal punishment may have been used to protect the African American child from experiencing trauma in their current society. The process group is designed to focus on understanding realistic expectations for child behavior, acknowledging parental stressors, and learning the effects of spanking on children while breaking down parental fear of their child’s lack of obedience outside of the home. The process group will focus on providing psycho-education about children’s psychosocial developmental stages, the importance of empathy and attachment when disciplining, and educate parents on the alternatives to spanking children. Participants will explore what they have learned each week pertaining to parenting, and process their thoughts and feelings on the topics discussed. The goal of the process group is to develop an understanding of what has influenced their parenting choices and how culture, African American history, and society impacts parental discipline.

### **Summary of Evaluation**

I had the pleasure of consulting with Tia Brisco, LMFT and Allen Lipscomb, PsyD, LCSW on their suggestions and recommendations for developing the process group. Dr. Allen Lipscomb offered insight on the importance of a collaborative approach when working with the

African American or Black population. He discussed the importance of group member “buy in” which is the acceptance and commitment to a course of action. Dr. Allen Lipscomb mentioned the potential challenge of gaining “buy in” from parents due to the sensitivity of the topic for some black folk and the possible hesitations due to their fear of judgment or shame from mental health professionals. Additional challenges and hurdles discussed were focused on the advertising component related to parent accessibility and recognition of the process group. Dr. Allen Lipscomb and Tia Brisco, LMFT emphasized the significance of advertising in Black community spaces, such as churches, barbershops, and schools to ensure that African American people receive and consider the resource available to them.

Both professionals discussed the importance of facilitator knowledge and their understanding of the historical linkage between spanking and generational cycles of violence stemming from slavery within the black community. Dr. Allen Lipscomb discussed the significance of acknowledging the underlying messages intended by black parents when utilizing spanking. Tia Brisco, LMFT identified the linkage needed to understand the reality of spanking, which is the lack of patience or knowledge in treating the underlying problem. She continued on and explained how important it is to recognize how the underlying problem fuels the symptoms of child misbehavior. After consulting with the professionals and receiving advise from other members of the African American community, I gained insight on the characteristics and role of the group facilitators.

Dr. Allen Lipscomb suggested that facilitators of the group be members of the African American or Black community. He stated, “Some people can’t trust or get past the messenger”. His statement focused on people’s hesitation with receiving information from someone outside of their community. He emphasized the significance in receiving information from someone

within your community who has a better chance of understanding your history because of their shared racial background and similar experiences. In addition, Tia Brisco, LMFT recommended that group leaders be sensitive to parent experiences, while gauging whether they should share their personal experiences with the group. The group leader should utilize the collaborative approach and ensure that all group members feel heard before disclosing their personal experiences with spanking. The information acquired from members of the African American community and the interviews with the mental health professionals helped construct a culturally sensitive approach to address parental use of spanking within the African American community. Through a therapeutic and culturally inclusive lens, I was able to utilize the information and suggestions provided to develop a project that addresses parenting and corporal punishment on children.

### **Recommendations for Implementation of the Project**

Recommendations for implementation of the project are centered on cultural consideration and inclusion. African American parenting groups need to incorporate and utilize the spirit of the Black community and African American cultural involvement within the structure of the support group. While a parent-training program illustrated the importance of cultural sensitivity within an African American inner-city parent group, that parenting group aimed to establish a culturally sensitive environment that included elements of African American culture. Some of those cultural elements included black professionals and discussions of ethnic and racial pride, as well as an opportunity to brainstorm strategies for coping with racism (Whaley, 2000). The hope for this African American educational process group is to similarly involve the Black community in the complex discussions regarding discipline and the societal pressures that influence parenting choices. Without the cultural and historical consideration,

African American people may be subjected to judgment, misunderstanding, and silencing of their opinion and reasoning behind their generational choices of implementing physical discipline to ensure survival in America.

To avoid participants being subjected to insensitivity and discrimination, it is important to have a physical space that African American parents can go to and surround themselves with individuals with similar backgrounds and cultural understandings. Black people pride themselves on their family cookouts, family gatherings and their wide sense of community beyond blood relatives. Some African American families gather amongst one another singing, dancing, laughing, and sometimes playing a hand of spades. This sense of community needs to be considered and incorporated to offer the members of the group a sense of familiarity and comfort. The African American community emphasizes the importance of community whether it is within the church, blood relatives or extended kinships. Thus, African American groups may need to consider holding support groups in churches, parks, or spaces that are familiar or symbolic of the African American community gatherings. This project can act as an escape from the societal pressures and stressors in America and offer the African American group members an opportunity to gather amongst other African American parents to vent, exchange insights, and co-create alternative ways to achieve behavioral change in children.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Many opportunities exist for future research concerning the correlation between parental discipline and historical experiences of corporal punishment on Black people in America. This research project aims to shed light on the multiple factors that contribute to parenting choices and the affects those decisions make on African American children. I suggest four recommendations for future research:

1. Further research on the adverse effects of corporal punishment on African Americans in America. This will offer more research to compare and contrast the effects of physical discipline on African American people.
2. Explore the connection between religion (i.e. Christianity, etc.) and corporal punishment within the African American community. This understanding will highlight the multiple avenues of learned and accepted behaviors stemming from religion. It will help identify the impact religion has on parenting.
3. Explore the historical experiences of all people in America and examine the factors that influence the continued use of corporal punishment on children. This will allow researchers to compare and contrast the experiences of all people and the factors contributing to their choice to use corporal punishment.
4. Explore the strategies of African American parents who have dismissed the use of spanking in their households. Understanding their experiences and techniques when utilizing alternative discipline would further establish the importance of attunement, patience, and secure attachment on the parent-child relationship.

### **Conclusion**

The adverse effects of corporal punishment on African American children continue to persist in an environment of unspoken acknowledgement of its roots and harms. Specifically, African American people's historical and societal factors have shaped and contributed to the continued use of corporal punishment as a means to ensure learned obedience and child behavioral change. This chapter offers an overview of the project, discussed the projects main goals and presented recommendations for future research.

There are multiple reasons to consider why African American parents resort to using corporal punishment on their children. The literature provided in this project has proven that African Americans use other forms of discipline techniques before resorting to spanking. However, African American parents reported more frequent use of punitive discipline than the general United States parent population (Pinderhughes et al., 2000). The multiple factors that reinforce the belief in physical disciplinary practices within African American culture challenge the attempts to dismantle the use of corporal punishment on children. The historical and social context of corporal punishment in the African American culture is important to consider when assessing risk factors associated with corporal punishment on African American children. Parental stress, African American history with corporal punishment, and generational practices of spanking has influenced the African American parent to think that the use of physical discipline on children will increase obedience and their respect of authority.

How do we address the topic of spanking within the African American community while offering a non-judgmental and collaborative space? Giving African American parents the tools and environment to share their concerns and provide them with the language to understand how they came to inherit their parenting choices regarding discipline. Exploring the long-term effects of spanking on children to increase parent awareness on the effects of corporal punishment on children is crucial. Overall, the purpose of this project was to gather research to conduct a group curriculum that acknowledges the adversities that affect the African American community and identifies how these adversities influence the use of corporal punishment on African American children.

What we are seeing now in today's society is that the lessons that have been received from previous generations are not fitting within our current framework. Today, more research

has surfaced indicating the effects of corporal punishment on children. When we take this type of child rearing and view it throughout generations, we may realize as time progresses the effects it has on our perception of obedience. We do not have to be defined by our historical trauma or guided by our parents parenting. Hopefully, we can learn from our past and continue to evolve in our community.

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**APPENDIX A: PROCESS GROUP SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE**

THE BLACK INITIATIVE: STRENGTHENING POSITIVE PARENTING: SCREENING

QUESTIONS

This group is dedicated to providing a community space to best service the family at large. In order for us to cater this process group to your needs, please answer the following questions.

Your responses will be confidential and strictly for the purposes of determining whether “The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting Group” is a best fit for you.

DATE:
APPLICANT NAME:
APPLICANT ADDRESS:
APPLICANT AND CHILD BIRTHDATE:

CRITERIA	SCREENING QUESTIONS	YES or NO	COMMENTS
COMMITMENT TO GROUP TIMEFRAME	Are you able to attend the group at the appointed time, dates, and location?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No	
GROUP GOALS	Agreement to group goals?  <b>Group Goals:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote cultural pride.</li> <li>• Reduce parental stress.</li> <li>• Increase tolerance and empathy during parent-child conflict.</li> <li>• Strengthen family bond and attachment.</li> <li>• Increase alternative methods of disciplining.</li> <li>• Prevent, treat, and manage child</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No	

	<p>misbehavior.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop appropriate expectations to child developmental stages</li> </ul>		
<p>AGREEMENT TO GROUP RULES?</p>	<p>Do you agree to the following rules?</p> <p>Group Rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group confidentiality should be held and should not be repeated outside of group environment.</li> <li>• Advice should not be given unless requested or given permission by group members and facilitators.</li> <li>• Speak respectfully.</li> <li>• Facilitators will direct group discussion and has the right to stop any participant to ensure cohesiveness and time management.</li> </ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	
<p>AGREEMENT TO GROUP OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase understanding of the impact of parents stress on children.</li> <li>• Parents will explore the concept of empathy and learn techniques to increase empathy.</li> <li>• Parents will apply age and developmentally appropriate expectations and limits to children.</li> <li>• Participants will learn techniques for reinforcing good behavior and decreasing misbehavior.</li> <li>• Parents will focus on promoting growth through knowledge and skill building.</li> <li>• Parents will be better able to acknowledge their stressors and utilize their strengths to promote a balance parenting style.</li> <li>• Parents will learn how utilize attachment activities to increase parent-child relationship and strengthen family bond and attachment.</li> <li>• Parents will be able to support emotional development in minors</li> </ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	

	<p>while incorporating knowledge of parenting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents will learn how to maintain and create concrete support in times of need.</li></ul>		
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## APPENDIX B: FLYER

### THE BLACK INITIATIVE: STRENGTHENING POSITIVE PARENTING: SCREENING

# The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting

RSVP to [email@xxx.com]



**Goals:**

- Promote cultural pride
- Reduce parent stress
- Strengthen family bond and attachment
- Increase alternative methods of disciplining
- Prevent and treat child misbehavior

“The Black Initiative: Strengthening Positive Parenting” is a 10 week process group tailored to foster a dialogue between African American parents to address societal and generational influences of parenting and discipline. Parents will learn how to identify the socio-cultural factors that influence their parenting choices while coming together to discuss ways to cope and manage community and family adversities (i.e. parent stress, lack of support, racism, prejudice, etc.).

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THIS COMMUNITY GROUP PLEASE RSVP TO [email@xxx.com] OR CALL US AT (XXX) XXX-XXX**

**WHEN: [DATE/TIME]**

**WHERE: [ADDRESS TO LOCATION]**

**COST: FREE [INCLUDE IF CHILD CARE PROVIDED]**



## **APPENDIX C: FACILITATOR INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Referral Process and Group Structure & Timeline**

1. Client Referral
  - Distribute and email flyer and screening questionnaire to DCFS offices, and non-profit mental health agencies.
  - Review prospective members screening questionnaire to determine parent eligibility.
  - Call client to inform them of group location, date, and time.
2. Group Structure & Timeline
  - Icebreaker/relaxation technique (choose exercise from Appendix D)- 10 minutes
  - State weekly objective
  - Check in- 10 minutes
  - Quote and discussion- 15 minutes
  - Psycho-education- 30 minutes
  - Discussion/Activity- 20 minutes
  - Closing statement/check out/homework- 5 minutes
3. Process Group- 1.5 hours per week

## APPENDIX D: ICEBREAKER SHEET

# Coping Skills

## Anxiety

### Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.

Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises. Hold the air in your lungs, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw. The secret is to go slow: Time the inhalation (4s), pause (4s), and exhalation (6s). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.



### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

By tensing and relaxing the muscles throughout your body, you can achieve a powerful feeling of relaxation. Additionally, progressive muscle relaxation will help you spot anxiety by teaching you to recognize feelings of muscle tension.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. For each area of the body listed below, you will tense your muscles tightly, but not to the point of strain. Hold the tension for 10 seconds, and pay close attention to how it feels. Then, release the tension, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs from the feeling of tension.

- Feet** Curl your toes tightly into your feet, then release them.
- Calves** Point or flex your feet, then let them relax.
- Thighs** Squeeze your thighs together tightly, then let them relax.
- Torso** Suck in your abdomen, then release the tension and let it fall.
- Back** Squeeze your shoulder blades together, then release them.
- Shoulders** Lift and squeeze your shoulders toward your ears, then let them drop.
- Arms** Make fists and squeeze them toward your shoulders, then let them drop.
- Hands** Make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm, then relax your fingers.
- Face** Scrunch your facial features to the center of your face, then relax.
- Full Body** Squeeze all muscles together, then release all tension.

**APPENDIX E: WEEKLY GROUP FACILITATOR INSTRUCTION SHEETS &  
PARENT AGENDAS**

**Session 1: Group Introduction**

**Facilitator Instructions**

Week 1: Introduction

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 1 (page 68)

1. Establish group purpose: The purpose of this project is to address African American community adversities and its influence on parenting.
2. Review informed consent and confidentiality provided and discussed. (See pages 60-62).
3. Explain group timeline (i.e. see group timeline for time breakdown) Explain icebreaker and relaxation techniques as important components to build cohesion, attachment, and connection between family members and group members. Use APPENDIX D for each session's icebreaker (page 65).
4. Icebreaker: Share names. Announce your hopes and hesitations for group, and identify a quality/strength that you like about yourself as a parent.
5. Psycho-education: Discuss information about societal influence on parenting. Facilitators will utilize the research presented below to inform parents of the societal influences (**key “societal influences” bolded below**) presented in literature.
  - a. Pinderhughes et al. (2000) notes that **parental history, financial stress, single-family households**, and **environmental dangers** such as **unsafe neighborhoods** are all additional stressors that undermine the parents' ability and willingness to offer negotiation and immediate understanding of child behaviors.
  - b. Multiple exposures to **life stressors** such as **lack of financial support, emotional exhaustion, economic strain**, and **lack of social and emotional support** are more likely to affect parent ability to use empathic responses to children (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019).

- c. Based on Joe, Shillingford-Butler, and Oh (2019), six themes were highlighted within their study that illustrated the experiences of African American mothers who were **exposed to media coverage of police brutality, and community and state violence**. The six themes included, “psychological distress,” “physical manifestations of stress,” “parenting behaviors,” “empathic isolation,” coping strategies,” and strengths” (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019, p. 67).
  - d. Parents develop parenting behaviors based on factors such as social experiences, familiar practices, and **cultural history** (Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce, 2000). African American parents teach respect for elders and authority figures, resiliency, hard work ethic, and value freedom of expression through authoritarian parenting styles (Jambunathan, Burts, Pierce, 2000). Jambunathan et al. (2000) point out that respect, resiliency, hard work, and expression are necessary to survive in **hostile environments** due to **slavery, Jim Crow laws, and generational racism**.
    - i. *Jim Crow laws*: Legalized racial and segregation state and local statutes to marginalize African Americans. Defiance against Jim Crow laws often led to accounts of violence and death (Patton, 2017).
6. Quote/Discuss Quote in Dyads: What did you understand or like from the quote? What did you not understand or dislike about the quote? What does being a perfect parent mean to you? What has influenced your parenting?
- “I’m not a parenting expert. In fact, I’m not sure that I can even believe in the idea of “parenting experts.” I’m an engaged, imperfect parent and a passionate researcher. I’m an experienced mapmaker and a stumbling traveler. Like many of you, parenting is by far my boldest and most daring adventure.” – Brene Brown
7. Share Dyad Discussion as Group: Each member will share their thoughts on quote questions and responses from dyad partner.
8. Check Out: What did you learn, like, or wish you learned from today’s group?

## Session 1: Group Introduction

### Parent Agenda

1. Establish group purpose: The purpose of this project is to address African American community adversities and its influence on parenting.
2. Informed consent and confidentiality
3. Group structure & timeline
4. Icebreaker: Share names. Announce your hopes and hesitations for group, and identify a quality/strength that you like about yourself as a parent.
5. Psycho-education/Discussion: Societal influences on parenting.
6. Quote/Discuss Quote in Dyads: What did you understand or like from the quote? What did you not understand or dislike about the quote? What does being a perfect parent mean to you? What has influenced your parenting?
  - “I’m not a parenting expert. In fact, I’m not sure that I can even believe in the idea of “parenting experts.” I’m an engaged, imperfect parent and a passionate researcher. I’m an experienced mapmaker and a stumbling traveler. Like many of you, parenting is by far my boldest and most daring adventure.” – Brene Brown
7. Share Dyad Discussion as Group.
8. Check Out: What did you learn, like, or wish you learned from today's group?

## Session 2: Understanding Burnout: Parental Stress

### Facilitator Instructions

Week 2: Understanding Burnout: Parental Stress

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 2 (page 71-72)

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (See APPENDIX D, page 65)
2. Objective: Increase understanding of the impact of parent stress on children.
3. Check in: How are you all feeling today?
4. Quote/Discussion about quote: What did you understand or like from the quote? What did you not understand or dislike about the quote?
  - “If you don’t think your anxiety, depression, sadness and stress impact your physical health, think again. All of these emotions trigger chemical reactions in your body, which can lead to inflammation and a weakened immune system.  
  
Learn how to cope, sweet friend. There will always be dark days.” – Kris Carr
5. Psycho-education: Discuss the origins of parental stress (i.e. financial stress, environmental and neighborhood stress, lack of social support, etc.). Discuss stress effects on the child. What is parental burnout? Importance of “self-care” for parents. Facilitators will utilize the research presented below to inform parents of the origins of parental stress (**key “life stressors” bolded below**) presented in literature.
  - a. According to Mikolajczak, Raes, Avalosse, and Roskam (2018), parent burnout (i.e. parent exhaustion) develops into three categories of exhaustion: tiredness and emotional draining, emotional distancing with the child, and a sense of ineffectiveness as a parent. Tiredness and emotional draining accumulates from parents’ active involvement with their child and a loss of identity outside of parenthood.
  - b. Pinderhughes et al. (2000) notes that parental history, **financial stress**, **single-family households**, and **environmental dangers** such as **unsafe neighborhoods**

are all additional stressors that undermine the parents' ability and willingness to offer negotiation and immediate understanding of child behaviors. 2000).

- c. Based on Joe, Shillingford-Butler, and Oh (2019), six themes were highlighted within their study that illustrated the experiences of African American mothers who were exposed to **media coverage of police brutality**, and **community and state violence**. The six themes included, "psychological distress," "physical manifestations of stress," "parenting behaviors," "empathic isolation," coping strategies," and strengths" (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019, p. 67).
  - d. Multiple exposures to life stressors such as lack of **financial support**, **emotional exhaustion**, **economic strain**, and **social and emotional support** are more likely to affect parent ability to use empathic responses to children (Joe, Shillingford-Butler, & Oh, 2019).
6. Discussion/Activity: What are some of your origins of stress? How can parental burnout affect parenting? Think about your physical reactions to stress (i.e. clenched fists, tight jaws, tense muscles). Activity- Practice deep breathing and positive thinking in dyads: one parent playing the parent and another a misbehaving child. The parent should walk away, take deep breaths, and respond. Parent should try to understand/recall what need is not being met with the misbehaving child.
7. Check out: What did you like best about the session? What would you have liked to ask that you did not have the opportunity to before?
1. Homework: Four techniques of empathy for parents:
    - Step 1- Identify parent feeling.
    - Step 2- Determine the reason for feeling.
    - Step 3- Honor the feeling. Try to understand what need is not being met.
    - Step 4- Respond to the need.

## Session 2: Understanding Burnout: Parental Stress

### Parent Agenda

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation
2. Objective: Increase understanding of the impact of parents stress on children.
3. Check in: How are you all feeling today?
4. Quote/Discussion about quote: What did you understand or like from the quote? What did you not understand or dislike about the quotes?
  - “Burnout is not a new concept; we just have a new way of describing, or rather marketing, the particular anxiety of our age.” –Tiana Clark
  - “If you don’t think your anxiety, depression, sadness and stress impact your physical health, think again. All of these emotions trigger chemical reactions in your body, which can lead to inflammation and a weakened immune system.  
  
Learn how to cope, sweet friend. There will always be dark days.” – Kris Carr
5. Psycho-education: The origins of parental stress (i.e. financial stress, environmental and neighborhood stress, lack of social support, etc.). Stress effects on the child. Importance of “self -care” for parents.
6. Discussion/Activity: What are some of your origins of stress? How can parental burnout affect parenting? Activity- Practice deep breathing and positive thinking in dyads: one parent playing the parent and another a misbehaving child. The parent should walk away, take deep breaths, and respond. Parent should try to understand/recall what need is not being met with the misbehaving child.
7. Check out: What did you like best about the session? What would you have liked to ask that you did not have the opportunity to ask before?

- a. Homework: Four techniques of empathy for parents:
- Step 1- Identify parent feeling.
  - Step 2- Determine the reason for feeling.
  - Step 3- Honor the feeling. Try to understand what need is not being met.
  - Step 4- Respond to the need.

## Session 3: Somatic Empathy

### Facilitator Information

#### Week 3: Somatic Empathy

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 3 (page 75-76)

1. Icebreaker: Deep breathing technique (See APPENDIX D, page 65)
2. Objective: Parents will explore the concept of empathy and learn techniques to increase empathy.
3. Check in: How are you all feeling? Did anyone complete the homework assignment? For those who were unable to complete the assignment, what prevented you from completing the assignment? Were you aware of a time this week where you got stressed? How did it affect your body?
4. Quote/Discussion: What do these quotes mean to you?
  - “Empathy begins with understanding life from another person’s perspective. Nobody has an objective experience of reality. It’s all through our own individual prisms.” –Sterling K. Brown
  - “You don’t teach morals and ethics and empathy and kindness in the schools. You teach that at home, and children learn by example.” –Judy Sheindlin
5. Psycho-education/Discussion: What is parental empathy? Facilitators will utilize the research presented below to inform parents about the benefits of using empathy within parenting.
  - a. Somatic empathy allows for people to understand the experiences of another person by using their own body sensations and cues as a signal for identifying the other person’s experiences (Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association, 2002).

- b. Empathizing is an important phased of communication process that allows for parents and their children to understand one another's point of view (Bean & Rolleri, 2005). Within For example, a mother can utilize somatic empathy by tuning into her bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings to identify what may be the cause of her child's tantrum. If the mother assesses her own heart rate, muscle tension, and intuition she may find that her child's tantrum is a result of discomfort, nervousness, or possibly fear, etc.
    - c. Utilizing empathy is an important component of understanding. Utilizing empathy to gain understanding of the child's feelings and experiences is a form of intimacy, which can lead to an increased sense of parent-child connectedness (Bean & Rolleri, 2005). Within an African American parent focus group, the teenaged children discussed the importance of parent understanding of the teen perspective (Bean & Rolleri, 2005). Within the focus group the African American parents expressed their need to inform their teens that they themselves were once teenagers that had experienced similar obstacles and stressors (Bean & Rolleri, 2005). Parents' attempts to utilize empathy, through the form of claims of similar experiences, produced negative responses form their teens (Bean & Rolleri, 2005). The lack of somatic empathy and focus on the parents' experiences and feelings harvested negative reactions and misunderstanding from the teens (Bean & Rolleri, 2005).
6. Activity/Discussion: Group brainstorm- Group will brainstorm possible meanings of Empathy. Define empathy. Discuss why empathy is necessary for parent-child success. Ask if parents have experienced someone being empathetic with them? How did it feel? How did it open them up?
7. Check out: What did you learn from session? Are there any hesitations in group therapy thus far? What do you wish you learned or asked in session?
8. Homework: Four techniques of empathy for child:
  - Step 1- Identify child feeling.
  - Step 2- Determine the reason for feeling.
  - Step 3- Honor the feeling. Try to understand.
  - Step 4- Action, help child identify and appropriately express feeling.

## Session 3: Somatic Empathy

### Parent Agenda

1. Icebreaker: Deep breathing technique
2. Objective: Parents will explore the concept of empathy and learn techniques to increase empathy.
3. Check in: How are you all feeling? Did anyone complete the homework assignment? For those who were unable to complete the assignment, what prevented you from completing the assignment? Were you aware of a time this week where you got stressed? How did it affect your body?
4. Quote/Discussion: What do these quotes mean to you?
  - “Empathy begins with understanding life from another person’s perspective. Nobody has an objective experience of reality. It’s all through our own individual prisms.” –Sterling K. Brown
  - “You don’t teach morals and ethics and empathy and kindness in the schools. You teach that at home, and children learn by example.” –Judy Sheindlin
5. Psycho-education: What is parental empathy?
6. Discussion/Activity: Group brainstorm- Group will brainstorm possible meanings of Empathy. Define empathy. Discuss why empathy is necessary for parent-child success. Have you experienced someone being empathetic with you? How did it feel? How did it open you up?
7. Check out: What did you learned from session? Are there any hesitations in group therapy thus far? What do you wish you learned or asked in session?

a) Homework: Four techniques of empathy for child:

- Step 1- Identify child feeling.
- Step 2- Determine the reason for feeling.
- Step 3- Honor the feeling. Try to understand.
- Step 4- Action, help child identify and appropriately express feeling.

## Session 4: Appropriate Expectations for Child Developmental Stages

### Facilitator Information

Week 4: Appropriate Expectations for Child Developmental Stages

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 4 (page 79)

1. Ice breakers: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (See APPENDIX D, page 65)
2. Objective: Parents will apply age and developmentally appropriate expectations and limits to children.
3. Check In: What do you remember from last session? How are you feeling after progressive muscle relaxation technique? How does your body feel?
4. Quote/Discussion: What did you understand or like from the quote? What did you not understand or dislike about the quote?
  - “Every word, facial expression, gesture, or action on the part of a parent gives the child some message about self-worth. It is sad that so many parents don’t realize what messages they are sending.” – Virginia Satir
5. Psycho-education: Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development (i.e. infancy to adolescence). Facilitators will utilize the research presented below to inform parents of the Erikson’s infancy to adolescent stages of development.
  - a. Erikson proposed that in order for people to understand African American identity development they must look at influential elements of their lives such as their religion, academia, history, and social and cultural realities (Erikson, 1998).
  - b. According to Erikson (1997), the developmental stages each challenged with adversities consist of a positive and a negative outcome that determines identity. The eight stages include: (1) trust vs. mistrust; (2) autonomy vs. shame and doubt; (3) initiative vs. guilt; (4) industry vs. inferiority (5) identity vs. role confusion; (6) intimacy vs. isolation; (7) generativity vs. stagnation; and (8) integrity vs. despair.

- c. Stage 1: Trust versus Mistrust, proposes that warmth, affection and consistent care can create a secure attachment (i.e. trust) between caregiver and the infant. Inconsistent, neglectful, and inadequate care results in fear and mistrust. This initial relationship is the first example for forming relationships. Mistrust and inadequate care may result in future developmental problems that impact the infant's ability to form close relationships.
  - d. Stage 2: Autonomy versus Doubt and Shame, suggests that children ages one to three need encouragement to try to do things on their own in order to develop independence. Without the encouragement and opportunity for children to explore their abilities, they may develop self-doubt and dependency on adults.
  - e. Stage 3: Initiative versus Guilt, encourages children age three to six to explore their curiosity. Positive parent responses to this stage leads to a sense of initiative and curiosity.
  - f. Stage 4: Industry versus Inferiority, occurs during elementary years ages six to twelve. During this stage, self-confidence and competence develops from school and social success. Repeated failures lead to feelings of inferiority and unwillingness to venture to new tasks.
  - g. Stage 5: Identity versus Role Confusion, aims to develop a consistent sense of self. Within this stage, adolescents experiment with new behaviors, roles, and identities to determine which fit best for them as an individual.
6. Discussion: How can understanding your child's developmental stage help parenting?  
Can you think of a time in your childhood or adult life when expectations were far greater than your capability? If no one can think of an example, group leader can offer one.
7. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today's group session? What did you wish to gain in today's session that you did not receive?

## Session 4: Appropriate Expectations for Child Developmental Stages

### Parent Agenda

1. Ice breakers: Progressive Muscle Relaxation
2. Objective: Parents will apply age and developmentally appropriate expectations and limits to children.
3. Check In: What do you remember from last session? How are you feeling after progressive muscle relaxation technique? How does your body feel?
4. Quote/Discussion: What did you understand or like from the quote? What did you not understand or dislike about the quote?
  - “Every word, facial expression, gesture, or action on the part of a parent gives the child some message about self-worth. It is sad that so many parents don’t realize what messages they are sending.” – Virginia Satir
5. Psycho-education: Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development (i.e. infancy to adolescence).
6. Discussion: How can understanding your child’s developmental stage help parenting? Can you think of a time in your childhood or adult life when expectations were far greater than your capability? If no one can think of an example, group leader can offer one.
7. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive?

## Session 5: Staying connected through Conflict: Alternative Discipline

### Facilitator Information

Week 5: Staying connected through Conflict: Alternative Discipline

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 5 (page 82-83)

1. Icebreaker: Self-Affirmation gifts. Each member writes a positive affirmation to himself or herself on a piece of paper, folds it up, and randomly gifts the affirmation to another group member.
2. Objective: Participants will learn techniques for reinforcing good behavior and decreasing misbehavior.
3. Check In: What do you remember from last session? How are you feeling after the icebreaker activity? How do you or your body feel after hearing something kind?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Children need love, especially when they do not deserve it.” –Harold Hulbert
5. Psycho-education/Discussion: Give Handout (page 84-87). Discipline at each developmental stage. Parents can reinforce positive child behaviors by utilizing positive or negative reinforcement. Facilitators will utilize the research presented below to inform parents about discipline at each developmental stage (**key “developmental guide to discipline” bolded below**) presented in literature.
  - a. Stage 1: According to the Wolraich, Aceves, Feldman and Hagan (1998), discipline at birth to 12 months should involve **consistency, structured routines, and attunement to the child’s needs**. Structured routines and schedules promote predictability and a sense of safety. During this infancy stage discipline **should not include spanking, or consequences** (Dobson, 1992).

- b. Stage 2: While in stage two, age 1 to 3 years old, children begin to explore their environment and develop their own sense of independence. Blum, Williams, and Friman (1995) state that children during this stage are susceptible to fear of abandonment in which **time-outs serve to heighten the feelings of fear** when kept away from their parents. Therefore, at the toddler stage, **time-outs and explanations are likely ineffective.**
  - c. Stage 3: At stage three, during preschool to kindergarten age, limitations can be incorporated into parental discipline. During this age children are able to accept limitations that will help them achieve parental or others' approval (Pediatrics & Child Health, 2004). **Verbal rules can be utilized to teach direction and maintain child safety during their exploring moments. For children with defiant behaviors, Dobson (1992) states to utilize spanking at the last resort proceeding with a time-out.** Dobson (1992) states that **spanking should stop around 6 years old.**
  - d. Stage 4: At stage four, age 6 to 12 years old, parental discipline should involve a **withdrawal of desired privileges, consequences, restrictions and time-outs** (Wolraich, Aceves, Feldman and Hagan, 1998).
  - e. Stage 5: At stage five, 13 to 17 years old, **physical discipline should not be used and can be deemed potentially harmful. Withdrawal of privileges or restriction from desired activities or hobbies is most effective in changing adolescent behavior** (Daves, McMahon, Flessati, Tiedman, 1984).
6. Activity: Members will get into dyads to role-play praising and ignoring child behaviors. One member will be parent while another will act as the dysregulated child.
  7. Discussion: What was the experience like for you? Ask both parent and child. What adversities came up inside of the parent as you were role-playing?
  8. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today's group session? What did you wish to gain in today's session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?
  9. Homework: Practice praising and or rewarding positive child behaviors and ignoring attention-seeking behaviors.

## **Session 5: Staying connected through Conflict: Alternative Discipline**

### **Parent Agenda**

1. Icebreaker: Self-Affirmation gifts. Each member writes a positive affirmation to himself or herself on a piece of paper, folds it up, and randomly gifts the affirmation to another group member.
2. Objective: Participants will learn techniques for reinforcing good behavior and decreasing misbehavior.
3. Check In: What do you remember from last session? How are you feeling after the icebreaker activity? How do you or your body feel after hearing something kind?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Children need love, especially when they do not deserve it.” –Harold Hulbert
5. Psycho-education/Discussion: Discipline at each developmental stage. Reinforcing positive child behaviors.
6. Activity: Members will get into dyads to role-play praising and ignoring child behaviors. One member will be parent while another will act as the dysregulated child.
7. Discussion: What was the experience like for you? What adversities came up inside of the parent as you were role-playing?
8. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?

9. Homework: Practice praising and or rewarding positive child behaviors and ignoring attention-seeking behaviors.

# Creating a Token Economy

A token economy is a frequently used and effective technique to help change behaviors in resistant children and adolescents. Some form of token (such as a slip of paper or a sticker) is awarded after a positive behavior. The token can later be exchanged for a reward. Research has shown that token economies are an effective way to change behavior, but the way in which they are implemented is the key to their success. Here are a few tips to help you get started.

## **1. Tokens can be awarded, but never taken away.**

In the same way that an employee won't lose their pay from Monday if they do a bad job on Wednesday, tokens should not be taken away as punishment. The child has earned this token, and being overly punitive can lead to them giving up or feeling that their efforts are useless.

## **2. Desired behaviors (and rewards) must be clearly defined.**

Asking a child to "clean your room" for a token is not enough. Your idea of a clean room is probably very different than theirs. Explain that clothes need to be placed in drawers, there should be no toys on the floor, and any dishes must be returned to the kitchen. Avoid abstract tasks such as "don't get in trouble today".

## **3. Choose just a few behaviors at a time. Don't get too complex.**

Focus on two or three behaviors to reward at any one time. Even the most proactive parent will have difficulty tracking and rewarding four or five goals on a daily basis. Complex systems work great for a day or two, but are usually quickly abandoned.

## **4. Do what you say.**

When offering a token or a reward you must follow through. Make sure the rewards you offer are realistic for your budget. Offering a reward and not following through will invalidate the entire system. In that same vein, don't give a token if the desired behavior is not achieved.

## **5. Collaborate.**

A token economy will do little good if your child does not understand how to achieve rewards or if the rewards aren't something they care about. Get some ideas for easy rewards such as spending the night with a friend or having extra time on the computer, but also create bigger rewards they can work and save toward.

## **6. Give it time.**

Behavior isn't going to change overnight. These things take time and practice. Stick with it and be consistent.

# How to Use Time-Outs

✔ **Time-outs shouldn't be a surprise.** When your child misbehaves, give one warning before sending them to time-out. However, if your child knowingly breaks a rule you've already discussed, the time-out may be given without a warning.

✔ **Briefly explain the reason for the time-out.** It's normal for children to "zone out" during long lectures, so keep your explanation to two or three sentences. Always use a calm tone, and avoid getting into arguments.

✔ **Don't make empty threats.** If you give a warning or a time-out, you *must* follow through. Be careful not to dig yourself into a hole by threatening a time-out you won't enforce.

✔ **Time-outs should happen immediately (or as soon as possible).** This allows your child to better connect the unwanted behavior to the time-out. The longer between a behavior and a consequence, the less effective it will be.

✔ **Use a designated time-out spot that is free of distractions.** "Go to your room" might be music to a child's ears. Bedrooms—where kids have toys and games—tend to be one of the worst time-out spots. Instead, use a neutral area without distractions.

✔ **Don't give your child attention during time-outs.** You may monitor your child, but avoid giving any additional attention (including negative attention). If your child leaves the time-out spot, calmly walk them back without talking or making eye contact.

✔ **Time-outs last for one minute per year of age.** Once your child is seated calmly, set a timer and place it where they can see it. If your child acts up during a time-out, instead of adding more time, pause the timer and resume once they've calmed down.

✔ **Once a time-out is over, it's over.** If you still feel frustrated about your child's behavior after they've completed a time-out, be careful not to take it out on them. This means no lecturing or other ongoing consequences following the time-out.

✔ **Balance time-outs with positive attention.** Time-outs are most effective when there are plenty of good parent-child interactions, too. Spend quality time with your child, notice when your child is behaving well, and praise their good behavior.

# Planning Rewards and Consequences

## Unwanted Behavior

Before attempting to change a behavior, it should be clearly defined. Identify specific actions instead of broad ideas (e.g. "hitting" instead of "being bad").

**Describe one of your child's behaviors you would like to change.**




## Consequences

Consistent use of consequences—such as timeouts and taking away privileges—helps eliminate unwanted behavior. Be sure to talk with your child so they understand why the behavior was not appropriate.

**List 3 consequences you can use to discourage your child's unwanted behavior.**

1
2
3

## Replacement Behaviors

Teach your child appropriate behaviors to replace the unwanted behavior. For example, "taking deep breaths" or "counting to 10" could replace "hitting others" when angry.

**List 3 replacement behaviors you would like to encourage in your child.**

1
2
3



## Rewards

Rewarding appropriate behavior is even more effective than giving consequences for unwanted behavior. Rewards don't have to be elaborate or expensive. Positive attention (a smile, kind words, or a hug) is a great reward that can be used every day.

**List 3 rewards you can use to encourage your child's replacement behaviors.**

1
2
3

## How to Use Rewards

☑ **Set achievable goals.** If your child doesn't believe they can achieve their goal, they won't try. A good rule of thumb is that your child should earn their reward about 75% of the time.

☑ **Rewards must be desirable.** Choose rewards your child actually wants. Whether they admit it or not, most children want the attention of their parents. Never underestimate the power of a smile or a hug. Sometimes these little rewards can be more powerful than anything else.

☑ **Praise behaviors instead of traits.** For example, if your child gets a good grade, praise their hard work instead of their intelligence. If your child believes they passed a test because of their intelligence, what does it mean when they fail a test? Also, praising a behavior such as hard work will lead to more hard work, but traits like intelligence are outside of your child's control.

☑ **Give rewards regularly and consistently.** Instead of offering one big reward for a long-term accomplishment, try offering smaller rewards along the way. Children have a hard time waiting for distant rewards, making them less effective. Regular rewards keep children motivated.

☑ **Catch your child being good.** Is your hyper child sitting still? Let them know you notice! Try to catch your child being good—no matter how minor it seems—at least 3 times a day. The best way to end a bad behavior is to reward the opposite good behavior.

☑ **Always follow through.** If you promise a reward but don't follow through, your child may not take you seriously next time. However, every time you do follow through, your promises gain credibility.

☑ **Be clear about rewards and how to earn them.** Specify what exactly rewards will be (rather than "extra TV", say "30 minutes of extra TV") and what your child needs to do to earn them ("hang up your clothes, put away toys, and vacuum the floor" rather than "clean your room").

☑ **Don't take away rewards that have already been earned.** If your child earns a reward and then gets in trouble for something unrelated, let them keep the reward. You can use a consequence for the negative behavior, but it should not affect the reward. Taking away rewards can lead to a constant sense of defeat when the child works hard but never sees positive outcomes.

☑ **Reward good habits instead of good outcomes.** For example, reward your child if they study for an hour each night, instead of rewarding them for an "A" on a test. Even though it seems obvious to adults, many children don't know how to get an "A" on a test. Use rewards to teach your child habits that will eventually lead to the ultimate goal.

## Session 6: Effects of Spanking

### Facilitator Information

Week 6: Effects of Spanking

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 6 (page 90)

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (See APPENDIX D, page 65)
2. Objective: Parents will focus on promoting growth through knowledge and skill building.
3. Check in: Homework assignment completion? What was that experience like for you?  
If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task? How can we support you in completing homework?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell- Proverbs 23:13-14/ The Bible (King James Version)
5. Psycho-education: What are the long and short-term effects of spanking? Facilitators will utilize the research presented below to inform parents of the short and long-term effects of spanking (**key “short and long-term effects of spanking” bolded below**) presented in literature.
  - a. Long-term goals of parents’ use of corporal punishment are to decrease unacceptable behaviors and increase socially accepted behaviors. Parents have reported that they use spanking to prevent their children from engaging in unsafe behaviors or socially unaccepted behaviors or norms. Parents’ main goal is to increase their child’s obedience and decrease child aggression and antisocial behavior (Gershoff, 2010).

- b. According to Gershoff (2010), a study examined the short-term and longer-term effects of spanking and non-spanking parental disciplines on children. Results found that **after spanking occurred children were more obedient immediately after spanking than the alternative “time out” method** (Gershoff, 2010, p. 35). **(Short-term results)**
  - c. **Results found that barrier-enforcements (i.e. child restrictions) produced equal short-term compliant results** just as the spanking method did. For long-term compliance, “thirteen of fifteen studies” found that **corporal punishment was associated with less compliance over the course of time** (Gershoff, 2010, p. 37).
  - d. **Alternative disciplines such as taking away privileges, ignoring misbehavior, reasoning and other forms of barrier enforcements proved equally effective at increasing short-term compliance, as well as increasing long-term compliance in children** (Gershoff, 2010).
  - e. Children learn to make positive decisions based on consistent lessons of moral reasoning. **Corporal punishment shows less success in establishing “moral internalization” of child misbehavior**, thereby decreasing the child’s ability to connect their misbehavior to societal moral values (Gershoff, 2010, p. 38).
6. Activity/Discussion: What are the societal influences of parental discipline? Where does our disciplinary choices come from (i.e. past parenting styles, religious teachings, friends or family influence). What historical (i.e. slavery, Jim Crow laws, police brutality) challenges have influenced parenting styles? Does the bible influence your parenting, and how so?
  7. Reflection/Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?
  8. Homework: Think about your parenting and what influences it. Throughout the week think about what factors form your choices in parenting?

## Session 6: Effects of Spanking

### Parent Agenda

1. Ice Breaker: Guided Imagery (i.e. Your Safe Place)
2. Objective: Parents will focus on promoting growth through knowledge and skill building.
3. Check in: Homework assignment completion? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task? How can we support you in completing homework?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell- Proverbs 23:13-14/ The Bible (King James Version)
5. Psycho-education: What are the long and short-term effects of spanking?
6. Activity/Discussion: What are the societal influences of parental discipline? Where does our disciplinary choices come from? What historical (i.e. slavery, Jim Crow, justice system) challenges have influenced parenting styles? Does the bible influence your parenting, and how so?
7. Reflection/Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?
  - a) Homework: Think about your parenting and what influences it. Throughout the week think about what factors form your choices in parenting?

## Session 7: Building Resilience: Acknowledging Stressors

### Facilitator Information

Week 7: Building Resilience: Acknowledging Stressors

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 7 (page 93)

1. Ice Breaker: Deep Breathing (See APPENDIX D, page 65)
2. Objective: Parents will be better able to acknowledge their stressors and utilize their strengths to promote a balance parenting style.
3. Check in: Did each member think about the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts.” –Winston S. Churchill
5. Psycho-education: Cognitive Distortions. Give Handout (page 94). Which distortion do you see within your framework? Where do these cognitions come from? How do you feel about these cognitive distortions?
6. Discussion/Activity: Discuss pros and cons to these cognitive distortions. Examples of cognitive distortions.
7. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?

8. Homework: Pay attention to possible cognitive distortions that may come up during our time a part. Acknowledge them and recognize their influence on your feelings, and parenting.

## Session 7: Building Resilience: Acknowledging Stressors

### Parent Agenda

1. Ice Breaker: Deep Breathing
2. Objective: Parents will be better able to acknowledge their stressors and utilize their strengths to promote a balance parenting style.
3. Check in: Did each member think about the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts.” –Winston S. Churchill
5. Psycho-education: Cognitive Distortions. Which distortion do you see within your framework? Where do these cognitions come from? How do you feel about these cognitive distortions?
6. Discussion/Activity: Discuss pros and cons to these cognitive distortions. Examples of cognitive distortions.
7. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?
8. Homework: Pay attention to possible cognitive distortions that may come up during our time a part. Acknowledge them and recognize their influence on your feelings, and parenting.

## Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but in their more extreme forms they can be harmful.

**Magnification and Minimization:** Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

**Catastrophizing:** Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

**Overgeneralization:** Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my job interview. I am *always* so awkward."

**Magical Thinking:** The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. "I am a good person—bad things shouldn't happen to me."

**Personalization:** The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."

**Jumping to Conclusions:** Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

**Mind Reading:** Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. "She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly."

**Fortune Telling:** The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

**Emotional Reasoning:** The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

**Disqualifying the Positive:** Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.

**"Should" Statements:** The belief that things should be a certain way. "I should always be friendly."

**All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Thinking in absolutes such as "always", "never", or "every". "I *never* do a good enough job on anything."

## Session 8: Developing Attachment

### Facilitator Information

Week 8: Developing Attachment

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 8 (page 97)

1. Ice Breaker: Deep Breathing (See APPENDIX D, page 65)
2. Objective: Parents will learn how utilize attachment activities to increase parent-child relationship and strengthen family bond and attachment
3. Check in: Did each member complete and think about the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do... but how much love we put in that action.” – Mother Theresa
5. Psycho-education: Attachment play. Using attachment play to solve child behavioral problems. Facilitators will utilize the research presented below to inform parents about attachment play advantages (**key “advantages to play” bolded below**) presented in literature.
  - a. Booth and Jernberg (2010) note that **human behavior is influenced by connection and social interactions**, therefore interpersonal interactions such as play are likely to impact child behaviors. For an example, **Theraplay is a treatment approach that aims to address emotional issues, behavioral issues, developmental issues, and improves parent-child relationships through play** (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).
  - b. According to Booth and Jernberg (2010), **parents and children can mend and build secure based relationships through attachment play activities such as**

**thumb wrestling, mirroring games, hide and seek, peek-a-boo, patty-cake, bubbles, singing and dancing, and so many more.**

- c. Structured play activities can help **increase children's organization skills and foster self-regulation.** Structured play is useful for **hyperactive children and children who lack focus** (Booth and Jernberg, 2010). Calming activities can **promote a sense of safety, calm, and comfort between the parent and child** (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).
  - d. Booth and Jernberg (2010) recommend utilizing play to **increase children's patience, humor, and social skills** through the use of structured, fun, and interactive games.
  - e. With the use of structured play, nurturing interactions, challenging tasks, and engaging activities therapy or play-based therapy **can teach children social skills, self-regulation, increase focus, and promote feelings of competence and self-confidence** (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).
6. Activity/Discussion: What are your hesitations and apprehensions with utilizing play to solve discipline problems? What are some playful activities that you currently do with your child? Lets brainstorm pros and cons to using play to improve child problematic behaviors.
  7. Reflection/Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today's group session? What did you wish to gain in today's session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?
  8. Homework: This week, try utilizing at least one of the attachment play examples discussed last week. If attachment play is not working, note reasons why attachment play does not work for your family and child.

## Session 8: Developing Attachment

### Parent Agenda

1. Ice Breaker: Deep Breathing
2. Objective: Parents will learn how utilize attachment activities to increase parent-child relationship and strengthen family bond and attachment
3. Check in: Did each member complete and think about the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do... but how much love we put in that action.” – Mother Theresa
5. Psycho-education: Attachment play. Using attachment play to solve child behavioral problems.
6. Activity/Discussion: What are your hesitations and apprehensions with utilizing play to solve discipline problems? What are some playful activities that you currently do with your child? Lets brainstorm pros and cons to using play to improve child problematic behaviors.
7. Reflection/Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?

8. Homework: This week, try utilizing at least one of the attachment play examples discussed last week. If attachment play is not working, note reasons why attachment play does not work for your family and child.

## Session 9: Protective Factors

### Facilitator Information

Week 9: Protective Factors

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 9 (page 101-102)

1. Ice breaker: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (See APPENDIX D, page 65)
2. Objective: Parents will be able to support emotional development in minor while incorporating knowledge of parenting.
3. Check In- Did each member complete the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task? Why do you think attachment play did not work for you and your child?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “If I cannot do great things I can do small things in a great way.” –Martin Luther King Jr.
5. Psycho-education/Discussion: Give Handout (page 103-105). Protective Factors (i.e. parent resilience, knowledge of parenting and child development, social and emotional competence of children, social connections, and concrete support in need). What is the ABC Model? How can the ABC model help you during parent-child conflict?

Facilitators will utilize the research and handout presented below to inform parents about A-B-C model.

  - a. One of the many interventions utilized in CBT is the A-B-C model developed by Albert Ellis, which allows clients to make sense of confusing events through socratic questioning in order to clarify the distinction between one’s emotions and thoughts about a situation (Hansen, Kingdon, Turkington, 2006).

- b. Once the client identifies the activating events (A) that lead to particular consequences (C), the therapist then assists the client in realizing the lack of personal meaning in the connection of these two factors (Hansen et al., 2006).
  - c. “Realization and modification of the belief (B) is the primary goal of the A-B-C model” (Hansen et al., 2006, p. 2). Realization and modification of the belief is beneficial for parents to be able to recognize the underlying feelings and meaning behind the events, which therefore will help them understand why they immediately reacted to their child’s actions (i.e. consequences).
  - d. Example: A mother found herself angry and on edge after spanking her child because of his constant misbehavior at school. Based on the example, the activating event is the child’s constant misbehavior, and the consequence for the behavior became the spanking and the emotional consequence of anger. The counselor helps the mother (i.e. client) to identify the beliefs and thoughts that are the true cause of the consequences (Hansen et al., 2006). The mother would then identify a core belief such as, “misbehaving in school means that he is disrespecting and undermining authority.”
6. Activity/Discussion: Group members will discuss what protective factors they have learned or had prior to parenting group. Members will offer examples of moments when they were unable to give concrete support for the child’s need, perhaps due to their own stressors or feelings. Group leader will ask, “Did anyone engage in a conflict between children since last session?” Leader will allow members to discuss adversities within parenting and take one recent parent-child conflict to utilize for their dyad role-play for the ABC model.
7. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today’s group session? What did you wish to gain in today’s session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?
8. Homework: Practice doing the ABC model for at least one parent-child conflict at home. Use Thought Log to record thoughts (i.e. ABC model).

## Session 9: Protective Factors

### Parent Agenda

1. Ice breaker: Progressive Muscle Relaxation
2. Objective: Parents will be able to support emotional development in minor while incorporating knowledge of parenting.
3. Check In- Did each member complete the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task? Why do you think attachment play did not work for you and your child?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  1. “If I cannot do great things I can do small things in a great way.” –Martin Luther King Jr.
5. Psycho-education: Protective Factors (i.e. parent resilience, knowledge of parenting and child development, social and emotional competence of children, social connections, and concrete support in need). What is the ABC Model? How can the ABC model help me during parent-child conflict?
6. Activity/Discussion: Group members will discuss what protective factors they have learned or had prior to parenting group. Members will offer examples of moments when they were unable to give concrete support for the child’s need, perhaps due to their own stressors or feelings. Group member will ask, “Did anyone engage in a conflict between children since last session?” Leader will allow members to discuss adversities within

parenting and take one recent parent-child conflict to utilize for their dyad role-play for the ABC model.

7. Check out: What did you learn from today? What were the likes and dislikes to today's group session? What did you wish to gain in today's session that you did not receive? What are your suggestions for next session?

- a) Homework: Practice doing the ABC model for at least one parent-child conflict at home. Use Thought Log to record thoughts (i.e. ABC model).

# Protective Factors



**Protective factors** are things that contribute to mental health, and allow a person to be resilient in the face of challenges. Someone with a lot of protective factors—such as strong relationships and healthy coping skills—will be better equipped to overcome life’s obstacles.

Many protective factors are out of your control. For example, genetics, the neighborhood where you grew up, and family cannot be changed. However, plenty of factors *can* be controlled. You choose the people in your life, how to cope with problems, and how you’ll spend each day.

By focusing on what you can control, and building upon those protective factors, you will improve your ability to cope with many of life’s challenges.



## My Protective Factors

**Instructions:** Review each of the following protective factors, and mark the scales to indicate how well you are performing in each area.

### Social Support

- ability to talk about problems
- people to ask for practical help (e.g. a ride if car breaks down)
- feelings of love, intimacy, or friendship



### Coping Skills

- ability to manage uncomfortable emotions in a healthy way
- awareness of one’s own emotions, and recognition of how they influence behavior



### Physical Health

- adequate exercise or physical activity
- a balanced and healthy diet
- medical compliance (e.g. taking medications as prescribed)



### Sense of Purpose

- meaningful involvement in work, education, or other roles (e.g. parenting)
- understanding of personal values, and living in accordance with those values



### Self-Esteem

- belief that one’s self has value
- acceptance of personal flaws, weaknesses, and mistakes
- belief in ability to overcome challenges

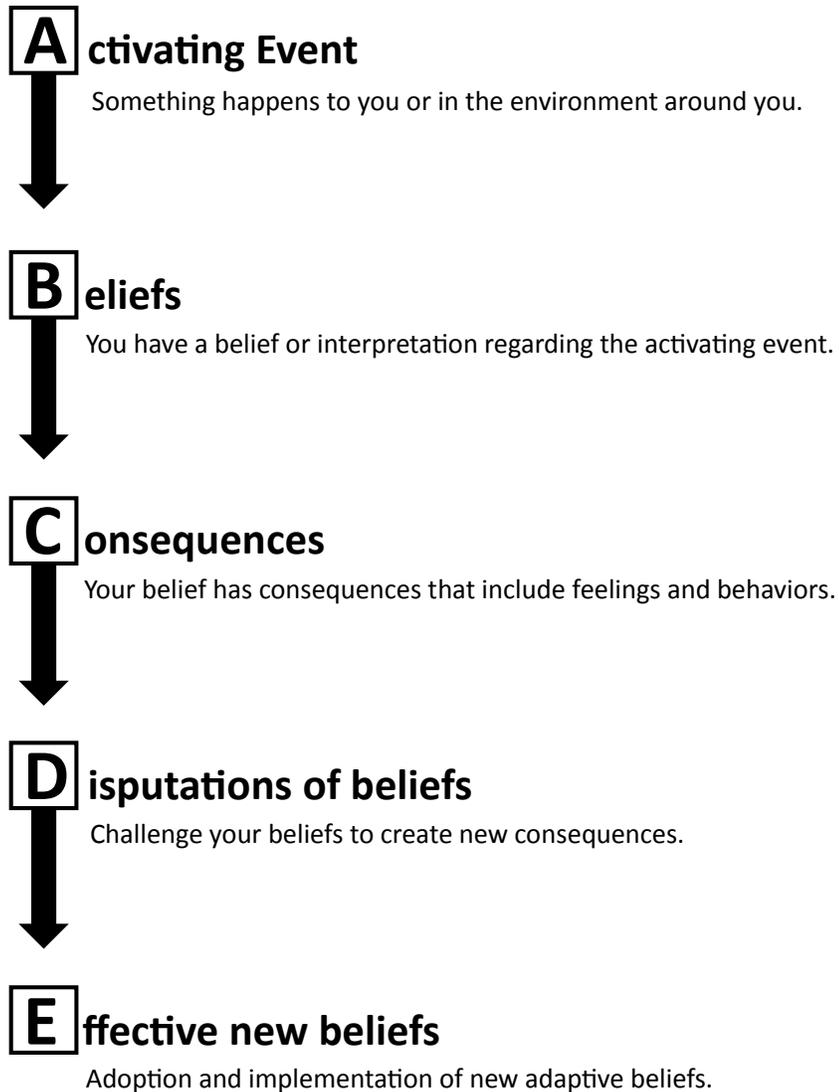


### Healthy Thinking

- does *not* ruminate on mistakes, personal flaws, or problems
- ability to consider personal strengths and weaknesses rationally



## ABC Model



# Thought Log

Event	Thought	Consequence (emotion & behavior)	Alternate Response

## Session 10: Building your Village

### Facilitator Information

Week 10: Building your Village

Provide Agenda to parents for Session 10 (page 107)

1. Ice Breaker: Final meeting potluck
2. Objective: Parents will learn how to maintain and create concrete support in times of need.
3. Check in: Did each member complete the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Surround yourself with people most like the person you want to become.” - Tom Hopkins
5. Activity/Discussion: Discuss who are the supportive people in your life? How do you know when someone is safe and helpful? Are you able to cut unhealthy/unhelpful people in your lives? Give Handout (page 108). Begin a dialogue about what social support looks like to you? How can we make this happen?
6. Reflection/Check out: Reflect on past lessons, objectives, and overall purpose of parenting group. Discuss limitation, suggestions, likes and dislikes. Apprehensions and fears regarding the parenting group. Did the fears go away, if so what do you think helped? What tools will you teach or implement in your parenting? How do you feel about ending our group?

## Session 10: Building your Village

### Parent Agenda

1. Ice Breaker: Final meeting potluck
2. Objective: Parents will learn how to maintain and create concrete support in times of need.
3. Check in: Did each member complete the homework assignment? What was that experience like for you? If you did not complete homework assignment, what were the limitations that prevented you from accomplishing the task?
4. Quote/Discussion: What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quotes meaning?
  - “Surround yourself with people most like the person you want to become.” - Tom Hopkins
5. Activity/Discussion: Discuss who are the supportive people in your life? How do you know when someone is safe and helpful? Are you able to cut unhealthy/unhelpful people in your lives? Begin a dialogue about what social support looks like to you? How can we make this happen?
6. Reflection/Check out: Reflect on past lessons, objectives, and overall purpose of parenting group. Fears regarding parenting group. Did the fears go away, if so what do you think helped? What tools will you teach or implement in your parenting? How do you feel about ending our group?

# Social Support



**Social support** is the help provided by family, friends, groups, or communities. This help can fulfill emotional, tangible, informational, or social needs.

## Benefits of Social Support

- Improved physical health
- Greater resilience to stress
- Improved self-esteem
- Feeling of security
- Improved mental well-being
- Greater life satisfaction

## Types of Social Support

**Emotional Support:** Help managing emotions, such as stress, anger, or depression. This support might include listening to problems and showing empathy.

**Tangible Support:** Help with practical problems, such as financial assistance, providing a ride to work, or help with childcare.

**Informational Support:** Providing information that helps solve a problem or overcome a challenge. This might include advice or information about helpful resources.

**Social Needs:** Fulfillment of basic social needs, such as love, belonging, and connectedness. This helps provide a feeling of security and contentment.

## Building Social Support

**Attend to your existing relationships.** Reach out to friends and family. Make it a priority to maintain your most important relationships, even when other areas of your life are busy.

**Increase community involvement.** Participate in hobby groups, volunteering, or religious groups. This is a great way to meet like-minded people, and build a new support system.

**Attend support groups.** Connect with others who are dealing with similar problems or life experiences. It can be rewarding to share your own story and provide support to others.

**Use professional support.** Doctors, therapists, social workers, and other professionals can help you solve problems that are more complicated, or too difficult to tackle alone.