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ABSTRACT

This guide contains 15 learning activities that can be used in parenting classes, especially for adults with limited literacy skills. Activities include quotations for discussion and suggestions for conducting group discussions and writing lessons. The following activities are included: interpreting quotations about raising children; positive parenting tips; exploring parenting attitudes; "the biggest problem I have with my children"; "what's a parent to do?"--problem-solving work; "what I learned from my parent"--reflection exercises; active listening skills; family problems for discussion; working moms versus moms at home (working with graphs); chores (working with graphs); spanking (critical thinking); the joy of parenting (group drawing); television (critical thinking); ending the homework hassle (directed reading exercise); communication skills (jigsaw activity); and the perfect parent oath (coming to terms with guilt). Contains 10 references. (KC)

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# PARENTING

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Activity I

"Parenting"

Respect is what you have to have in order to get.

Bernard Malamud

The mother who spoils her child fattens a serpent.

Spanish Proverb

The reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen the more and talk the less.

Zeno of Citium

Children need encouragement like plants need water.

Rudolf Dreikurs

In our children rests the future of the people.

Alfred Adler

Insanity is hereditary-you get it from your children.

Sam Levenburg

What the mother sings to the cradle goes all the way down to the coffin.

Henry Ward Beecher

For the teacher:

Suggestions for working with quotations

1. As a warm-up exercise or introduction to parenting, go over quotations at beginning of lesson as class. Have quotations on over-head projector. Reveal one quotation at a time.

2. Talk about the meaning and implications of the first three quotations. Then split class in groups of three and give one quote and the following three tasks to each group.

- A. Tell in your own words what the quotation says.
- B. Give examples of why the quotation is true or not.
- C. What does this mean for our parenting?

EXAMPLE

Quotation: Respect is what you have to have in order to get.

A. This means that when you respect yourself others will respect you, too. If you don't respect yourself others will not respect you either.

B. We think this quotation is true. When people don't take care of themselves (e.g., don't wash, wear dirty clothes etc.) they are not treating themselves well and others won't respect them. A messy person will not get a job as easily as a neat person.

C. This is important for parenting. If we show our children that we respect ourselves, they will respect us, too and they will learn from us how a person with self-respect behaves. We also have to treat our children with respect and then they will grow up respecting themselves and their parents.

## Activity II

### "Positive Parenting"

#### Let's Reach For It Together

The Massachusetts Department of  
Social Services (adapted)

Parents can:

read books and take parenting classes that teach helpful ways of bringing up children

Remember that discipline doesn't have to be humiliating or harmful to a child's body or self-esteem.

Don't call children names like "brat", "jerk", "stupid", "clumsy." This makes children feel bad and does not help them to behave better.

Don't say "You're never doing a good job" or "You are so slow". It hurts your children's confidence and self-esteem.

Tell children what you like and appreciate about them.

Be affectionate. Put your arm around the child and say, "I love you."

Show children that you love them for being themselves. Don't expect them to be like their brothers or sisters.

Look for the good qualities in each child.

Show interest in your child's world, hobbies and school activities.

Speak to children in a pleasant tone of voice.

Spend special times with each of your children alone and tell them how special these times are to you.

Show humor when dealing with your family.

Learn about being a positive parent.

## Student Worksheet

### Questions for discussion:

1. Who made this pamphlet?
2. What is the tone of the pamphlet (humorous, instructional, moralistic)?
3. Make list on blackboard with the following categories:

What was helpful about the pamphlet?	What was not helpful?	What is not clear?
--------------------------------------	-----------------------	--------------------

4. Do you agree with all statements? Do you disagree with any?
  5. After reading the pamphlet, how do you feel about yourself as a parent?
  6. If you had to write a pamphlet for parents, what would you write on it?
- (You could possibly send suggestions for improvement to Mass. Dept. of Social Services.)

### Activity III

For the teacher:

#### "What Do You Think"

Suggestions for class activity:

1. Preview the vocabulary from the worksheet on the following page.
2. Let the students fill out the worksheet.
3. Discuss student responses.

Student Worksheet

"What do you think ?"

from Active Parenting, by  
Michael Popkin (adapted)

- |   |       |          |
|---|-------|----------|
| 1. Sometimes it is better to give in to keep the peace in the family than to have a fight.          | Agree | Disagree |
| 2. It's good to spank children a little so that they will remember what you told them.              | Agree | Disagree |
| 3. Children shouldn't always get their way but usually we should listen to what they have to say.   | Agree | Disagree |
| 4. Childhood is so short that parents should do everything to make it a happy time.                 | Agree | Disagree |
| 5. Children first have to learn that the parent is the boss.  | Agree | Disagree |
| 6. Too many children talk back to their parents today when they should just quietly listen to them. | Agree | Disagree |
| 7. If we want children to respect us, we must treat them with respect, too.                         | Agree | Disagree |

Answer YES or NO to the following statements:

1. I often have to call my child more than once to get him or her out of bed.
2. I have to stay on top of my child to get things done (or, I have to tell my child over and over again what he or she has to do).
3. I often get angry and yell at my child.

4. We have discussed chores at our home and everybody does their part.
5. My child has no regular chores around the house but he/she helps sometimes when we ask him/her.
6. I have to threaten my child with punishment at least once a week.
7. I wish my child wouldn't interrupt my conversations so often.
8. I often feel that my child takes advantage of my good nature.

## Activity IV

For the teacher:

### "The Biggest Problem I Have With My Children"

from SABES Orientation  
Curriculum (adapted)

This activity can be done as a follow-up exercise to the previous discussion or as an independent activity.

1. Ask students to write on a slip of paper a brief description of the biggest problem they have with their child(ren). They could also write about a situation that they fear could happen to them.
2. Ask students to put their slip of paper into a bowl. Divide students into small groups.
3. Pass the bowl around and ask each group to pick 2-3 slips (depending on the number of slips). Give the group 15-20 minutes to discuss the situation and brainstorm strategies for dealing with the situations. Have each group tape the slip with the problem on newsprint and have them write their strategies next to the appropriate slip of paper.
4. Bring the whole class together. Ask each group in turn to put up their newsprint, read the description, and then comment on the group's strategies, suggestions and resources for dealing with the problem.
5. If time and interest is there, talk about what community resources parents could make use of if they have problems with their children (teachers, school guidance counsellors, services to have a pre-school child screened, where could you take your obese child for help, etc.).

Activity V

For the teacher:

"WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO ??????????????????????????????"

Divide the class in three groups and provide each group with one of the reading selections on the following pages, assigning the selections according to reading level. Group 1 is the easiest and Group 3 the most difficult. Students should read and discuss the problem and think about other ways to handle the situation (each group writes their suggestions on newsprint). Afterwards, have them introduce their problem and their alternatives to the whole class.

Group Reading Passages

WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO ?????????????????????????????????

from Active Parenting, by  
Michael Popkin (adapted)

---

Group 1

Susan is ten years old. It's in the morning and she has to go to school. When Susan's father tells her to get ready for school, she yells at him, "Get off my back!" He tells her not to talk to him that way, but she calls him a jerk. He gets so angry that he slaps her. She throws herself on the bed crying, "I hate you, I hate you!" Her father leaves, hurt by her words.

---

Group 2

Susan (age ten) is lying in bed reading a comic book. Her father tells her that she has to get ready for school. Susan ignores him and keep reading. Five minutes later, her father tells her again to get ready. She says okay but is still lying on the bed reading. Her dad goes into her room a third time and is very angry. He tells her to get dressed right away or she will get a spanking.

Vocabulary:

ignore - Susan ignores her father. Susan doesn't listen to her father; doesn't look at her father.

---

### Group 3

Susan (age ten) is lying in bed reading a comic book. It is time for her to get ready for school. When her father comes in and tells her to get dressed, she puts down the comic book and begins to dress. But two minutes later she gets distracted by another comic book, and sits down on the bed reading again. Her dad reminds her of the time, and she continues to dress herself. A little later she has turned on the TV and still isn't ready. Her father is annoyed but he keeps on telling her to get ready.

#### Vocabulary:

to get distracted - You are doing your homework. The telephone rings. The telephone is distracting you. It is taking your attention away from what you are doing.

#### Other examples:

The noise in the street distracted me from my reading.

He always thinks of his dead wife. What can we do to distract him?

remind - Her father reminds her to get ready for school. He makes her think of having to get ready.

#### Other examples:

He reminds me of his brother (when I see him I have to think of his brother).

Please remind me to send this letter.

annoyed - to be angry

#### Other examples:

I felt annoyed when he didn't help me.

He was annoyed when the dinner in the restaurant was badly cooked.

Activity VI

"What I Learned From My Parents"

from Active Parenting, by  
Michael Popkin (adapted)

Remember one thing that your parent(s) taught you. Close your eyes for a moment and try to "see" how your parent(s) taught you.

Now fill out these questions.

1. What did your parent(s) teach you?

-----

2. How did you feel about yourself when your parent was teaching you?

-----

3. What can you learn from this memory?

Things to do:

Things not to do:

Activity VII

"Jason's Problem"

from Active Parenting by  
Michael Popkin (adapted)

Read the following two conversations that Jason could have with his father.

Conversation 1

Mr. Bradford was in the driveway cleaning his car when his son Jason came running to him crying loudly. Jason held a toy truck in his hand.

Bradford: What's the matter, Jason?

Jason: Daddy, Jimmy hit me!

Bradford: What happened?

Jason: Jimmy pushed me down and I hurt my leg.

Bradford: Jason, calm down. What did you do that made him hit you?

Jason: Nothing, I was just standing there and he pushed me!

Bradford: Are you sure?

Jason: Yes, I promise! I didn't do anything to him.

Bradford: Stop crying, Jason. Big boys don't cry. What are you going to do?

Jason: There's nothing I can do; he's bigger than me.

Bradford: Stop crying, now. Act like a man. What you need to learn is to stand up for yourself. Show him he can't push you around.

Conversation 2

Mr. Bradford was cleaning his car in the driveway. His son Jason came running home, crying loudly. He held a toy truck in his hand.

Bradford: What's the matter, Jason?

Jason: Daddy, Jimmy hit me!

Bradford: What happened?

Jason: Jimmy pushed me down and I hurt my leg.

Bradford: That must hurt.

Jason: It does, it does.

Bradford: Tell me again what happened.

Jason: I was just standing there holding my new truck, and he suddenly pushed me down. That dumb Jimmy, I hate him.

Bradford: You are very angry with him.

Jason: I am. He really hurt my leg.

Bradford: Does it still hurt a lot?

Jason: Not so much now. I didn't expect that he would push me.

Bradford: You were surprised when he pushed you.

Jason: Yeeeeees. I hate Jimmy. He is a rat.

Bradford: I guess he really hurt your feelings.

Jason: That damn Jimmy, I'm going to knock him down and I hope he gets hurt!

Bradford: That's one thing you could do. What do you think will happen if you do that?

Jason: Well, he is bigger than me. He'd probably beat me up.

Bradford: Can you think of anything else you might do?

Jason: I won't play with him ever again!

Bradford: Hmm. Jimmy must have been pretty angry to have done that.

Jason: I was just standing there playing with my new truck. He wanted to see it and I didn't want him to.

Bradford: Oh, is that right?

Jason: Well, it is a brand new truck.

Bradford: I'm sure it is. You don't want him to play with it.

Jason: He might break it.

Bradford: Is there any way that you would feel comfortable with him playing with it?

Jason: Maybe I could show him how and we could play together.

Bradford: That sounds like a good idea to me.

Jason: Maybe I'll play with him and maybe not.

Bradford: Uh-huh. That's really your choice. I wonder what you will decide.

Jason: I don't know.

Bradford: When you do decide, let me know.

The next day

Bradford: Jason, remember that talk about Jimmy yesterday?

Jason: Yeah.

Bradford: I'm interested in what you finally decided to do.

Jason: Oh, I decided it was okay for him to play with my things if he is careful.

Bradford: Great! I'm glad it worked out for you.

Student Worksheet

Answer the questions on the left for Conversation 1 and on the right for Conversation 2.

Conversation I

Conversation II

List examples of how Jason's Dad listened to him:

-----

What are feeling words (adjectives) the father used:

-----

How does Jason react to what the father says:

-----

How much does Jason tell the father about what happened ?

-----

Who has a problem?

-----

Who suggests solutions to the problem?

-----

Will Jason ask his  
Dad for advice in a  
future problem?

-----

## Activity VIII

### "Parent Pow-Wow"

from Six Point Plan to Raising Happy, Healthy Children and Advice on How to Cope with Kids (adapted)

#### Mealtime Madness

My daughter, age 3, pokes at her food. I know what kinds of food she is supposed to be eating. But I am losing the battle in getting these foods down her throat. Should I insist that she eat everything on her plate?

#### Beat the Bedtime Battles

Bedtime is a problem in my house. I can get my kids into bed by 8:30 with few hassles, but then the trouble begins. One son wants a drink of water. Another complains he's not tired and can't get to sleep. Often it is after 10 before all the children fall asleep. By then it is too late for me to enjoy my evening. How can I make my kids fall asleep soon after they get into bed?

#### Giving Allowances

We are having disagreements about allowances at our house. I think that allowances should be tied to chores so that the kids receive a set amount of money for doing specific jobs. If the kids goof off and don't do their chores, they get no allowance. I figure this way they'll learn the relationship between work and money. My wife thinks kids should get a weekly allowance regardless of the work they do. Since parents are not paid for performing general chores around the house, she thinks children should not be paid for similar chores. Who is right?

Last Sunday MAMA Last Sunday we went MAMA MAMA Last Sunday

What can I do with my kids who constantly interrupt my conversations? I can't say two words to anyone, even my husband without my kids interrupting to ask a question or to tell me something. I've told them a hundred times to wait until I'm finished talking but they still interrupt. What else can I try?

#### Visiting Grandma and Grandpa

My parents live relatively close and we see them fairly often. Spending the night with Grandma and Grandpa is a big thing for our four-year-old, who also happens to be their only grandchild.

The problem is that during visits, whether we are there or not, the folks ignore our rules and let Michael do and have just about anything he wants. As a result, Michael is very hard to handle when we get him home, and it sometimes takes as much as several days to get things back to normal. How would you suggest we deal with this problem?

For the teacher:

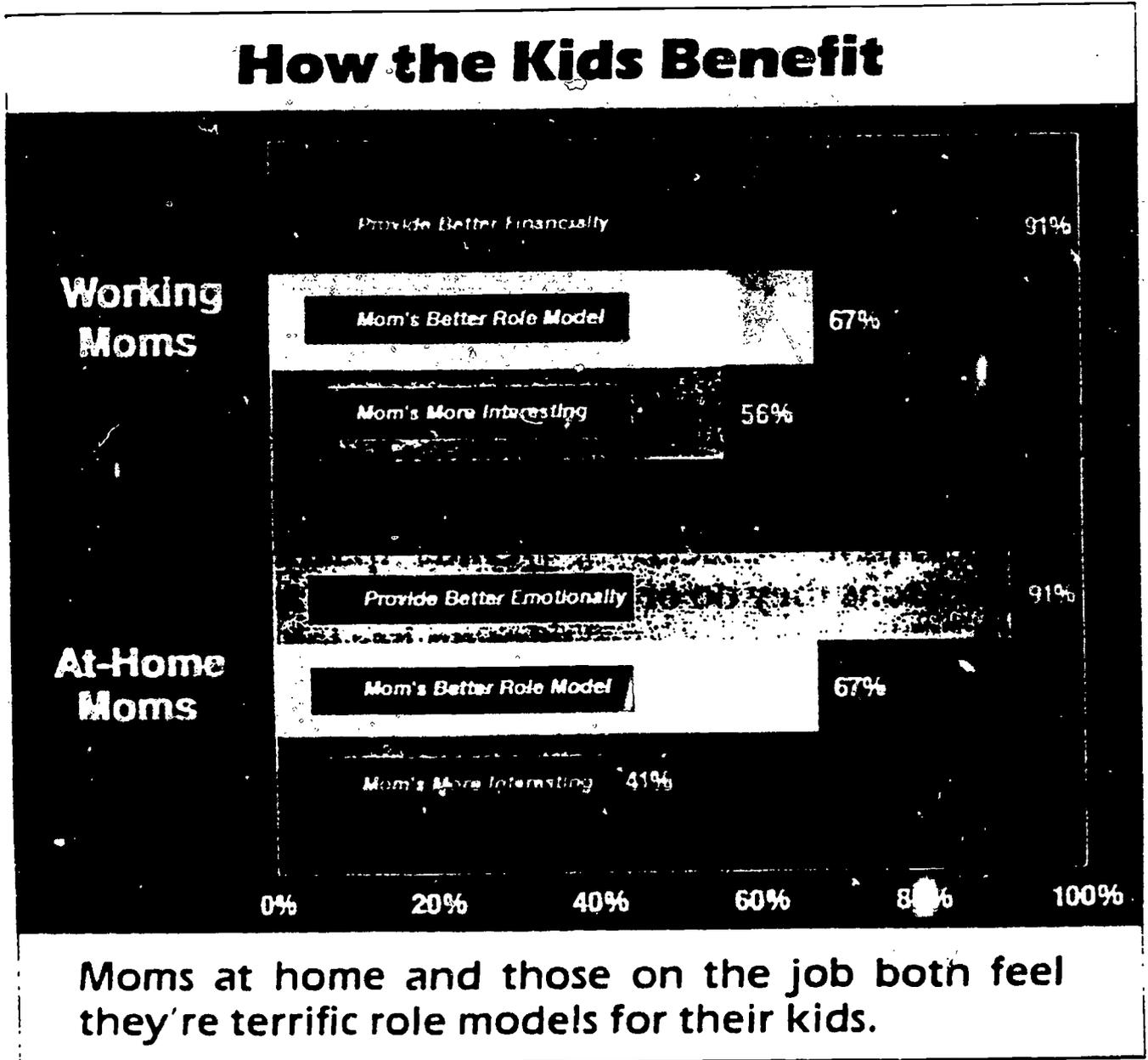
### Suggestions for PARENT POW-WOW

1. Divide the class in three groups and provide each group with one problem. Students read and discuss the problem and think about ways to handle the situation. Afterwards, they introduce their problem and their solution to the whole class.
2. Read each problem as a class. Brainstorm ways to handle the situation without discussion. Then each student chooses the five best solutions and numbers them 1 through 5. One will be the most favorite and five will be the least favorite of the five.  
Compile the results of the class on the blackboard and discuss.
3. Read and discuss two problems as a class. Have students write a response to at least one other problem. For homework, have students try out the advice on their own children and report back to class.
4. This could be followed by "The biggest problem I have with my children" (p. 10).

Activity IX

"Working Moms vs. Moms at Home"

Graph 1 from: Parents Magazine, July 1990



Answer the following questions about graph 1.

#### READING THE GRAPH

1. The graph shows how \_\_\_\_\_ women and \_\_\_\_\_ women feel about one another.
2. How many working women say that they admire at-home mothers?
3. How many working women envy at-home moms?
4. How many working women are critical of at-home moms?
5. How many at-home moms envy working mothers?
6. How many at-home moms envy working mothers?
7. How many at-home moms are critical of working mothers?

#### INTERPRETING A GRAPH

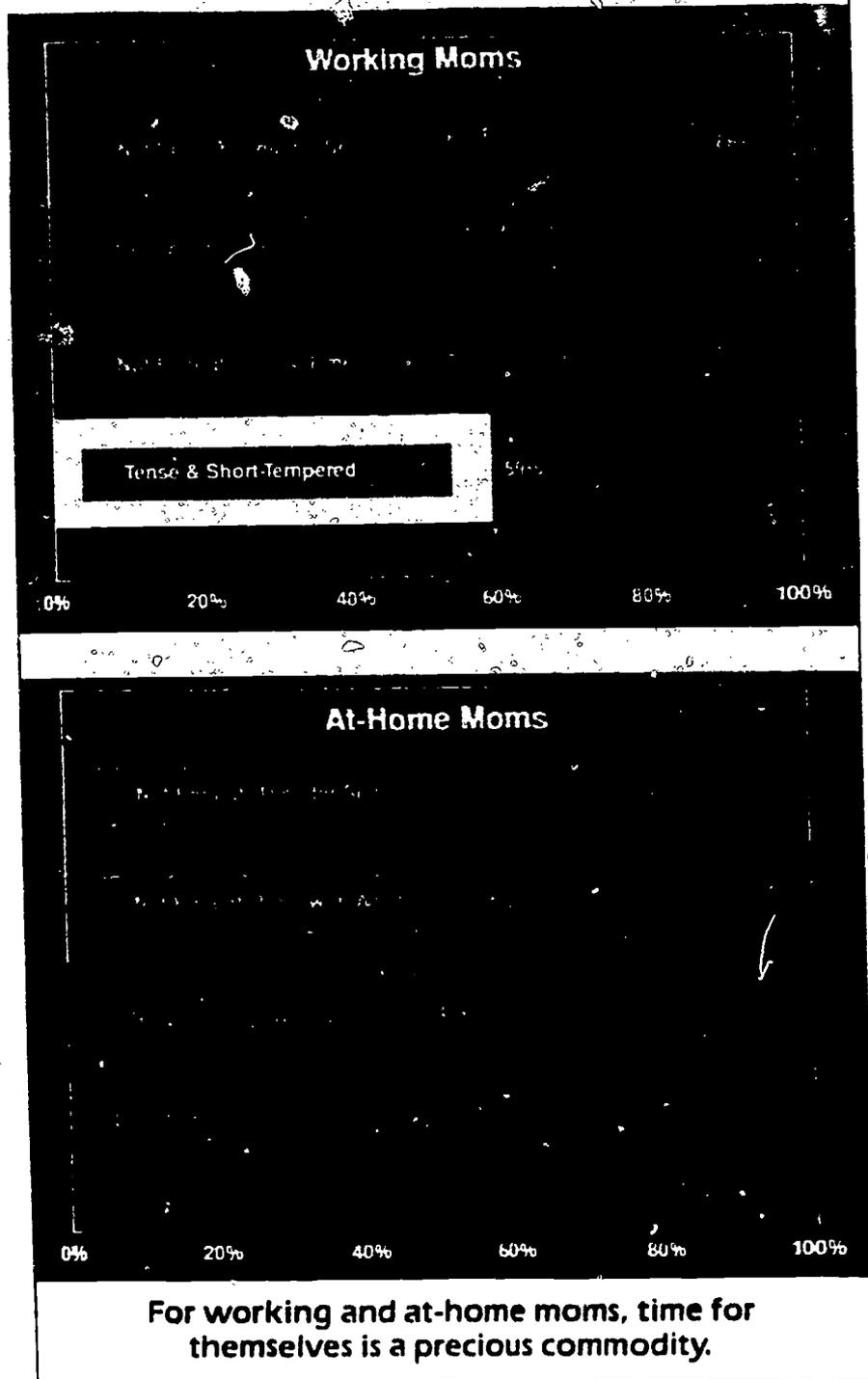
8. Why do you think a high percentage of working women admires at-home mothers ?
9. Why are more working women envious of at-home mothers? Why are few at-home mothers envious of working mothers?
10. Why is a high percentage of at-home mothers critical of working mothers?

#### WRITING ACTIVITY

11. Do you think mothers should stay at home with their children or should mothers be working?  
(Tell what your family chose and how you feel about your choice)

Graph 2 from: Parents Magazine, July 1990

## Where Does the Time Go?



Answer the following questions about graph 2.

#### READING A GRAPH

1. What do the graphs show?
2. What is the biggest problem for working mothers and at-home mothers?
3. What complaints do working women have?
4. What complaints do at-home mothers have?

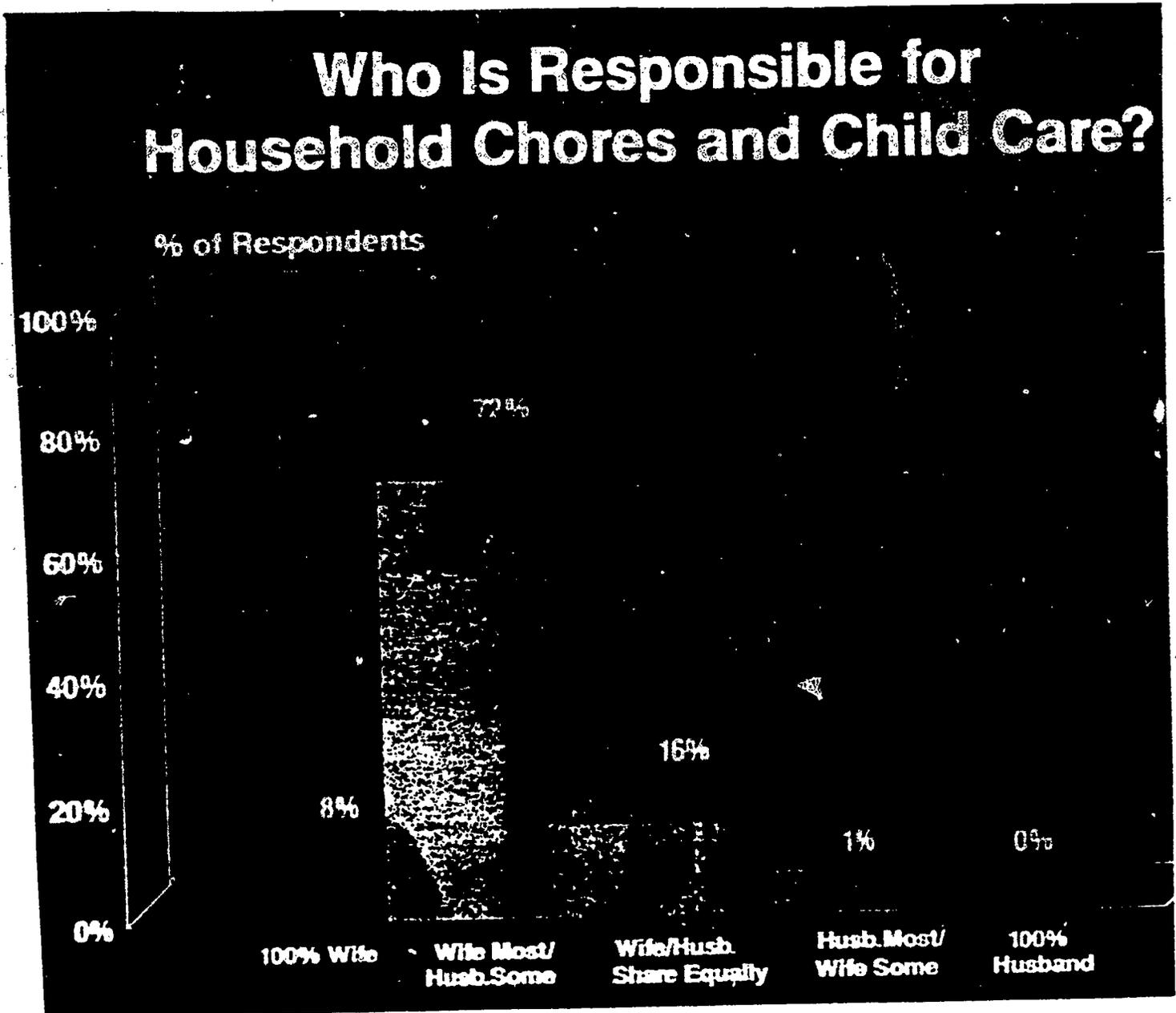
#### WRITING ACTIVITY

5. What do you feel you have enough time for?
6. What do you wish you had more time for?

Activity X

"Chores!"

Graph 3 from: Parents Magazine, November 1990



Answer the following questions about graph 3.

#### READING THE GRAPH

1. What is the title of the graph?
2. How many respondents say the wife and husband share chores and childcare equally ?
3. How many respondents say only the wife is responsible for chores and childcare ?
4. Which category shows 0% on the graph?
5. Which group has the highest percentage of respondents ?

#### INTERPRETING THE GRAPH

6. It isn't stated, but do you think that this question was asked of
  - a. mostly women
  - b. all men
  - c. both men and women

Discuss these responses with your class.

Answer the following questions about graph 4.

#### READING THE GRAPH

1. How many wives do the laundry?
2. How many husbands wash the dishes?
3. a How many husbands do yardwork?  
b How many wives do yardwork?  
c How many couples share yardwork?
4. Which chore is done by 63% of the wives?
5. Which chore is done by 77% of the husbands?

#### INTERPRETING THE GRAPH

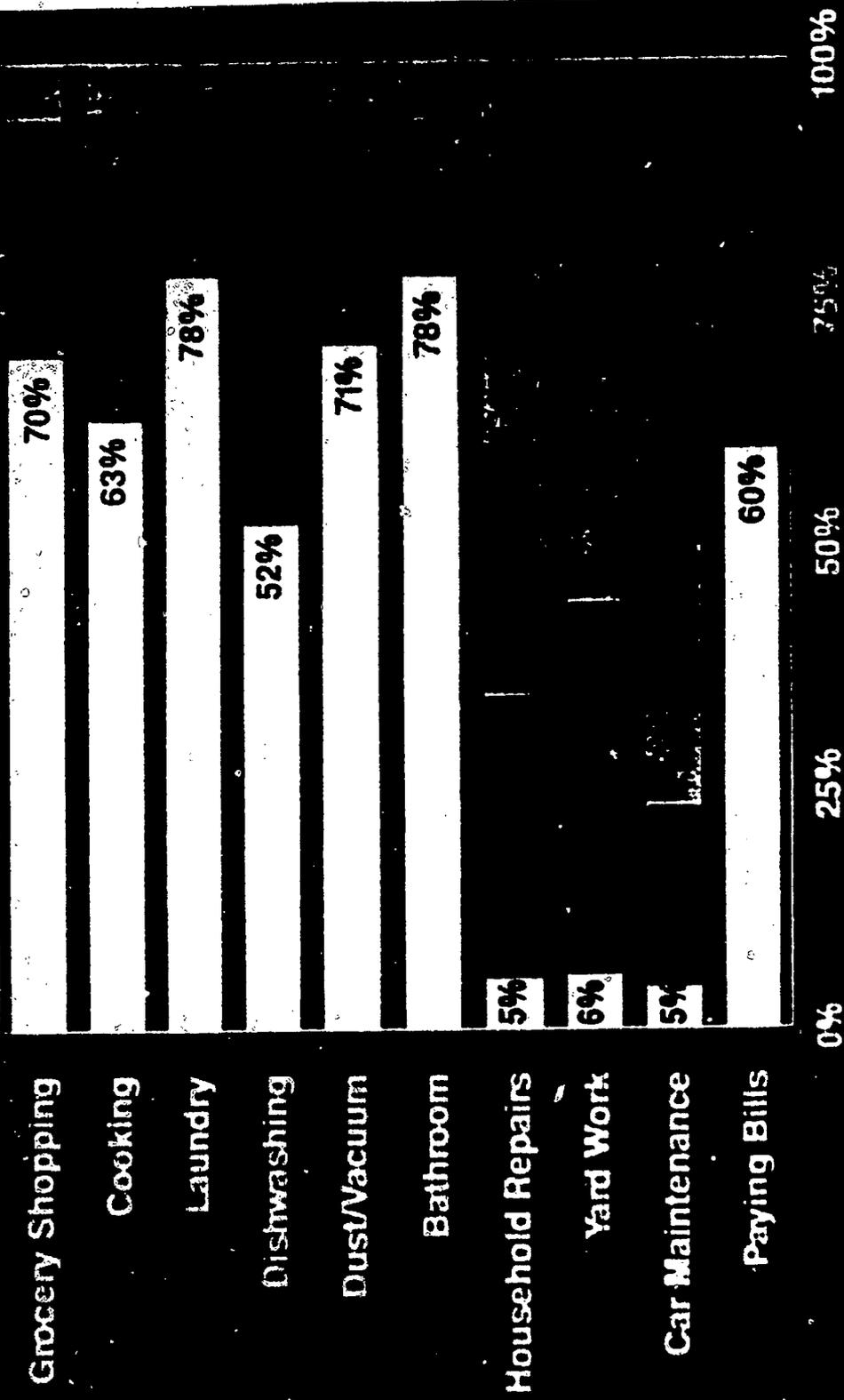
6. a. What type of work are the wives mostly responsible for?  
b. What type of work are the husbands responsible for?
7. Who do you think has to spend more time on their chores? Why?
8. Is there a chore on the chart that more women do than men that surprises you? If so, why?

#### WRITING ACTIVITY

1. Why do you think most of the household chores and childcare are done by women?
2. Do you think it is fair that women do most of the household chores and childcare?
3. Who is responsible for performing the household chores listed on the graph in your house? Are you happy with your present situation?

# Does the Wife or Husband Perform the Following Household Chores?

Wife



Source: PARENTS "Women & Work Poll"

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## Activity XI

### "Spanking"

from The Strong-Willed Child,  
(adapted)

Here are two different views on spanking:

1. The way to stop violence in America is to stop spanking. When parents spank their children, the children think that it is okay to hit other people. Spanking is followed by hitting and ultimately by rape, murder, and assassination. The behavior the child sees at home sets the stage: "I will resort to violence when I don't know what else to do."

2. Some people say that spanking your children teaches them to hit others, makes them more violent people. Nonsense! If your child has ever bumped his arm against a hot stove, he'll never do that again on purpose. He does not become a more violent person because the stove burnt him. In fact, he learned a good lesson from the pain. Similarly, when he falls out of his high chair or hurts his finger in the door or is bitten by a dog, he learns about dangers in this world. This is nature's way of teaching him what he can do and what he can't do. It doesn't damage his self-esteem. It doesn't make him vicious. It just shows him reality. A spanking teaches the child in the same way to behave well socially. He learns not to be dishonest, aggressive, defiant, etc.

### Discussion Questions

1. According to the first speaker, what effect does spanking have on American society?
2. How might the spanked child react when faced with a frustrating situation, according to the first speaker?
3. What do you think about this speaker's ideas? Support your answer with examples.

4. What could be said against this speaker's ideas?
5. According to the second speaker, what does spanking do?
- 6 a. How does spanking help a child?
  - b. "This is nature's way of teaching him what he can do and what he can't do". Explain this sentence.
7. What do you think about the second speaker's ideas? Support your answer with examples.
8. What could be said against this speaker's ideas?

#### Writing Exercise

How do you feel about spanking? Choose one of the following topics and write about it. Be sure to give details to support your view.

1. There are certain circumstances when spanking is appropriate.
2. Spanking is a necessary part of teaching your children right from wrong.
3. Spanking should only be used as an absolute last resort when everything else has failed.
4. "Spare the rod; spoil the child."
5. Spanking is always cruel.
6. Parents teach by example. If parents hit, their children will hit. If parents don't hit, their children won't hit either.
7. Spanking damages a child's self-esteem.

## Activity XII

### "The Joy of Parenting"

from the SABES Orientation  
Curriculum (adapted)

1. As a group, discuss for five minutes your thoughts about the following question:

"What is the most wonderful thing about being a parent?"

Everyone in the group takes a turn saying what they think is most wonderful about being a parent.

2. Now your group should think about how you want to draw your answer. You could:

A. Each draw something on the paper.

B. One person draws something that each person in the group tells him/her to draw.

C. One person draws one drawing which represents the ideas of everyone in the group.

You may draw anything, but you may not use words.

3. Someone from your group will then explain your picture to the whole class.

-----

#### WRITING

1. Write about one of the times that you felt very proud of your child(ren).

2. Write about why you are happy to be a parent.

3. Write about some of the ways that your children changed your life for the better.

## Activity XIII

### "TV or not TV"

from Parents are Teachers, Too  
(adapted)

John Rosemond, author of Parent Power, feels that TV hurts a child's chances for success in school. A child who is used to seeing scenes change every 4 seconds on television is sure to be bored in the classroom. His attention span will be very short. It will also be difficult for him to listen well to his teacher.

In The Read-Aloud Handbook, Jim Trelease strongly suggests parents control the TV. He admits that this is more easily said than done. Trelease turned off the TV in his own house. After three months of no TV on school nights, there was time in the evenings to read aloud as a family, do homework, learn to play chess, play a sport, draw, paint and TALK.

Fred Rogers (of the TV show "Mister Rogers") tries hard to talk with children about things that are important to them. He says that television puts a lot of fears, doubts, and questions in a child's head. But television does not help a child to deal with those things. Mister Rogers feels that parents need to watch TV with the child so that they can answer or talk about the questions that came up during the show.

#### Discussion Questions

1. According to Rosemond, what effect does TV have on children?
2. According to Rosemond, what difficulties will a child who watches a lot of TV have in school?
3. What do you think of John Rosemond's ideas? Support your answer with details.
4. What could be said against Rosemond's ideas ?
5. According to Trelease, how should parents handle the TV ?

6. What changes did Trelease see in his children after they watched less TV?
7. What do you think about Trelease's ideas? Support your answer with details.
8. What could be said against Trelease's ideas ?
9. What does "Mister Rogers" try to do?
10. What does Rogers worry about ?
11. What does Rogers suggest parents do when their children watch TV?
12. How do you feel about Rogers' ideas? Support your answer with details.
13. What could be said against Rogers' ideas ?

#### WRITING ACTIVITY

How do you feel about TV watching?

Choose one of the following topics and write about it. Be sure to give details to support your views.

1. There are many things that can be learned from television. Children should be able to watch as much as they want.
2. Too much of anything is not good. Television watching should be limited to truly educational programs.
3. Television keeps my children out of my hair and lets me keep my sanity.

For the teacher:

"TV or not TV"

from the SABES Orientation  
Curriculum (adapted)

Small Group Discussion - Alternatives to Television

1. Form small groups and make a list of activities that the students' families enjoy when they do not watch TV. Have each group select a member to report to the class what that group listed.

2. The whole class can discuss when is it easy or enjoyable not to watch a lot of TV and when is it hard to turn off the TV. Have the students write a list similar to the one below. Discuss ways to reduce the negative influences and how to strengthen the positive ones.

WATCHING LESS TV

Easy Not to Watch

When we have something else to do (eg., have visitors)

Sundays, because we can go for a ride

On vacation, because I'm not so tired all the time

When I have the time to do something else with them

When both my husband and myself are at home

When the chores (cleaning, cooking, yard work) are done

Hard to Turn It Off

After work I'm so tired that I'm glad when the kids are watching TV and aren't all over me right away.

Because of my kids' age differences I find it hard to find anything to do that is interesting for the whole family.

They fight a lot when they don't watch TV.

Sometimes it's Sunday and we all want to do something special but then we don't know what and we can't agree on what to do, so we stay at home.

## Activity XIV

### "Ending the Homework Hassle"

from "Better Homes and Garden"  
Magazine, October 1990  
(adapted)

#### PREREADING ACTIVITY

Read the following questions and try to answer them. You will probably not be able to answer all the questions. Discuss your answers in class. Then read the article that follows.

1. What is one basic reason for doing homework ?
2. What should the parent do if the child is having a little trouble with the homework ?
3. Should a child do his homework in private or out among the rest of the family ?
4. What are the ABC's of homework ?
5. What emotional or behavioral skills should homework teach ?

#### WORD BANK

responsibility- duty, obligation

independence- self-support

perseverance- trying again and again

initiative- the quality of being able to get things going for the first time

self-reliance- being able to depend on oneself

resourcefulness- cleverness in thinking of other ways to do something

FILL IN THE BLANK

Choose the best word from the Word Bank to complete the following sentences.

1. Lena lives in her own apartment, has a job and pays her own bills. This shows a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. John started a paper drive for the whole neighborhood. He showed a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. By trying over and over, Maria finally figured out what the problem was. She showed great \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Laura thought of a new way to study her spelling words. She now uses a tape recorder instead of just looking at her word list. Laura showed a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Jose knows that he alone is responsible for getting his homework done. Jose shows a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.

## HOMWORK

Here are two views on homework.

1. Homework is the child's responsibility. It is the child's work and parents should generally not help the child. When parents help their children do their homework on a regular basis, they take over a problem that belongs to the child. The child will learn that she doesn't have to try very hard because her parents will help her anyhow. The child will not learn all the good qualities that come from doing homework alone: responsibility, independence, perseverance, time management, self-reliance.

(adapted from "Ending the Homework Hassle", by John Rosemond)

2. Your child will be self-confident when you encourage him in all his efforts. Be supportive and helpful about his homework. Guide your child through difficult homework, have the child do the work and let him feel the accomplishment. Be interested in your child's friendships and activities in and out of school.

(adapted from Parents and Kids Reading Together, D.C. Heath and Company, 1988)

### Questions to Ponder and Discuss

1. Summarize what John Rosemond says about homework.
2. Summarize what Parents and Kids Reading Together says about homework.
3. What do the two views about homework have in common ?
4. Do the opinions expressed in the two articles conflict in any way?

## Activity XV

### "Communication skills"

from How to Talk So Kids Will  
listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk  
by A. Farber and E. Mazlish  
(adapted)

For the teacher: This could be used as a Jigsaw activity, or each group's material could be used as an independent lesson.

The following is based on the assumption that good communication skills are essential in the parent-child relationship. Before starting the "Jigsaw" activities, be sure that the class understands this well. Have a discussion about the importance of good communication skills. Choose one or more of the following quotations to get started (see p. 5, "Suggestions for working with quotations"). Rephrase if the wording is too difficult.

"A blow with a word strikes deeper than a blow with a sword." - Robert Burton

"By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." - Bible, Matthew 12:37

"The tongue of a man is a twisty thing." - Homer

"Language is the dress of thought." - Samuel Johnson

"Speech is a mirror of the soul." - Publilius Syrus

"Words are weapons." - George Santayana

"Once a word has been allowed to escape, it can never be recalled." - Horace

## JIGSAW

1. Familiarize yourself with Jigsaw method by reading attached handout entitled "Jigsaw".

2. The four groups for the Jigsaw are given below. Each group receives the student worksheets for that group which are on the following pages.

Group A: Acknowledging feelings.

Group B: Describe the problem

Group C: Give a choice

Group D: Encouragement

## JIGSAW

The Jigsaw Method is a cooperative approach to learning. Students work first in small groups, called learning groups. Each group works together until all of its members understand a particular topic or part of a topic well. Each group's material is self-contained and does not need the information of the other groups to be understood, but the final goal is that the class learns the whole set of new information from all groups. After each group has mastered its material, the class forms new groups, called teaching groups, consisting of one member each of the previous learning groups. Each member of this group then teaches to the rest of his/her group the material he/she has earlier learned.

Step 1: Ask students to divide into equal-sized groups (learning groups). For example, if the topic is graphs, there could be three learning groups for bar graphs, line graphs and pie graphs. Hand out activity sheets to each group, along with specific instructions for that group. Tell them to be familiar enough with the activity to teach it to someone else. Set a time limit for completion of this step.

Step 2: While the learning groups are discussing their activities, hand out a different colored card to each member of a group. Now the groups will look like this:

<u>Bar graph</u>	<u>Line graph</u>	<u>Pie graphs</u>
O   O   O	O   O   O	O   O   O
red   blue   green	red   blue   green	red   blue   green

Step 3: When it is time to form the teaching groups, ask all people with the same colored card to form a new group (reds together, blues together, etc.). Each teaching group should have a member from each of the previous learning groups.

Teaching Group 1	Teaching Group 2	Teaching Group 3
O   O   O	O   O   O	O   O   O
BAR   LINE   PIE	BAR   LINE   PIE	BAR   LINE   PIE
red   red   red	blue   blue   blue	green   green   green

Step 4: Remind students that when they teach their activity to the rest of the group they should really assume the role of the teacher and not just tell the others what their particular group did. Tell them that they should check on the comprehension of the others when they teach.

Step 5: Call time every 15 minutes (depending on activity) so that each member of the teaching group has time to teach his/her activity to the rest of the group.

### TOPICS TO TEACH USING THE JIGSAW METHOD

Anything can be taught with the Jigsaw method but here are some specific suggestions:

**Forms:** Give each learning group a different form to fill out. In the teaching group they will teach their form to others.

**Prepositions:** Each group specializes in one preposition. Give pictures and worksheets. If time allows, let them draw and write their own examples for the teaching group.

Tables/charts

Branches of government

Mean, median and mode

Writing mechanics (for example, punctuation marks, capitalization rules, etc.)

### GROUPINGS:

The number of teaching groups is not necessarily the same as the number of learning groups. The number of students in each of the teaching groups should equal the number of learning groups (ie., the number of topics). For example, it is possible to have three learning groups of four students each. These would then break up into four teaching groups of three students each.

Learning Group 1	Learning Group 2	Learning Group 3
0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0
red blue grn black	red blue grn black	red blue grn black

Teaching Group 1 (all red)	Teaching Group 2 (all blue)	Teaching Group 3 (all green)	Teaching Group 4 (all black)
0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0

Group A: Acknowledging feelings

from Active Parenting, by Michael Popkin and How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and How to Listen So Kids Will Talk, by Faber and Mazlish (adapted)

Often times it makes us feel better when someone seems to understand our problems.

Example 1.

Tommy is crying because his pet turtle died. His father says, "What a shock! To lose a friend can hurt."

Example 2.

Husband: "I didn't get that job."

Wife: "I'm so sorry to hear that. You must feel so disappointed."

Example 3.

Susan is learning to tie her shoe, and is becoming impatient because she can't seem to get it right. Her mother says, "It must be very frustrating when you try so hard. But things like that take some time to learn."

1. Look at the following sentences and decide what the speaker is feeling.

1. I'd like to punch that Michael in the nose.

The child feels \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Just because of a little rain my teacher said we couldn't go on our field trip. She's dumb.

The child feels \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Mary invited me to her party, but I don't know..."

The child feels \_\_\_\_\_.

4. The bus driver yelled at me and everybody laughed.

The child feels \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Janey is moving away and she's my best friend.

The child feels \_\_\_\_\_.

6. We had basketball practice today and I couldn't catch that ball once.

The child feels \_\_\_\_\_.

7. I have been working on this puzzle for half an hour and I have only found 10 pieces.

The child sounds \_\_\_\_\_.

8. I'm Mary's best friend but today she said Jane is her best friend. I hate her. I hate her.

The child feels \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Now go back to each of these examples. Imagine you are the parent of that child and respond to your child's statement, acknowledging his or her feelings.

EXAMPLE:

1. I'd like to punch that Michael in the nose.

The child feels angry.

Parent's response: Michael, you sound really angry.

## Group B: Describe the Problem

Often our children do things that we can't tolerate or aren't willing to tolerate. How do we tell them that their behavior displeases us?

### Example I:

A: You have to be a slob to keep such a filthy room. You live like an animal.

B: I see a room that needs to be cleaned. I expect it to be cleaned before dinner.

1. What is the problem ?
2. How does parent A express the problem ?
3. How does parent B express the problem ?
4. How do you think the child will react to parent A ?  
What will be the result ?
5. How do you think the child will react to parent B ?  
What will be the result

### Example II

A. "Look at you! You're walking out the door without your lunch again. You'd forget your head if it weren't attached to you."

B. "Jamie, your LUNCH."

1. What is the problem ?
2. How does parent A express the problem ?
3. How does parent B express the problem ?
4. How do you think the child will react to parent A ?
5. How do you think the child will react to parent B ?

Example III:

A. "Is this the homework you're bringing to school tomorrow? Well, maybe your teacher can read chicken scratches; I can't."

B. "I'm having some trouble reading this paper. Ink has covered part of this word and you've crossed out that word."

1. What is the problem?
2. How does parent A express the problem?
3. How does parent B express the problem?
4. How do you think the child will react to parent A?
5. How do you think the child will react to parent B?

Here are statements from parents that need to be rewritten. How could you describe the problem to get the wanted result from your child ?

1. You're so irresponsible. You always start the tub and then forget about it. Do you want us to have a flood ?

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2. How many times do I have to tell you to turn off the bathroom light after you use it ?

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3. You kids never keep your promises. I've told you a hundred times to get your pajamas on and all you've been doing is clowning around. You agreed that before you watch TV you'd be in pajamas and I don't see a sign of anyone doing anything about it.

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4. It's sickening to see you eat. Don't you believe in using a fork ?

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5. Why are you acting so stupid ? Can't you see that I've just vacuumed the rug and now you've cookie crumbs all over it?

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6. You left your hamburger out on the table and now the dog got it. I can't believe you're that dumb.

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Group C: Give a choice

Often times we are more willing to do something when we have some control over how to do it. Just like ourselves, children respond better when given choices of how to do things.

Example I:

Situation: A child has to take medicine.

Choice: "Would you like to take it with apple juice or ginger ale?"

Example II:

Situation: Mother, father and their small child have to cross a busy street.

Choice: "Do you want to hold Mommy's or Daddy's hand?"

Example III:

Situation: Family is at a friend's birthday party. The parents want to leave in ten minutes.

Choice: "We have to go home in ten minutes. Do you want to play with Steven for a few more minutes while I get your things or do you want to come with me to get them."

For each situation below, give the child a choice.

1. Situation: A parent is bothered because a child is playing loud music.

Choice:

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2. Situation: The child wants to play with blocks but complains that her baby brother keeps knocking them over.

Choice:

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3. Situation: A child keeps interrupting his father.

Choice:

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4. Situation: It's bedtime and a child complains she's not tired.

Choice:

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5. Situation: A parent and a child go shopping for school clothes.

Choice:

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6. Situation: A parent tells a child that they will be leaving the playground in five minutes.

Choice:

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7. Situation: It's breakfast time and you have to feed your child.

Choice:

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Group D:

"Praise"

Children need encouragement like plants need water.

(Rudolf Dreikurs)

As parents we feel great joy and pride seeing our children learn new things and we love to compliment them. Praise is very helpful to children when it points out what it is that they did well. When praise describes a skill or a deed, children tend to think of themselves as skillful in that area and develop their ability and confidence in it. Praise like "Good boy" or "Great job" is too general for a child to learn from.

Example: A child took a very clear phone message for his mother.

Praise I

Good boy !

Praise II

The message was written so clearly, I knew exactly why the meeting was cancelled.

Praise II lets the child know exactly what he did well. The next time he takes a message he will remember what pleased his mother. Although Praise I is very common, it doesn't let the child know exactly what he did well.

Example: A child realized that the tuna fish on sale was really more expensive than the tuna fish the family usually bought.

Praise I

Praise II

You're terrific!

You figured out that the tuna fish on sale- the two for a dollar ones- are more expensive than the kind we always get. I'm impressed!

Praise I doesn't point out to the child what she did that was terrific. Praise II describes exactly what the child did well.

For each situation below, write some praise by describing in detail what you see or feel.

1. A young child has just dressed herself for the first time. She stands in front of you hoping you'll notice.

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2. You went to see your child in a school play. He plays the part of a king. After the show, your child comes running up to you and asks, "Was I good?"

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3. You notice that a child's schoolwork is improving. He has been practicing his vocabulary words until he knows them well. His last report was finished one day ahead of time.

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4. You have been sick in bed for a few days. Your child has drawn you a 'Get Well' card decorated with balloons and hearts. She hands it to you and waits for your response.

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5. Your son has been feeding the dog without being asked all week. He puts the food back where it belongs and makes sure that the dog has enough water.

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6. Your son has been neatly setting the table. He makes sure he gives everyone a napkin, fork, knife, plate and glass.

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7. You have been on the phone for half an hour and your child has not interrupted you once.

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Activity XVI

"The Perfect Parent Oath"

from Active Parenting, by  
Michael Popkin (adapted)

OATH

It's okay for me not to be perfect. It's okay not to be a perfect parent. It's okay that I have already made a lot of mistakes as a parent and it is okay that I will make mistakes in the future. What's not okay for me is to pretend that I am perfect. I will catch my mistakes- with a smile rather than a kick- and learn what they have to teach me. That way, I won't make the same mistake too often, and I'll become a better and better parent. But I'll never be a perfect parent, and that's okay, because my goal is excellence, not perfection.

## I LOSE MY TEMPER TOO MUCH

A lot of times I'm real short with my children and when I think about it later I realize that I didn't need to do that. I don't think I'm teaching them really well by losing my temper instead of explaining things to them.

P. C.

For the teacher:

"The Perfect Parent Oath"

1. As a class, read "I Lose My Temper Too Much" (from "The New Word", 1990). Discuss and have some students name some of their shortcomings. Consider the following questions:

Is it easy to accept shortcomings?  
Can others relate to these shortcomings?

2. Resolving guilt. Read "The Perfect Parent Oath" and discuss.

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