



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Institute for Family Violence Studies

Florida State University

AUGUST EPRESS

QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

I am working with a family that has two children by different fathers. Can I have the visits on the same day at the same time?

There is no rule against it. Generally, though, you would have the visits separately, although they could be on the same day. Here are some issues I see.

- Do the court orders speak to this issue at all? If so, abide by the court order. If not...consider the following:
- The risks in each case with each parent and child must be considered separately.
- Each father is only related to one child. Role confusion might result if a father was interacting with a non-related child. The goal is for each father to strengthen his relationship with his own biological child.
- How do the children get along? If they are competitive or have little relationship, it does not make sense to have a dual visit.
- If you only want to combine the visits for your own convenience, you are not putting the needs of the children first.
- A dual visit in which the fathers and children do not interact with each other sounds much like a “group” visit. However, in group visits, the children do not know each other and are less likely to interact, keeping boundaries clear. It would be awkward to enforce separation between two half siblings. Are they allowed to have contact?
- If the four individuals were interacting during the visit, the monitors might have difficulty sorting out who was speaking to whom for purposes of documenting and case notes.
- The children would hear all of the interaction of the other father-child team, even inappropriate comments, criticism of the mother, and talk about other family members. If you did decide to have a combination visit, be sure to think through all of these complications. You’ll probably find more issues as you and your staff talk it out.
- I would then consult with the custodial mother to determine whether and why she might object to a dual visit.

Meet our newest program manager, Kirsten Castillo! She can be reached at 850-644-1715. She replaces Thallia, who did wonderful work before she left for law school in Philadelphia.

REMINDER: It's August, which means all A and V Recipients should input their case data into the Clearinghouse database to have it counted in the October 1st roll up. PLEASE INPUT YOUR DATA!!

How to Create Emotional Safety for Kids

By Kristen Carney

Emotional affect, attachment styles, and personality all begin in childhood and are influenced by a child's experiences during the early years of development. Parents and monitors have the opportunity to make a child feel safe in expressing emotions every time they interact. Children deserve to have a safe space and a person to confide in. "Bonding with a primary caregiver in the early years is critical for emotional safety and healthy development throughout life.

Caregivers need to create an environment for children that is dependable, trustworthy, and loving." It is not possible to protect children from everything, or always do the right thing for their development, but we are called to at least try.

Below are ways you can create an environment of emotional safety. The recommendations are all centered on making the child feel heard, respected, supported, and validated.



1. Don't dismiss a child's feelings

You can help a child by encouraging them to trust his or her feelings and acknowledge his or her experiences. This will encourage resiliency more than avoidance.

As a monitor:

The children you work with may not be able to identify or articulate how they feel, or been taught not to share or express their feelings. Encouraging these children to elaborate on their experiences and subsequent emotions will foster a better relationship between you and the child, and help the child with long-term expression of emotions.

As a parent:

If your child is being bullied, don't encourage the child to "tough it out" or "deal with it" this encourages avoidance of feelings. Instead, acknowledge their feelings and show the child that you care about what is happening and how he or she is feeling.

2. Validate and empathize.

Validation is acknowledgement, not agreement. Empathy goes hand in hand with validation. It involves hearing people out and helping them feel heard, accepted, and understood.

As a monitor:

Monitors will have the opportunity to demonstrate empathy for their clients. One way to create an emotionally safe environment for the children you work with is by validating their feelings throughout the supervised visitation process. They may not be receiving this attention and care outside of visitation.

As a parent:

Even if you disagree with your child's words or behaviors, you can still validate feelings of anger. You do not have to agree with how he or she handled a situation, but you can still acknowledge their feelings as valid. "Boundaries and consequences can simultaneously exist with validation."

3. Let children know it's okay to fail.

Failure does not have to be a bad thing. Failure makes way for opportunities to grow. A positive approach to failure is teaching the child that there is something constructive to be learned from mistakes. It is not possible to be good at everything, and children should know that they can and should keep trying.



As a monitor:

Acknowledging a child's failures may be a hard thing to do. Pointing out a child's failures is something to steer clear from. Instead, when a child comes to you with a failure, redirect their experience and inspire them child to try again.

As a parent:

As a parent, you may feel a strong inclination to protect your child from life's adversities. But, "Not allowing children to fail can lead to helplessness, powerlessness, anxiety, and a lack of coping skills." While it is important to protect your children, there is something to be said for allowing them to make some mistakes on their own and paving the way to learn from those mistakes.

4. Support your children.

Make yourself a safe-haven for your child. Throughout this process your child may feel uncertain about a lot of things. You have the ability to make your child feel supported.

As a monitor:

As a monitor, you may interact with children who have insecure or avoidant attachments with the parental figure(s) in their life. You can provide emotional security by listening, and letting them know you are there for them and will “go to bat” for them.

As a parent:

You are the child’s first and ultimate protector. Make sure your child knows that he or she can count on you. You do not always have to agree with children but you do have to show them you always have their best interest at heart.

5. Be available and open to talk about anything.

Recognize that some things a child will want to talk about may make you uncomfortable. Despite this, you should take questions seriously and respond appropriately. Knowing that they can confide in you discourages secret-keeping.

As a monitor:

Your job will give you the opportunity to communicate with the children you work with. Use these times to listen and talk to the child about topics that are important to him or her. Sometimes children won’t know who to ask or who to tell about their experiences, but showing them you are available will make them feel like they have someone they can go to.

As a parent:

Every parent wants to be their child’s “go-to” person. In order for your child to feel comfortable confiding in you, you should take questions seriously and answer them honestly. This will demonstrate that you are a safe person to go to with questions.



6. Be aware of your own baggage.

Know that you have baggage which affects your relationship with the child. Acknowledge your own emotions so that you can be more prepared to create an emotionally safe environment for them.

As a monitor:

It is important that you continually reflect and assess how your own experiences impact the service you provide. It is up to you to make sure that your experiences and your reactions are continually monitored. Doing so will enable you to be an asset to the children you work with.

As a parent:

Putting your emotional baggage aside will foster a more stable environment for your child. This includes baggage related to your visitation. Children don't want to be focused on problems or negative situations, they need to feel supported despite whatever is going on in your life.

Work Cited

Derhally, L. A. (2016, March 23). How (and why) to create emotional safety for our kids. Retrieved April 07, 2016, from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2016/03/23/how-and-why-to-create-emotional-safety-for-our-kids/>



Mindful Parenting: ‘Conscious Discipline’

By Kirsten Castillo

Introduction

There is a new approach to parenting, which is a far cry from the days of the traditional model of corporal punishment and compliance. In fact, it is just the opposite. This new approach is about talking with your children and empowering them through the practice of healthy communication and self-regulation skills.

Objectives

- Educate parents, caregivers, and practitioners about a new approach to parenting called ‘Conscious Discipline’
- Refer them to further resources about the program

Background

Conscious discipline is an evidence-based comprehensive model for developing discipline *within* a child, rather than applying discipline to them. Developed by internationally renowned child developmental psychologist Dr. Becky Bailey, the program uses research to create a cooperative, collaborative approach to discipline. It emphasizes the process as one for both the parent and child, and is laid out in four stages.

How does it work?



The program, made for parents, children, and teachers, involves four stages.

- **First Stage:** The first stage in the process is understanding the ‘brain state model.’ This stage is the foundation and involves understanding how internal emotional states often dictate behavior. This stage involves breaking old habits of disciplining children and replacing them with mindful habits of self-regulation.
- **Second Stage:** The second stage, the ‘conscious’ part of Conscious Discipline, is based on consciousness and mindfulness research, and consists of ‘Seven Powers for Conscious Adults’ which are meant to empower them to self-regulate. These seven powers are: perception, unity, attention, free will, acceptance, love, and intention. The seven powers provide a foundation that facilitates parents’ access to the integrated executive brain state where all higher-order thinking occurs. Once they are able to access this state, they are able to override impulsive and reactive tendencies.

- **Third Stage:** The third stage, the 'Connected Family' is about cultivating connections through compassion, and increasing a child's willingness to solve problems together, rather than fight.
- **Fourth Stage:** The fourth stage involves the 'Seven Skills of Discipline,' which include composure, encouragement, assertiveness, choices, empathy, positive intent, and consequences. These skills are meant to arm the parent with the tools to turn everyday discipline issues into teachable moments for themselves and their children.

Does it really work?

Luckily, this program is research-based and has been evaluated many times over. Its effectiveness has been evaluated, both qualitatively and quantitatively, by Conscious Discipline practitioners, independent researchers, and Loving Guidance, Inc. The research has shown that Conscious Discipline incites:

- Social-emotional competency changes in adults
- Social-emotional competency changes in children
- Behavioral and resiliency changes
- School climate changes
- Classroom management shift from external rewards and punishments to problem-solving
- Academic success



Learn More

Conscious Discipline has been featured in many newspapers and magazines, and has received international attention. You can learn more about Conscious Discipline on their website, where they have a myriad of resources including books, curriculums, music, audio programs, and dvd's. (There are also resources available for Spanish-speakers). Learn more at: <http://consciousdiscipline.com>

Conclusion

Parenting is no easy feat, and it can be frustrating and overwhelming for everyone. Help yourself, and your children discover another way of relating. Teach them to be mindful and compassionate with themselves and others. It is possible, and it is being implemented in schools and families.

Works Cited

Conscious Discipline. (2016). Retrieved 20 June 2016, from <http://consciousdiscipline.com/>

A New Approach to Discipline: What is Conscious Discipline?. (2016). Getmecc.com. Retrieved from: <http://www.getmecc.com/Conscious-Discipline.html>

Back to School!

By Lisa S. Panisch

It's that time of year – time to go back to school!

Many parents are relieved by the steady weekday schedule that school provides for their children. However, the weeks leading up to the beginning of the school year can be stressful for kids and parents alike. In this e-press, we will provide some tips to reduce stress and help set the entire family up for success!



Helpful suggestions that monitors can offer to parents:

Schedule

Parents can help their child transition back into a school year schedule in advance by making sure their children begin going to bed and waking up earlier each day. Parents can also ensure that their children are having their meals at the same time each day to help them adjust back into a school year schedule.

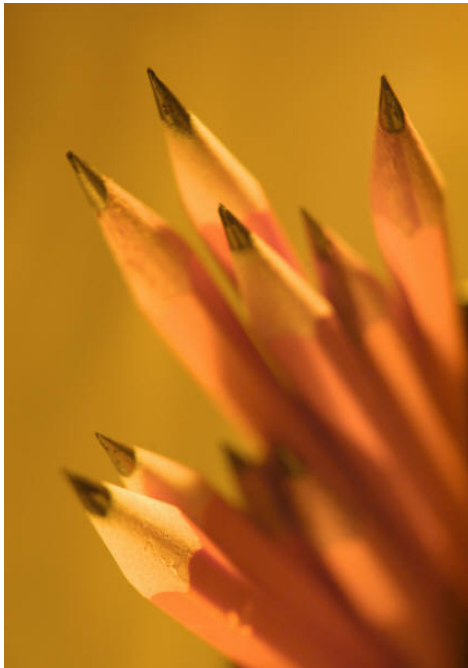


Uniforms

Parents should also be aware of any dress code that their child's school requires. While some schools only require uniforms for physical education classes, others may require them to be worn throughout the day. Parents will want to be familiar with their school's requirements so as to avoid any undue stresses. It may be helpful to check the school's website, which will likely outline their policies.

School Supplies

Here are some general suggestions for school supplies:



- Number 2 pencils
- Erasers
- Pencil Sharpener
- Pencil Box
- Pens
- Ruler
- Calculator
- Loose Leaf Paper
- Spiral Notebooks
- 3 Ring Binder(s)
- Folders with pockets
- Agenda/Planner
- Tissue Packs
- Backpack

***Parents should check to see if their child's teacher has a specific list of required school supplies. This information may also be listed on the school's website.

Emotional Preparation



For Kids:

It is normal for children to be anxious about returning to school. Parents should be encouraged to talk with their children about going back to school in order to help them ease any fears or concerns they might have.

For Parents:

Parents can ease their own fears and concerns about the beginning of the school year by:

- Meeting their child's teacher
- Attending Open House events

Have a Great School Year!

Works Cited

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