

NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT

Volume Two

**How to prepare children and
young people at school to be
good parents**

Ros Kane

Also available:

NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT

Volume One

**Teaching parenthood in schools:
Five centuries of heartfelt advocates**

Copies of both volumes available from:
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Front cover: Schoolboy in Colombia with lifelike baby doll,
National Geographic magazine, February 2018

ISBN 978-1-5272-6391-8

Published by *Before Becoming a Parent*
2024

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Printed by Book Printing UK

Dedicated to Fiadh Grace Kane, my baby granddaughter,
and to all her little contemporaries the world over.

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‘Despite the well-documented critical nature of early life experiences, we dedicate few resources to this time of life. We do not educate our children about development, parenting or the impact of neglect and trauma on children. We put more value in requiring hours of formal training to drive a car.’

*Professor Bruce Perry and Dr John Marcellus,
Child Trauma Academy, Texas*

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Thanks to everyone, too numerous to name, who contributed information and gave feedback about both volumes of this book,
and especially to Noël Janis-Norton for her meticulous comments and frequent encouragement which helped me keep going.

CONTENTS

Summary: How to teach good parenting.....1

Introduction.....

Part One: Why this is an urgent need

1 Lack of preparation: 'I was shocked'.....

2 Two Crises: Mental health and education.....

Part Two: Who's doing/has done what in UK secondary schools

3 Power2 (formerly Teens & Toddlers).....

4 Teenagers in Playgroups / Tots and Teens.....

5 Growing2Together.....

6 Virtual Babies.....

7 Teenage Parents / Straight Talking Peer Educators.....

8 WAVE: Parenthood & Relationships Education Project

9 Before Becoming a Parent (B4BP).....

10 Other parent education in schools.....

11 Parenthood education in other countries.....

Part Three: The central role of drama

- 12 'I don't usually like working much, do I, Miss?
But I could have worked on that forever'

Part Four: Who is doing what in the US

- 13 Virtual babies in US secondary schools.....
- 14 Educating Communities for Parenting (ECP) 1976
- 15 p.a.p.a. (Parenting and Paternity Awareness) 1988
- 16 Parents Under Construction (PUC) 1991
- 17 Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) courses.....
- 18 Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education
1997.....
- 19 Educate Tomorrow's Parents (ETP) 2005).....

Part Five: Work with 3-11-year-olds

- Preamble.....
- 20 Roots of Empathy (ROE) and Seeds of Empathy.....
- 21 BASE®BabyWatching & Watch and Wonder.....
- 22 Other baby/parent observation schemes: Circles for Learning
& Understanding Each Other
- 23 Flour Babies.....
- 24 Year Six Help the Nursery.....

Part Six: How to teach parenting in schools

- 25 What qualities do you need?.....
- 26 Cynthia Reynolds: secondary students' expert.....
- 27 What makes for memorable parenthood education?.....

Part Seven: Evidence, evaluation and feedback

- 28 Secondary schools UK: evidence, evaluation, feedback....
- 29 Before Becoming a Parent: evidence, evaluation, feedback....
- 30 Projects in the US: evidence, evaluation, feedback.....
- 31 Work with under-11s: evidence, evaluation, feedback.....

Part Eight: Resources to use

- 32 Role-plays, poems, songs, facts, quizzes, myths etc....

Bibliography.....

Some relevant organisations.....

Index.....

Summary: How to teach good parenting

This section is for:

- People who have no time or desire to read the whole book but who want to know what it's about or get quick information about teaching good parenting. Each section below is dealt with in far more depth and detail in the following chapters;
- People who've read the book and would like a summary.

Education for parenthood: ideal ways to do it

Here is the best possible programme for ages 3-to-18. It deserves a place at the centre of the curriculum for every student throughout their school years. I know the reality: a case of 'the art of the possible.' I don't believe parenthood education should comprise of just a short course – too much is at stake. But if all you can do is start something on a modest scale, that's far better than nothing. Who knows? It could lead to greater things.

All lessons should be:

- Stimulating, lively and memorable;
- Enjoyable and mostly 'fun' (though there are some heavy topics which aren't fun);
- Interactive;
- Varied to prevent boredom and restlessness, with short items if students have short attention spans, with surprise items weekly;
- Responsive to the needs, interests, life circumstances, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and desires of the students;
- Flexible: no lesson plans made of stone. Because parenthood education should be mandatory at least once a week during a child's entire school career, there would be time in future to swap a planned topic by something of particular interest today. The planned topic can be covered later;
- Making use of a variety of methods to cater for students who learn in different ways and have different interests: visually,

practically, scientifically, logically, artistically, personally, emotionally, historically, verbally;

- Without tests, exams or compulsory written work. These change the nature of the lessons and encourage a tick-box mentality, instead of learning for its own sake, its relevance, intrinsic interest and enjoyment. Academic pressures are off-putting for non-academic students, and it is good for bright, ambitious, competitive students to do something divorced from any promise of a top mark;
- Aiming for 'the flow', when staff and students alike are disappointed when the lesson is over;
- Free from the slightest hint of judgment.

*School is a place where they **make** you go and where they **tell** you to do things and where they try to make your life unpleasant if you don't do them or don't do them right.* John Holt, How Children Fail

Primary level

Ages three-to-seven

- Seeds of Empathy is for children: aged three-to-five;
- From five years, every child takes part in weekly baby watching, Watch and Wonder, Roots of Empathy (ROE) or Circles of Learning when they observe a parent and baby who visit the class regularly for 20 or 30 minutes. Watch and Wonder is designed so that the school can become self-sufficient.

Ages eight-to-eleven

- Children can observe several parents – who ideally include mothers, fathers and couples – to reinforce learning and appreciate the differences between babies and between parents. Some visits should comprise of two or more parent/baby or parent/toddler couples, so that children can observe how infants relate to each other e.g. signs of empathy between them, and observe the different ways the parents relate to their baby;

- Watch and Wonder, ROE etc is repeated each year, as children become more sophisticated and gain different understanding and knowledge;
- Each child is given a flour baby to care for night and day for a few weeks. The learning is reinforced and expanded if the school also has Philosophy for Children or Circle Time for all, and nurture groups for children needing extra small group nurturing;
- There are excellent picture books for young children about ‘situations’, such as parents splitting up or a child getting very angry. The class can pretend to read one to a young child, then discuss the value this has for the child – being read to by a parent, and reading about difficult human feelings. Letterbox Library has an especially rich collection of books like this, many of which you can’t find elsewhere.

Secondary level

Every young person attends compulsory lessons each week about parenthood for the entire time at secondary school, whether single sex, boarding, independent, public, free, academy, faith, special, pupil referral unit or state maintained. These lessons should be based on the principles and practice below.

Drama

Most or much of the teaching is through drama. Experience suggests that this is one of the most effective ways to enable people to remember what they learn. It can include role-play, forum theatre, freeze frames, thought-tapping, puppetry, playback theatre, theatre as debate, visits by theatre in education companies, and writing a play and presenting it to others (students, staff, parents and other schools.) See chapter 12. You will find resources in chapter 32.

Other arts

All of the arts are an enjoyable, memorable way to learn: singing, rap, poetry, dance, graphic design, drawing, painting, mime, storytelling, photography, sculpture, collage, depending on the students' interests, staff skills, and resources in the school and community such as teachers' special interests, parents' contributions and those of local artists of all kinds.

Film

- Show short clips during lessons about, for example, childbirth, babies, parental behaviour, domestic violence and childrearing in other cultures. Many charities concerned with parenting produce DVDs. The charity Concord Media rents out others;
- Set up film clubs at lunchtime, after school, during registration or school holidays, with short and longer films. Invite parents;
- Students make and show their own films; film makers and film students are invited to help, including the use of ideas from Video Interaction Guidance, an effective method to help parents with relationships and communication and to become more sensitive and attuned to their child's emotional needs.

One-off visits by parents

Articulate, reliable parents are invited to talk to a class and can represent, over the years, the following:

- A stable couple, married or not;
- A single parent, male or female;
- A father or, even better, two fathers together;
- A teenage parent or couple, e.g. via Family Nurse Partnership;
- Gay and trans parents and couples, male and female, of all ethnicities and religions;
- People who have chosen not to be a parent;
- Parents from the main ethnic populations in the school;
- Foster carers and adoptive parents;
- A parent with a child with special needs;
- Parents with special needs;

- Step-parents;
- Grandparents.

Visitors from the early years' world

School is more interesting for everyone with visitors from outside agencies. Their visits are usually remembered more than normal school lessons. The speakers need to like young people and have the skills of addressing groups. It helps if they are young - or colourful characters. They could be, for example:

- Midwives and health visitors;
- Family planning clinicians;
- Domestic violence workers;
- Relationship counsellors;
- Breastfeeding advisers, e.g La Leche League or NCT;
- Play specialists;
- Workers with teenage parents;
- Childminders.

Visits in small groups to early years' venues

Small groups visit ante-natal clinics; maternity units; special care baby units; day nurseries; childminders' play groups; toy libraries.

Practical work with babies and children

All students are given placements in an early years' setting. This can be for an hour or two a week for at least one term, buddying one young child or helping with several. Teachers need to visit them during the placement. There has to be enough time at school to discuss their experiences in a group, with emotional support as needed in a group or individually.

Virtual babies

All students are given the chance to take home a life-like 'baby' for the weekend to experience what it is really like to care for a young baby full-time. The dolls are expensive, so only a few are likely to

be available. A waiting list is necessary. Because this activity needs the agreement and co-operation of parents, they are invited to informal, friendly meetings (with free refreshments) at the school to explain the value and practicalities. Or it is far cheaper to make flour babies, for students of any age, to keep with them all the time for several weeks. Students might choose to keep a journal and report their experiences, with the virtual baby or flour baby, to the class.

Play materials

Bubbles, slime, balloons, playdough, sand and water are used in one lesson to show the fun possible with cheap materials. It takes students back to their own early years, connecting them to a young child's feelings, or filling in gaps of what they didn't have.

True and False statements

These are printed on small, coloured, laminated cards. Each student picks a few at random, reads one out in turn and the class discusses it, saying whether they agree, disagree or are not sure. They don't have to give an immediate answer - might even sleep on it and report back next week. The teacher arranges impromptu role-plays about the more controversial statements or those that elicit the most interest. Examples of statements in chapter 32.

Facts

Well-chosen, photo-enlarged press cuttings, or surprising, dramatic or humorous facts from other sources are presented to a class and can have a strong impact. Students can respond in imaginative ways, such as role-play. Invite them to bring in press cuttings of their own or social media items.

Case studies

Most of us are fascinated by other people's stories. Exploit this shamelessly. There are so many examples: a mother's shock when her three-year-old, who had been 'her whole life,' becomes 'as nothing' to her when the new baby is born – something she would

never have predicted. This is used as a basis for a choice of art forms. Quiz your friends and relations for good stories, or read them in publications of many kinds. Students contribute a case about people they know - even, anonymously, their own case. Situations are acted out; students are invited to give advice to the actors on how to change the outcome.

Unanswered questions

Students ask questions about sex, relationships, parenting or anything else. If they write well enough, they have an opportunity during every lesson to write questions anonymously and put them in a covered box. These are answered that day or the next week.

Homework

This is optional and fun. Activities are a mix of suggestions by the teacher and ideas by the students: e.g. discreet observation in public of a family, with observations recorded later in a journal to relate to the class. Students assess how hard it is for parents to use public transport or do shopping. They research their own families: interview parents or other relatives; discover what it was like for their parents and grandparents to be children and then become parents. They create a poem, painting or other art form.

Endings

When they leave secondary school, all students are given a certificate and an attractive, sturdy handbook with reminders of what they've learnt and a list of useful health and welfare agencies for now and in the future.

6th form / further education colleges / universities

Students aged 16-plus have an increasing interest in the subject: they are more likely to know teenage parents; to have relationships which might produce children, planned or not; to have had a pregnancy scare or termination. Contraception is a real concern for many. Despite academic pressures, there should be a core

provision about parenthood for them all, preparing them for what many will experience within five-to-ten years: having a baby.

Some of the qualities needed to teach parenthood

- Informality;
- Genuine interest in the subject;
- Flexibility;
- Sense of humour;
- Emotional literacy;
- Preferably being a parent. A suitable non-parent is not ideal but preferable to a parent who is unsuited to teach the subject;
- The ability to discern signs of emotional distress and ensure that they are addressed;
- Sensitivity and tact;
- A willingness to allow behaviour which is more spirited than is allowed in other lessons;
- A willingness to use occasional self-disclosure to avoid talking from on high. This nurtures an intimate atmosphere, shows that everyone makes mistakes and can recover; e.g. the teacher might refer to his or her own childhood or own childrearing. This helps students reflect on their own lives and families.

Points to consider:

Enough time

The school or college leadership must allocate enough staff enough time to organise speakers, arrange placements, visit and supervise placements, and liaise with colleagues: for example, science teachers for neuroscience, drama teachers for the play, maths teachers about family costs, English teachers for literary excerpts etc.

Emotional distress

Some students get upset if the subject matter evokes difficult feelings from their own childhoods or current lives. There is a

dedicated box where they can write their feelings and name, or just their name, so a suitable member of staff can talk with them one to one, as soon as possible. Staff members might also become upset and need support.

Disclosures

Student inadvertently or purposely reveals something of concern about self or someone else. The teacher follows this up in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy.

Who runs the classes?

- Parenthood fits most naturally into PSHE lessons. However, the mandatory guidance from the government about parenthood education is of little length or depth. Many schools do not have a dedicated PSHE teacher;
- Religious education and drama are suitable homes for these lessons, as long as teachers are suited to the work;
- Citizenship is a national curriculum subject at secondary level, though it omits parenting;
- Lessons can be delivered by any staff member with the right qualities, whatever subject or status, including learning mentors, teaching assistants or mid-day assistants keen to develop their skills;
- Aspects of parenthood are integrated into most subjects. Teachers in many departments discuss who teaches what, and how.

Every school/college a therapeutic community

We advocate a belt and braces approach, rather like London's Freedom Pass for everyone over 60: not every older person needs free travel but there are advantages in a universal benefit. Those students and staff members who could do with the effects of a therapeutically-minded environment find their needs met, at least to an extent. This will help prevent both emotional burn-out in adults and mounting distress in students.

A peek at one version of ideal, comprehensive, lifelong conditions for good parenting

Let's end by something utopian. Imagine the life history of an emotionally healthy person – 'P', then imagine how harmonious the world could be if P were everyone. P is a wanted, welcomed baby. The mother feels ready for parenthood, has a decent home in a peaceful district with a garden, nearby park, committed partner, probably resident. They've known each other for long enough to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses, never fight verbally or physically but sort out conflicts peacefully; don't smoke, drink to excess or have much to do with recreational drugs. They earn enough to live on, are on good terms with their own parents, siblings, friends, colleagues and neighbours and have both done their best to resolve whatever mental health difficulties they've had. Or they might live in a shared situation, such as a happy commune or extended family.

They go to ante-natal clinics and classes, eat healthily, relax. They know their birth plan must remain flexible. If there are problems with the birth or post-natal period, they find help to overcome them. P is breastfed on demand for many months and sleeps near the parents' bed. P has regular health checks and vaccinations. If the partner is a breadwinner, the most is made of co-parent leave. The mother has made several local friends who have babies and spends some of the first few months in their company. When both parents live together, they share household and childcare tasks. P is treated with sensitivity; needs are noticed and met. P begins to feel close to the mother, and later to the other parent and adults too.

If the mother chooses to return to work after several months (she never has to), the couple find childcare which they feel completely happy with, making sure there is continuity of staff. Or else the

partner stays at home, or both parents work, study or do other projects part-time. P has two stable, responsive role models.

At three, P starts at a local nursery half-time, then full-time. Parents are welcome to get involved, get to know the teachers and other children. At five, P goes to infant school: a mother and baby come to the classroom once a week for half an hour. This helps P to adapt to, and help look after, the new baby at home. P goes to classes after school and at weekends such as football or ballet. There's no pressure to do so. P has time to muck about at home too.

All through primary school, P is treated with respect and sensitivity by every member of staff, all of whom are happy at work and find school exciting, interesting and enjoyable. Children do Philosophy for Children or Circle Time. They are given no tests or exams. There are lots of outdoors and arts activities. Each year another parent and baby visit the classroom. P learns *about the* differences between babies and between parents. P's parents continue to contribute, for example on school outings and journeys or teaching the class about their hobbies.

All the local children of all social classes go to the same secondary school which is known as an approachable and cheerful place. P, confident and happy, adapts easily to the bigger school. The exam system is low-key and causes no anxiety. One lesson a week is about babies, children and parents. All the students visit early years settings and attend one on placement. A variety of good speakers come in to talk about their work with parents and children, or their life as a parent. It is now second nature for P to know how to care for children and understand parenting because P has been well cared for by his/her parents from the moment of conception and because parenting has always been a school subject. Good parenting has been internalised permanently.

When schooling ends, P has a few ideas about what job to go for and can discuss them with parents and teachers. There is no pressure to go to university, only encouragement to decide what really is of interest. P finds fulfilling work, has good friends and eventually decides to become a parent, having chosen a suitable partner with care. The benign cycle is repeated.

Society must early prepare for parenthood in children; and it must take care of the unavoidable remnants of infantility in its adults.

Erik H Erikson, Children and Society

Most school learning is about intellectual, cognitive understanding or the ingestion of information – not feelings.

Anon

Introduction

*There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul
than the way it treats its children.* Nelson Mandela

This book is about a way to help reduce human suffering. It's a 'one-stop shop' to give you everything you need to know about the practice of a simple idea. Its only purpose is to encourage and equip schools, and other agencies and people working with children and teenagers, to prepare them for parenthood. It advocates well-taught education for every boy and girl aged 3-to-18 as a core part of the curriculum at every type of school throughout their entire school years, on a par with the time given to English and maths. Certainly, there are disagreements amongst experts as to what constitutes good parenting, and huge differences in how various cultures do it, but that musn't prevent us from tackling all-important considerations: What are the needs of babies and children? What sorts of upbringing are most likely to lead to a happier, more peaceful society?

As Dr Myriam Miedzian had written: 'Is it not strange that one of the most important and difficult skills, raising children, goes untaught? Learning parenting skills is vital because the early experiences of children's lives impact their potential for learning and mental health. We need to create better parents because neglected or abused children are especially prone to perpetuate this cycle when they become adults without resources for healthy parenting. School-based parenting education programs can help to prevent future child abuse and work to build healthy children by developing an understanding of child development in future parents and by providing parenting skills such as empathy, listening, problem solving and critical thinking.'

You won't find many references here to learned papers (there are lots elsewhere.) The two volumes make a long book, but as no one

is ever likely to write so comprehensively again about this topic, I don't want to omit anything which might be interesting or useful: the history of the idea and everything that's been attempted or recommended.

To try to contribute a tiny bit towards the proliferation of this education, I show in Volume One how much has been said, written and done in the past by so many impassioned people, and to present you with the wealth of materials which has been developed, tried and tested on both sides of the Atlantic over many decades so that you can be part of the solution. (I've used American spelling in the parts about the US and Canada, as English spelling can jar on readers over there.) If you want to provide parenthood education as a school staff member, youth worker, mental health professional or anyone else, you needn't reinvent the wheel. Everything you require is, I hope, in this book. You can copy or devise your own courses by reading what other people have done or are doing. You'll find over 40 schemes or sets of course materials. Some of these curricula overlap; by reading them all, you will get the ideas reinforced. I have let the courses speak for themselves; each contributes new perspectives. Some will appeal to you, or suit your students' needs and interests, more than others. The aim is to teach parenthood so well, so thoroughly, for so many years, that ***good parenting becomes second nature***, staying with the students indelibly for the rest of their lives.

It is not just teachers who can impart this subject. Personality and personal qualities are far more important than status. Anyone at the school, from the right caretaker to the right headteacher or chair of governors, could do a good job, given enough time and high-quality training, support and supervision. When I refer to the teacher, that just means the adult, or even the young person, who runs, or co-runs, the sessions.

Being prepared for what can happen between a couple when a new baby is born, or understanding how to deal well with, for instance, your toddler's tantrums, seem to me far more important and relevant to real life than knowing about past participles or quadratic equations. In the meantime, what do you think of this from my local paper?

Moped acid attack

Two teenagers have been arrested after an acid attack that left a delivery driver fighting for his life. Police say a 32-year-old pizza delivery man, Muhammed Nawshad Kamal, may be permanently blinded after he was assaulted in Walpole Road, Walthamstow, last Thursday. Officers believe that Mr Kamal was attacked at around 6pm that evening while completing rounds at work on his moped. He was approached by two men [sic], also riding a scooter, who attempted to steal his bike, throwing acid in his face repeatedly in the process. Police arrested a 14-year-old boy on and a 16-year-old boy in connection with the incident.

Yes: a 14-year-old and a 16-year-old. They probably attended, recently left, or were excluded from schools in my London borough of Waltham Forest. After one's first reactions of judgement and revulsion, it is more useful to simply ask: Why? The first question in my mind, time after time after time as horrendous street crimes mount up, is: How were these boys parented? I find it impossible to believe that any little child who feels protected, nurtured, listened to, cared about, who has his emotional needs met well enough from day one, could become a teenager who throws acid into a stranger's face. How on earth could these teenagers become parents who understand and meet their own children's needs? And what were the childhoods of the teenagers' own parents like?

Parenting is the biggest single factor affecting children's wellbeing and development. Public Health England

In the same edition of the paper, we read of crack dealers plotting an acid attack on a former boxer and a ‘teenager disembowelled in attack’ in the street by two young men aged 18. Similar stories are reported in every local paper in every urban area every week. In 2023, 21 teenagers were killed on London streets - young men (mostly) killed by other young men: shot or knifed to death, often in incidents relating to gangs, drugs or the acquisition of someone’s mobile phone. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of women killed by their partners or ex-partners. One in five adults were abused in some way before the age of 16: all social classes are affected. The US Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect report that 75 percent of people who commit the most violent offences will have suffered serious abuse from a family member.

The welfare of today’s children is inseparably linked with the peace of tomorrow’s world. Henri Labouisee, Nobel Prize winner 1965

This book is about helping children and teenagers to think, learn, but mostly *feel* about the emotional health of babies, children, young people and parents, how they themselves might become a good parent in future, and how they can look after their own mental health – and that of their partner – in order not only to raise happy children but to enjoy parenthood. The book is not specifically about teenage parents. Its aim is not to prevent teenage parenthood, although that might be one result of the work we describe.

Why did I write this book? Not so much from personal experience. As a child I didn’t think of myself as a future mother and had no notion that parenthood could be one of the best things in life. As a teenager I immersed myself in the books of A. S. Neill. I had done a lot of living by the time I had my one child ‘late’ in life with a reasonably good, if not perfect, idea of how to bring her up, along with her devoted, child-friendly dad. I developed a growing fascination with pregnancy, childbirth and parenting, and would

approach strangers in cafés to ask about their experience, not believing that such self-possessed young women with their neat make-up were, only a few weeks before, going through the wild, primeval, dramatic process of giving birth. I learnt how several friends fared who had adopted deeply damaged children. I got involved with the La Leche League, went to NCT coffee mornings, a Parentlink group at the local school, joined Stepfamily, set up a NEWPIN centre, initiated the Newham Parents' Forum, did a two-year infant observation course, tried to support a few desperate parents, and had friends whose child had died, or who were single parents, or suffered all manner of situations and difficulties. In this book, my interest in all of that, and my work in schools, prisons, alternatives to prison, addiction, psychotherapy, children's emotional life, and diverse community activities have been brought together. Going back to the very roots of social and psychological problems by wondering how parenting can be improved universally, seems the logical thing to do.

If there's a book you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it. Toni Morrison

I realised, whilst co-running a charity offering play therapy, that children's emotional problems were usually, if not always, explained, or partly explained, by the way they were being brought up. My determination to do something about all this has been sharpened by the recent phenomenon of the 'mobile phone mother' (or father.) Early years teachers report parents at the school gate glued to their phones while their excited little children run up to them and get no welcome. 'They feel crushed,' a teacher told me, 'and by the age of nine are cynical.' We read of five-year-olds starting school unable to talk or use the toilet. Surely it makes sense - is essential - to prepare young people well in advance for good parenting. Those of us in the UK and US who have tried this, know that it can be done.

As I researched who had done what in this field, I became more and more staggered by the number of people who have passionately met, talked and written about it over centuries, and the number of popular projects, mostly now moribund, which reached huge numbers of youngsters, usually at school. I determined to record, under one roof, all the people I could find and all the work I could ferret out, and it's all here in the two volumes of this book.

Their efforts must not go uncelebrated, but that's not all. They deserve to inspire and motivate others - you, me and the powers-that-be - to make full use of their carefully constructed, honed and evaluated work so that all that money, time and labour doesn't go to waste. And so that we gradually help to break the cycle, *in every social class*, of the harmful or inadequate parenting that creates so much avoidable suffering. What hope is there of enormous improvements in parenting unless we start in schools?

The case seems to me simple and obvious, boiling down to:

Fact one

Many people in every social class become parents without knowing how to do the job in 'good-enough' ways. Many pregnancies are unplanned. Some are unwanted. The children are deprived (from day one and before) of the best possible emotional start in life. This can result in poor mental health and all kinds of social ills which get passed down to the next generation and to generations after that.

Fact two

Nearly all children and young people in the UK go to school for at least 11 years. (Home education is still rare, though growing.) Of these, 80-to-90 percent are likely to become parents, adoptive,

foster or step-parents, others aunts and uncles or have some other contact, personal or professional, with children. As school students, they are a captive (albeit usually very willing) audience.

Fact three

It is feasible to teach every single child and teenager about 'good-enough' parenting. It's fascinating and fun. Experience shows that nearly all teenagers (males too) find the subject, related as it is to their main preoccupations - sex and relationships - of enormous, pressing interest. And very young children are charmingly receptive to learning about babies and their mums and dads.

And now a hypothesis

Long-enough parenthood education at school, as a core curriculum subject, taught well enough, through vivid methods by the right people who have adequate training, support and supervision, is likely to result in better parenting in future by at least some students once they start to have children, mostly within five or ten years after leaving school.

Fact four - the depressing bit

Only long-term research could provide the evidence. We will consider the slim possibility of that happening.

In Volume One of this book, *Parenthood Education in Schools: Five centuries of heartfelt advocates*, I recount the surprising history of this idea, what has been done about it mainly in the UK and north America. I ask why this education is not being provided. What are the psychological, conscious, unconscious, political and economic reasons why the people who decide what students are taught seem to be so resistant to a thorough, long-term inclusion of a subject which could make such a significant contribution to a happier, safer society? Finally, I ask: what are schools for? What do they need to be like in order to nurture the emotional wellbeing of

students but also, importantly, of every staff member, every parent and carer?

In this volume, I describe in detail what's being done at the moment (2024, or has been done till recently) and how. I discuss the vital differences between a short, superficial course (e.g. parenting 'skills' or 'techniques') and a long, deep, memorable, emotionally impactful process of understanding, accumulated throughout the school years. I describe work with children from a very early age which fosters empathy about babies and parents, their feelings and relationships; this sows the seeds for more profound learning, once they become adolescents. I hold that parenthood education should be taught in many settings as well as in mainstream co-educational schools: for example, single-sex, faith, public, boarding and special schools including pupil referral units, further education, higher education, youth offender institutions, prisons, youth clubs and youth projects.

From July 2022, every type of school in England has had to teach 'Relationships' in primary schools and 'Relationships and Sex' in secondaries. There's meagre attention in government guidance to parenting, a far cry from the substantial, comprehensive, deep treatment advocated in this book.

In 1989 the United Nations agreed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UK signed up in 1991. If we read five clauses, as summarised by the Children's Rights Alliance for England, we see that preparing young people for parenthood fits neatly into our obligations. A child or young person is anyone up to 17. This includes babies (though, interestingly, they are not specified.)

- *Article 3:* The best interests of children and young people should always be top priority. Adults should always try to do what is best for them. Governments must do everything to make sure children and young people are safe and well looked after;

- *Article 5:* Children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, including smacking;
- *Article 6:* Every child and young person has the right to survival and maximum development;
- *Article 8:* Governments must do all they can to make sure every child and young person has the best possible life;
- *Article 19:* Governments must do everything to protect children and young people from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment.

A significant development is the *1001 Days Manifesto* produced in 2013, represented in parliament by a cross party group of MPs: Andrea Leadsom and Tim Loughton (Conservatives), Paul Burstowe (Liberal Democrat), Caroline Lucas (Green), Frank Field (Labour), Philippa Whitford (Scottish National Party), Mark Durkan (Social Democratic and Labour Party, Northern Ireland), Jim Shannon (Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland) and Liz Saville-Roberts (Plaid Cymru, Wales.) It is ‘a vision for the provision of services in the UK for the early years period which puts forward the moral, scientific and economic case for the importance of the conception to age two period.’ The WAVE Trust, the NSPCC and PIPUK (now called the Parent-Infant Foundation) were the manifesto’s chief contributors.

There have been countless well-attended All-Party Parliamentary Group meetings at the House of Commons, many critical reports produced. In an age of austerity, it is doubtful whether this call for action, despite its high-level impassioned support, can be met to anything like the necessary extent. But schools exist already. Thorough parenthood education for each student in each school could possibly make a huge difference in meeting needs from the moment of conception to the age of two (the 1001 Critical Days), and years after.

Dr Paul Williams, GP, former MP/chair of the parliamentary Health and Social Care Committee, said that he wants ‘this country to be the most supportive and caring place in the world that a child could be born into.’ His report praised Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for offering more than the minimum of five health visitor visits in England where government cuts have led to a shrinkage of services.

How might we describe the ideal conditions for ‘good enough’ parenting? Something like this, perhaps:

- Baby’s wanted (even if unplanned), welcomed by both parents;
- Parents are not stressed by factors such as poverty, bad housing, a bad relationship, poor physical and/or mental health, substance abuse, isolation or living in a dangerous unpleasant neighbourhood;
- Baby is well looked after by at least one parent or adult (who has a support system of family, friends and neighbours) and has mostly positive experiences before going to daycare or school;
- Aged three-to-five, the child receives lessons such as Seeds of Empathy, learning about good emotional health
- School is an emotionally healthy place where all staff are happy, well supported and model good parenting and respectful, friendly relationships;
- For those aged four-to-eleven, the school offers work such as Watch and Wonder or Roots of Empathy. Projects such as Philosophy for Children, nurture groups and Circle Time can add extra value. The emphasis is on emotional wellbeing and relationships rather than exams and academic achievement;
- Secondary school gives well-taught weekly parenthood education for all in Years 7 - 13 (11-to-18-year-olds.) The syllabus is huge. Parents of all sorts and their babies of visit to talk with students. Students have placement in early years settings and look after a fake infant such as a ‘virtual baby’ or flour baby. Every student at every type of school leaves with a

deep, detailed and memorable understanding of the universal emotional needs of babies, children and parents or carers. Treating babies and children kindly and sensitively has become second nature;

- Ante-natal clinic is attended by both parents. Pregnant and new parents have the choice of an extensive range of easily available, local, free support, advice, help and emergency services seven days a week and the chance to become involved in their local community of parents and non-parents.

An emphatic call for universal, mandatory, core curriculum parenthood education is controversial. I hope you enjoy the book and will be inspired to do, or facilitate, your own experiments. Let me know how you get on. I offer free support, seminars and training all over the UK. The struggle continues....

The new phenomenon sweeping Western Europe is parenthood education. It is seen by some to encourage better health care for young children, by others to alleviate crime and rates of broken homes.

James Cowley, TACADE, 1979

Part One

Why this is an urgent need

Chapter One

Lack of preparation: ‘I was shocked’

It is extraordinary how many people have never met a baby as young as a week old and are really startled when they do meet one.

Margaret Bonfiglioli

Poor parenting can make children intensely unhappy, scars lasting into adulthood. Claire Rayner, in her fascinating autobiography *How Did I Get Here from There?*, gives a vivid account of her mother. ‘I hated her, not only for her posing and pretending but for her cruelty to me. Her own childhood had been painful.’ Her mother, when ‘feeling lousy about herself’, would fly into a rage ‘that ended in wallops for me.’ The psychoanalyst Alice Miller tells of a young couple walking along with their little girl, eating their ice creams without buying her one and laughing at her when she wanted her own. Abuse, neglect, humiliation, tactlessness, resentment are just some of the ways in which babies, children and adolescents suffer at the hands of parents and carers, not to mention the widespread occurrence of parents fighting (verbally or physically), known to damage children’s brains. What can we do to try to minimise the hurt imposed on defenceless youngsters, to prepare parents-to-be for their most difficult but important job, and enable them to find parenthood more enjoyable?

I invited several people I knew to fill in a questionnaire and be interviewed about their experiences of parenthood. I was surprised by what was written and told. All the following was recounted by women in a healthy relationship, with good housing, an adequate income and no stated problems in living. (I’ve given them all pseudonyms.) I asked:

- When you had your first baby, what were your experiences? Elaborate on what, if anything, surprised or shocked you; what, if anything, you found difficult;

- Did you learn about having babies/bringing up children before you had yours? If so, where did you learn it?
- If you had had parenthood classes at school, do you think you would have welcomed them? If so, what do you think you would like to have learnt? Do you think you would have remembered what you learnt, once you had your first baby?
- What is your opinion about making it mandatory for every school student to have parenthood education?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about the idea of preparing children and young people for the realities and emotional aspects and needs of parenthood?

Miranda, a white middle-class woman of 35, lives in a big city in England with a decent husband and satisfying work. ‘I found it very hard when I had my first baby. I knew almost nothing. I just didn’t know people with babies and had almost no experience of taking care of babies. I didn’t grow up around babies. Looking back, I can’t believe how naïve I was. I just imagined myself walking through sunny parks with a sleeping baby in a pram.

‘I was shocked at how relentless it was: the 24/7 nature of parenthood hit me and my husband hard. Our baby didn’t sleep well and was very clingy which made me feel even more exhausted and trapped. Looking back, I think I had post-natal depression. My husband probably did too. I feel I went through a phase of genuinely mourning my old, pre-baby life. I was the first of my close friends to have a baby, so it was a lonely experience.

‘My family lives over three hours away. I had an NCT [National Childbirth Trust] group who were wonderful and still are, and kept me just about sane. We made each other’s lives bearable for that first year. I was lucky because they were all very open about how hard they were finding things which made me feel better.

‘The mundaneness of parenthood surprised me: monotony, sheer boredom sometimes. All that time spent pandering to this little baby’s needs, cleaning up after her, sweeping up under her high chair, wiping down my kitchen: endless. I spent so much time on my knees! It was a million times easier with my second child. I knew what to expect and, more importantly, that the newborn phase wouldn’t last forever. I had the number of a great child sleep therapist by then. I knew any bad sleeping could be fixed.’

What did she think about parenthood classes for teenagers? ‘I don’t know if I would’ve taken them seriously. I think it would all have seemed so unrelated and so far away in the future that I may have thought it didn’t apply to me. However, if certain issues had been brought to my attention, then they may have stuck with me, such as how hard it is to look after a baby. It’s a unique kind of difficulty. The individual tasks are in theory mind-numbing (washing clothes, dressing your baby etc) but when you add it all up, it can be totally overwhelming. Just finding the time to shower and eat is shockingly difficult. And the tiredness is devastating.

‘Compulsory classes can’t hurt. Anything that gets people talking about the realities of parenthood is good. I recommend the book *Life After Birth* to all my newly pregnant friends nowadays – it was a life-saver for me. There should be more books like that. I think it’s getting better and people are talking more about how hard some of us find early parenthood but I still think there’s a long way to go. I think it might be hard initially to get school children to take the content seriously but some messages would hopefully get through and come back to them in the future.’

I was struck by the way Miranda ended our conversation. ‘Thank you for letting me have my say.’ It reminded me of research I’ve done on childbirth where participants said how grateful they were for being heard. We forget that people who have been through traumatic experiences of any kind need a chance to relate it to

sympathetic listeners - perhaps again and again. Miranda's story can be replicated thousands of times – literally. (There were 605,479 live births in 2022 in England and Wales.)

*Our amazing naivety about the impact of having children!
We just had no idea how much time and emotion children captured
and how they simply changed our lives.*

The Making of a Confused Middle-Aged Husband, S Miller

‘I hated every minute of it’

Some people have children without being cut out for it. Jo, for example, an only child, didn't enjoy motherhood. In fact, she 'hated every minute of it. I was landed with a little bundle of responsibility. I'd never seen or held a baby till I was 28 and had mine. I didn't have a clue. Her screaming drove me mad. I could barely take care of myself. I wanted to change the world and got sidetracked. It was so time-consuming. Education at school would've been good. I'd have been interested but not have wanted a baby.' She's now totally out of touch with her daughter.

‘What you imagine comes from TV and film’

Louise helped at a lesson at school and wrote: "Thanks so much for inviting me in. I really enjoyed sharing my experiences and would be happy to do it again. I think any exposure to the realities of parenthood earlier would be an amazing foundation for young people. I think realistically what you imagine parenthood (well, certainly pregnancy and labour) to be like comes from TV and film, so the more opportunities there are to talk about stuff the better. I know I would have found that helpful, and especially if coming from young parents, it's definitely more authentic!

‘A shocking experience’

Helen hadn't thought of herself as a future parent. Her mother advised her not to get married or have kids. She was happy with her partner and had an interesting career but at 37 gave birth. 'The

epidural didn't work. I had an emergency Caesarean. I came out of hospital in a ragged state. It was a shocking experience. The midwife said, "Don't you know how to bath a baby?" I'd learnt nothing at school about all this. It would be good for kids to know about parenting, but how much will be remembered?

'Hell, with virtually no sleep'

A wealth of evidence suggests that many parents have absolutely no idea, or just the faintest at best, of what to expect, and they find aspects of parenthood an enormous shock. They had never been prepared by anyone. The small families of today give little or no preparation. The first year of Heidi's time as a mother was 'hell, with virtually no sleep.' Poor Janet had 'sleepless nights for four years.' Bruce concedes that being a parent was 'more difficult than I imagined. Our son is very demanding. I feel physically and emotionally drained.' Stephanie was 'physically depleted by the surprisingly chaotic and exclusive demands a child makes on you.' Harry admits that 'children can be very rewarding but they are also a source of considerable stress when they are ill or poorly behaved.' Prue didn't realise what a responsibility a baby would be, whilst Kathy expressed herself in the strongest terms: "The experience of motherhood shocked me at the deepest level."

Recent patterns of living and working may offer little guidance to tomorrow's young adults who need the space to think through the options that face them. Penny Sharland

'I wish I'd known'

It is very difficult for people to understand what is going to be the impact on them of a developing child. Dr Mary Seacome

The 'I wish I'd known' blogs and surveys are telling. It is common for a couple to fall out over how they parent, something they weren't prepared for but which can be harmful to children. Carole Saad (2015) wrote of the very different parenting style of her husband from hers, how conflict over this was damaging to their

marriage. Lack of preparation can be bad for parents, babies and children, for children's life-long mental health and for parents' memories of parenthood with the long-term guilt and shame when it didn't go as well as they'd have liked.

In an amusing, honest book, *Things I Wish I'd Known: Women tell the truth about motherhood*, 19 journalists, actors etc. have their say about some of the joys and some of the unsayables. Anne Marie Scanlon writes, 'Soon after returning from the hospital I looked at my tiny son lying in his crib and suddenly had an extremely vivid vision of putting a cushion over his face. A few days later the same thing happened again, only this time I imagined sticking a knife in his chest. These visions terrified me. Was I going mad? Then, when my son was 18-months-old, I discovered these episodes are relatively common for new mothers.' Clearly no one had warned her. What she writes is shocking and dramatic, but parenthood can be very shocking, very dramatic. We owe it to young people and parents-to-be of all social classes to tell them all about it, to help them know they're not going mad, not alone, to encourage them to tell someone and get the support they need. Solitary reading won't usually do it. Information and understanding need to come face-to-face. As a voracious reader Cathy Kelly, wrote after the birth of twins, 'I felt so unprepared. All the books in the world hadn't prepared me for this.'

Netmums's survey found the majority of parents wish they'd been prepared for parenthood. Family Lives' study showed that three out of four parents find being a parent harder, sometimes much harder, than expected and that many are isolated and depressed. Too many are at their wits' end, not knowing how best to care for their babies and children or where to get help. It's significant that TV programmes about childrearing are so popular. The high volume of parents who applied to the programme *Brat Camp* shows how desperate parents can be to get help with their 'difficult' teenagers. The internet abounds with articles from both sides of the Atlantic, e.g. *Ten Things I Wish I'd Known Before I Became a Parent*.

Many parents find themselves repeating, consciously or unconsciously, how they themselves were brought up: the ‘inherited parenting style,’ a style which has not always served them well and doesn’t necessarily do the best for their children.

Telling it like it is

Poet Hollie McNish reveals all in her aptly named book *Nobody Told Me: Poetry and Parenthood*. She writes wittily and honestly about the trials of pregnancy and the round of everyday life with a baby (‘Eat. Sleep. Poo. Repeat. Eat. Sleep, Poo, Repeat...’) What comes across clearly is this 26-year-old Cambridge graduate’s lack of knowledge. ‘I’ve only held a baby once before in my life because Dee made me. We were visiting his cousin’s newborn. Dee took the baby, passed her to me: “Here’s a baby, Hollie.” Then left the room. I feel an idiot asking how to hold my own child. “You can go home now,” the nurse smiled. I didn’t want to go home. I’ve no idea what I’m doing. It was horrible going home. With no experience of babies. Or breastfeeding. Or bathing. Or anything. I walked out of the ward and burst into tears. Dee showed me how to change nappies and bath a baby.’ Hollie told me, ‘I think preparing young people would be a great idea as long as it is equally done with male and female students. I read from *Nobody Told Me* a lot in schools and always get loads of questions afterwards. I normally read for age 14-plus. I think young people are all too happy to get honest insights into things they likely haven’t experienced much yet. If anything, it makes them more in awe of their mums and dads. I just watched the BBC series of parenting classes. I also think teaching about pregnancy and postnatal depression would be a massive thing.’

Poor parents and rich parents

Much of what is written about problem parenting relates to those living in deprived areas on low incomes, addictions and so on. There’s no doubt at all these factors make good parenting enormously harder. Well-established psychological research shows

the link between cuts in public services and mental health problems. When you live in cramped, sub-standard housing in a crime-ridden environment, or have the long-term humiliation of relying on food banks to feed your kids, it's understandable if the psychological subtleties of child-parent relationships are low on the agenda. But there's ample evidence that parents from every social class often find parenthood a shock and don't do it very well, or, looking back, wish they'd known more and done it better. Adults torn away from their parents at the age of seven to go to boarding school can struggle with the ins and outs of 'attachment' once they have their own children: they include many of the civil servants and politicians who decide health, welfare and educational policies.

Problems from parents' own childhoods

Parents who lacked good enough parenting themselves, for whatever reason, understandably can find it hard or impossible (without lots of the right support) to give their children a different experience:

- If they saw/heard parents physically fighting/arguing a lot; one in four women experience domestic violence in their lifetime;
- If, as babies or children, they were neglected or abused (physically, emotionally and/or sexually);
- If they were fostered (possibly multiple times) or adopted (though this is not always problematic);
- If parent(s) had emotional difficulties affecting their children;
- If one or both parents abused alcohol or drugs;
- If their parent(s) were young/single/isolated/lacking support;
- If their mother (or father) had post-natal depression or other post-natal mental illness and inadequate help;
- If parents bitterly separated and one parent disappeared or was unreliable at keeping in contact;
- If the child was sent to boarding school at too young an age, perhaps with parents abroad;
- If there was one/a succession of unsuitable step-parents;

- If a child didn't receive emotional help with avoidable/unavoidable trauma, e.g. death of a parent;
- If one or both parents were absent through work, politics, prison, hospital, with no satisfactory long-term substitute carer;
- If a child had special needs which were not met, or was in hospital for a significant period.

It is shocking to read that 'the most common cause of infant mortality in the US is parental beating,' no doubt by parents who themselves were beaten when tiny (Kohl 1967.) And sobering when scientific research is revealing how parental stress and behaviour affects not only the psychological but also the physical development of babies and children (Shonkoff 2012.)

As Andrea Pound wrote in 1994, 'The most vulnerable women with the most need of support for change are living in the most isolated, adverse conditions. Instead of a caring community, they are offered a tower block in a vandalised estate. They spend most of each day alone with their young children. It's not surprising that many re-create the circumstances of their own early lives, and an uncaring society then labels this as neglectful or abusive.'

What current difficulties, one or many more, can make it hard for us to parent?

- Pregnancy and/or birth difficulties and birth trauma;
- Post-natal depression/other post-natal mental health problems;
- Baby who cries a lot or has health problems;
- Poor economic, housing or social circumstances;
- Relationship problems with partner, in-laws, parents, neighbours or others;
- Special needs of parent(s) and/or child(ren);
- Lack of a child-friendly society;
- Problems with schools;
- Cuts to health and welfare services;

- Physical health problems in the family;
- Psychological problems in the family;
- Bereavement;
- Lack of sleep; poor diet
- Desertion by partner;
- Physical, verbal, emotional violence by partner, ex-partner or child/young person (see *Feeling Under Siege* by Family Lives);
- Not having the sort /gender of child we wanted;
- Child similar to, and reminding us of, the ex-partner where there was a bitter separation;
- Refugee or asylum seeker status;
- Isolation and loneliness;
- More children than we can cope with/twins or triplets;
- Single parent with inadequate support;
- Teen parent: inadequate support/subject to public prejudice.

Any of these can prevent good enough parenting. But thorough, memorable, experiential, well-taught, universal preparation at school could make at least some difference in at least some cases, despite adversity. We can't afford to wait. It's far too important.

Why good parenting matters

Both emotional and intellectual development depend on rich, deep, nurturing relationships early in life, and now continuing neuroscience research is confirming this process. Brazelton and Greenspan 2000

The famous Adverse Childhood Experiences study demonstrated the severe lifelong effects of exposure, before age 18, to these ten factors, showing how common they are:

- Physical abuse;
- Emotional/verbal abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Physical neglect;
- Emotional neglect;
- Mental illness of adult(s), especially mother;

- Child treated violently;
- Parents' divorce or separation;
- Household member in prison;
- Adult(s) abusing drugs or alcohol.

A shocking 40-to-50 percent of Britons have suffered at least one ACE. Nine percent have had four or more with significant consequences. The jury's out on the correlation of ACEs with later problems. It's claimed that a high ACE score means people are more likely to drink, use hard or soft drugs, have a poor diet, smoke, have sex under 16, have or cause a teenage pregnancy, have learning difficulties, become obese, have poor mental health, suffer chronic physical health problems, be a victim of violence, go to prison and be ten times more likely to become a serious violent offender by the age of 35. A US study found 97 percent of children with no ACEs had no learning problems. About 40 percent aren't securely attached to a parent. What better case for preparing students to look after their future children well? We need a belt and braces approach: school preparation is one approach of many with no excuse to ignore any of them.

The most important influence on a person's level of self-esteem are their parents. Once parents have had their say, little else in life is able to modify the opinion of self thus formed. Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2001

All this has long-term effects. 70 percent of women in psychiatric hospitals and 80 percent of those in 'secure settings' have been victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse. Appallingly, there was a 22 percent rise in violence at home against babies 2015-to-2016 (Buttle UK.) About 130,000 children live in homes with a high risk of violence. Of these, 62 percent are directly harmed themselves by the perpetrator, as well as witnessing violence between parents. One-third of female suicides are due to domestic violence. Abused women are three times more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety. Depression can affect our physical health

too. And in one year (2016), the UK's record on the protection of children's rights plummeted from 11th in the world to 156th.

People dealing with survivors should be more understanding of what the person is going through. It never goes away. The smallest thing, smell or item can trigger it off and send the person on a downward spiral into a very low feeling of despair, so low that they feel that the only way out is to die. Wise Women Glasgow

I once supported an unemployed single mother who had five children by three men. She tried hard to make a good job of it but all her children were in institutions or special needs programmes. Not surprisingly, she'd an awful childhood, with insufficient, consistent long-term help once she had kids. To be a good parent, you need either positive models in early life or substantial ways to repair the damage, whether intensive professional help, enough support from other parents, relatives and friends, or your own quest to research and apply better parenting than you received.

It was heartening to read entries in the book *The school that I'd like*. Paul aged 18 wrote: 'All should learn of the mechanisms and processes of the human mind in psychology and behavioural study classes (scrutinising themselves especially.) These would lead to 'Marriage and Parenthood Guidance' classes, including child care, child psychology, birth control, pregnancy and, most important, how to live consciously with another human being.' Susan and Janet, both 15, recommended that 'studies of child development should appear in the timetable. Children would have done most of their real learning by direct discovery methods. In their senior stage they would continue this method of learning by taking responsibility for the younger children e.g. conducting visits, helping with dinner duties, sometimes assisting during the school day.' 'There would be a huge domestic science bloc with instructions in child care,' imagines Patricia, 15. Anthony's novel idea could be adapted to parenting education: 'The direct method

is used. Students are saturated with the languages. They speak no English, they see films in the language, read poetry, sing songs, listen to records. They become 'French' for two months, then for the next two months become 'German.' They learn to think and write in the languages and, after four months, are fluent in both.'

Two opposing views about parenthood education

- ***Too little too late*** if it's only just before/after the birth
- ***Too much too soon*** if at school: people learn only once they are in the situation.

What do you think? We now look at two frightening crises.

Chapter Two

Two Crises: Mental Health and Education

*The rate of suicide in our children and young people
is at an all-time high.* Public Health England

The American professor Urie Bronfenbrenner said (1970): ‘The only country which exceeds the US in the willingness of children to engage in antisocial behaviour is England.’ And he suggested some explanation. ‘England is also the only country in our sample which shows a level of parental involvement lower than our own, with both parents - especially fathers - showing less affection, offering less companionship and intervening less frequently in the lives of their children.’ Fathers are probably more involved these days, but anti-social behaviour is still very much with us.

This book argues that high quality parenthood education in schools can improve the mental health of children and young people now and as future parents, leading to a happier generation when they have children with less social problems. It also calls for education to take into account what students like learning: parenthood education provided for long enough in the best ways, can make school of far greater interest, especially to male and female students who don’t see it as relevant to their lives. So we discuss some current problems in mental health and education to remind ourselves why change is needed. But it would take a whole book to deal with all of them, so here is some a fairly brief account. All facts have been taken from reliable studies.

Mental health: a serious, growing crisis for children and young people

- Children aged two have been diagnosed with depression.
- The Children’s Society’s *Good Childhood Report* (2023) showed more and more children in England are unhappy, the worst rating since 2009; one in nine are unhappy with

school: the highest in the world: a 'national scandal.' (Holland, Norway and Iceland have the best ratings.)

- 70-to-80 percent of British parents have hit their children, most often when the child is between three and seven. 'A smack is when a parent tries to hit you, but instead of calling it a hit, they call it a smack,' says a seven-year-old;
- The number of children reported as victims of emotional abuse has soared by 200 percent in seven years - more than any other form of child abuse;
- Male teenagers hit and sexually abuse girls at unprecedented rates. The BBC Panorama programme: 'there is a surge in sexual abuse by children';
- Most boys aged 11 have watched porn online; some teenage boys are addicted to it;
- Social media increasingly threatens youngsters' wellbeing;
- The government's Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (2003), the result of Lord Laming's enquiry after the domestic death of Victoria Climbié in London, called for five outcomes for 0-to-19-year-olds, including good mental health. It was described it as 'the world's best policy document for children.' It was ditched in 2010 by the Conservative/Lib Dem government;
- Every school class of 30 has about five children with a likely mental health condition, plus more with less classifiable but significant problems. 20 percent of children have a 'probable' emotional, behavioural or mental health problem. Clegg wrote: one in 12 children 'desperately needs help' (*Children in Distress 1970.*) What's changed since then?
- The NSPCC reports a big rise in calls to its helpline with higher rates of depression among youngsters; 80,000 children and young people are diagnosed a year with severe depression. The number going into psychiatric hospital has doubled in ten years. Girls are twice as likely as boys to

report emotional problem: one in four girls are clinically depressed by the age of 14;

- 50 percent of parents never talk to their children about mental health;
- Over a third of parents rarely talk to their children at all;
- A quarter of children with mental health problems have considered suicide; only a quarter receive the help they need. Suicide is the second most common cause of adolescent deaths. Childline reports over 60 children a day phoning with suicidal thoughts;
- Online bullying can lead to suicide. Self-harm by teenaged girls is rising. Most calls to Childline concern mental health and wellbeing. Girls worry about their appearance, with plummeting self-esteem.;
- Half a million children await mental health treatment, sometimes for years;
- The number of school nurses, who could help support mental health, has been cut. No school is likely to afford enough psychological help for all who need it;
- Children as young as four are terrorising teachers.;
- Eleven-year-olds can find SATS and transition to secondary school frightening. This affects mental health;
- Truancy rates are significant and rising;
- John Marsden (2019) slams the ‘middle-class epidemic of damaging parenting,’ based on parental anxiety, contributing to a rise in mental distress of children. ‘The scale of the problem is massive. The issue is pandemic. The level of anxiety is something I’ve never seen before;’
- Domestic violence amongst teenage and young parents increasingly puts their children at risk who teenagers might then be taken into care. Record numbers of children are now removed from their parents;
- Youngsters are more removed than before from nature, a factor in depression, children cooped up at home for hours before screens;

- Children from poor families are four times as likely to have mental distress, but rich kids are affected too;
- Over half of colleges have seen a 'significant increase' in the number of teenagers with poor mental health;
- The rise in violent crime, with an epidemic of killings on the street, has become a national scandal;
- Mental health has deteriorated since austerity and Covid;
- Demand for psychiatric care is predicted to rise by about a million people each decade. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services accept only the severest cases. Charities compete ever harder for dwindling funds. The government fiddles while Rome burns, its promised increase in funding unlikely to be sufficient;
- The Association of Child Psychotherapists found a third of its members said services for children were inadequate. Many young people are re-referred several times, 'reaching a crisis point before being accepted.' Half the cases of mental illness start by age 14 but only six percent of the mental health budget goes on children. 84 percent of parents with distressed children find it hard to get help for their child. What will these troubled, unsupported youngsters hand on to their own children?
- Economists work out the finances. Thorough help for a distressed child costs £85,000. Wait until he grows up, and it's £260,000. The cost to the public of a child with conduct disorder is £70,000, but only £7,000 if no disorder. 80 percent of crime is committed by people who had 'behavioural problems' as children. And crime costs a lot, in all sorts of ways. £6 billion a year in the UK is just the financial side.

Education

A crisis is brewing in English classrooms, but Government action to address it has been sluggish and incoherent. Meg Hillier MP 2018

Why do we subject four-year-olds to tests? The rot sets in early. We don't need research to know that testing little children, exam pressures, chronic overwork by teachers, Ofsted inspections, narrow curricula, reduction of arts, low pay, league tables and budget cuts cause dire problems in recruiting and retaining staff. Chat to a few. They go off sick or leave through stress, get scant emotional help, with no time to support children's wellbeing. Teachers talk of feeling disempowered, hopeless about their ability to change anything. If heads united to protest, might there be hope? Teachers live in fear of losing their job and house or not getting a good reference from the head. So most conform. Creative, experienced teachers and heads give up, become gardeners, photographers, saying how much happier, if poorer, they are. A Bristol primary school saw every teacher leave one July. And schools can find it hard to recruit good heads. The recent brand of 'superheads' tend to be driven, obsessed with academic achievement: even the cause of protest strikes by teachers and campaigns by parents.

I spoke to experienced secondary school ex-teachers in inner London. 'We were both career teachers. We loved teaching - central to our lives. To walk away was crushing. Under the Labour government, we had freedom, very enjoyable. Michael Gove was the turning point. Now schools can sack teachers after ten weeks. League tables run schools. It's like a market place, schools competing to get money. The bureaucracy took us from the classroom, so the actual teaching suffered. It became unmanageable personally, ethically. We questioned whether we were doing right by the students. The middle-level kids were pushed to improve the school's rating. In September the management team would look at GCSE results: we were hauled in to justify them. With some kids there were external factors we had no control over. Results were expected based on predictions by the primary school!' Gove, minister of education (2010-14), said that

children should leave their problems at home and not bring them into school. Did he really believe it to be possible?

Johan's brilliant teacher is on the brink of resigning. She is under constant monitoring from the school's management and Ofsted for allowing the four-year-olds too much time to play and not enough time for formal education.

Parent (moving back to Denmark)

Ofsted and the mental health of school staff

I want Ofsted to be an instrument of fear and terror for teachers.

Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector, Ofsted 1994

There have been school inspectors since 1839 but we don't read they were a source of terror! Ofsted was created for England under Major's Conservative government (1992.) A school deemed 'Outstanding' might have excluded or 'off rolled' its problem pupils to get them out the way or, despite the rows of smiling faces on the website, might have teenagers in toxic relationships with partners they met on or off line. 'Good' might not mean good. Academy chains send young 'experts' to tell experienced teachers how to run classes. ('End the day with maths, not a story.') British teenagers are amongst the most stressed in the world; our education system has a lot to do with it. Ofsted inspectors have left in droves, describing the job as a 'treadmill.'

I have actually contemplated suicide as a way out because the situation is making me miserable. I cannot carry on like this for much longer. Teacher

Studies put the number of teachers with diagnosed mental health problems between 31-to-50 percent. Applicants for teacher training is falling, despite pupil numbers rising. Ofsted, workloads, some local non-Ofsted inspectors cause untold pain: breakdowns, the suicides of several heads, class teachers and pastoral heads. The country was shocked in 2023 by Ruth Perry's suicide after Ofsted deemed her school, once outstanding, needed

improvement. Ofsted had to modify its approach. But her suicide has not been by any means the only one. Conscientious teachers, maybe vulnerable, not well supported, might be especially at risk.

A survey found that teaching is the most stressful profession in the UK; 41.5% of teachers reported themselves to be highly stressed. The NUT found that 36% felt the effects of stress all or most of the time. The pressure of school inspections was a key reason why teachers, particularly heads, felt stressed. Telegraph 2007

Woodhead certainly got his way. Primary and nursery teachers commit suicide at a rate of nearly double the national average. Three out of four teacher suicides are by primary and nursery staff. Secondary teachers have a lower but fast rising rate. Ofsted and the workload have been killing people. Teachers' lives are dominated by paperwork, exhaustion, often fear. The National Education Union states: 'Evidence suggests Ofsted inspections are connected to teacher suicides.' But Ofsted personnel will never stand, like those accused of manslaughter, in the dock.

Ofsted causes staff to develop weight disorders, turn to drugs, the bottle. Iain Gilmour, an academy head in Portsmouth, 'was convicted for possession of cocaine and drink driving in 2018. He told the court he had been under constant pressure after the junior school received a "requires improvement" rating' (*Private Eye* 1920.) The charity Education Support, by the way, exists to help the mental health of all school, college and university staff. Helpline: 08000 562561. See its excellent website.

Many teachers blame efforts to please Ofsted as a cause of increased stress. Unions have identified some time-wasting practices, such as "triple marking" of school books to measure pupil attainment. Many say pressure to perform under the threat of poor Ofsted ratings is another cause of stress, as well as the government's league

tables that rank schools by exam results and can be used to punish school leaders if they fall below certain levels. Guardian 2018

A teacher told me her daughter was due to give birth but she couldn't be with her, as intended: Ofsted suddenly said they'd inspect next week; the head said she had to be in school at the weekend to prepare. Another says her marriage would have survived if she hadn't the vast amount of paper work to complete at home. She resigned soon after. Many new teachers leave the profession after a year or two. The Labour Party's 2019 manifesto wanted to replace Ofsted with another type of inspectorate, and abolish Key Stage 1 and 2 SATS; the chance never came.

Most schools aren't child- or family-centred, but 'competing-in-the-world market'-centred, children used as the tools: a culture driven by targets. Perfectionist pressures on individuals and schools to get top marks are harming the minds of teachers and students; some put huge pressure on themselves. Young teachers enter this culture with nothing with which to compare it.

The mental health of students

The current education system is disastrous for the mental health not only of staff. Students too suffer, some in extreme ways. Physical punishment is now banned but there are other forms of violence. Britain starts formal school aged four or five. There's no evidence this helps with progress; on the contrary, countries allowing play and arts till seven, (e.g. Finland and Romania) have better outcomes. In Sweden it's nine. Norwegian children have no exam at all till they're 16; then it's a relaxed one. When a study at Cambridge university showed that children do better if they start school at six or over, the Blair government dismissed the results as outdated. Old traditions die hard, even in the face of evidence.

We hear of four-year-olds having panic attacks. Teachers report children as young as nine talking about suicide. Pettiness at school

can cause tragedy. Vulnerable Tyrese Glasgow aged 12 hanged himself in Oldham (2017) after forgetting his school bag and missing school. His mother said, 'He would have been graded "red" for forgetting his books.' 83 percent of teachers surveyed by the NEU (2019) see a rise in pupils' mental health problems.

These children are pulled out of broad curriculum subjects to try to close the gap. Their experience at school must be horrible. In assembly they've got to do phonics intervention, then a phonics lesson, literacy lesson, maths lesson, lunch, reading, extra reading intervention, then speech intervention. What else are they learning about the world? They are six years old. Exam Factories 2015

10-to-11-year-olds have lessons on grammar topics which even teachers don't know and see as useless (e.g. 'obscure clauses.') Some students can't yet express themselves well in basic English. Teachers know how unsuitable this work is, yet submit. We hear of schools cheating by telling children the answers to SATS tests. Primary teachers report children crying, having nightmares about SATS. Eighty percent of 11-to-18-year-olds say exam pressure has a big effect on their mental health. Parents also worry about results. Competition thrives: some kids who do well, we hear, mock those who don't. We learn of sixth formers becoming bulimic if they get five 'A's rather than five 'A stars' for A levels. The case of 16-year-old Mya-Lecia Naylor says it all. Her school phoned her parents to say her grades were lower than expected. Mya-Lecia hanged herself. Her father told the inquest, 'She had not been her normal self. She was stressed about her exams.'

English children are amongst the unhappiest in the world at school due to bullying. The Children's Society found that 38 percent of children surveyed had been hit by classmates in the last month. Guardian 2015

Effects of temporary and permanent exclusions from school

The pain caused by exclusion is deeper and lasts longer than physical injury.
American Psychological Society

The rate of exclusions from UK schools is increasing, one of the world's highest, with a zero-tolerance policy at some schools towards disruptive behaviour, unsuited to meet individual students' needs and problems, as though 'one size fits all.' Exclusion, the ultimate form of rejection for disadvantaged children, especially those who've been rejected before, perhaps fostered or adopted, has disastrous effects: low self-esteem, loss of sense of belonging, worse mental health, more crime. Exclusion contradicts human needs for long-term stability, care and concern. Most prisoners in youth offender institutions were excluded from school at some point. With child-centred curricula, attachment-based staff-student relationships, and good parenthood education, exclusions could surely fall.

Schools need enough resources to address the roots of bad behaviour constructively. More than that, they need to change so that students find school relevant to their lives with responsive, relaxed adults who they feel are on their side. Michael Duane, head of Risinghill school in London (1959–65), took a special interest in delinquent pupils; court appearances fell dramatically. Unlike Woodhead, he aimed 'to remove fear from schools.' The Welsh charismatic Gerry German, as a secondary head, also reduced delinquency. I asked how. 'I found out what café they went to, went there and talked with them.' R F Mackenzie, another visionary head, said, before he was sacked in Aberdeen: 'We could have cured delinquency but they wouldn't let us.' Such heads get crucified by education authorities, red or blue.

They see schools as a way to pass exams. The exam system is verging on child abuse. Secondary school teacher

Betrayal

Despite all the expert-led petitions, reports, letters to the press, the system hardly changes. Bodies like the British Psychological Society urge action, for education to concern itself with mental health. The English Education Committee report about assessment and mental health in schools advocated scrapping annual publication of scores, and opposed baseline testing in reception. Patrick Ainley cites the ‘betrayal of British youth.’ ‘Young people study harder but learn less, running up a down-escalator of devalued qualifications to become overqualified but underemployed, unable to move forward with their lives. From primary to post-graduate schools, funny phonics through endless testing to phoney apprenticeships, and the world's most costly university fees, English education is now driven by the economy and politics, “dumbing down” rather than “wising up”.’

Parenthood education: part of the solution

If we want a healthy society, it makes sense to educate kids about parenthood. Given that

- a) So many parents are ill-prepared for parenthood and shocked by it, which can have a bad impact on children’s development, mental health and the mental health of the parents themselves. Some find extra problems bringing up more than one child;
- b) Most adults have had little/no preparation at school or anywhere. Many have had no experience of babies/children;
- c) Adults from all social classes who had difficult childhoods can find it hard, even impossible, without adequate long-enough support, to give their children a better childhood;
- d) Mental health problems in children and young people are on the increase. This is not all due to parenting, but inadequate or harmful parenting is likely to cause emotional problems in babies, children and adolescents;
- e) Today’s schools can be bad for mental health of both staff and students, leading to stress and even suicide;

- f) Crime and anti-social behaviour are widespread, often caused by poor mental health;
- g) Most children will become parents, many with inadequate or harmful models of parenting from their own upbringing;
- h) Most youngsters go to school or college for at least 13 years: a captive audience;
- i) There's a lot of good experience of teaching parenthood.....

..... there is an undeniable case for thoroughly preparing every child and young person from every social class at every school about the realities of parenthood, the emotional needs of babies, children, teens and parents, and how best to meet these needs.

Case Study: This subject engages students more than most. Anna (14), disaffected, from a dysfunctional family in a deprived inner-city area, often truanted, had a defiant attitude. But when her teacher organised parenting lessons with a mother, toddler and baby visiting weekly, she changed, came to school often, showed intense interest in the toddler, joined in with gusto.

Many students are bored stiff with lessons with no relevance to their past, present or future. Most find well-taught parenting lessons of huge interest. So does it make sense to plug away at conventional subjects (forgotten straight after exams) but omit parenting which could be of use to most of them in future? I picked up on the pavement a *Pastoral Intervention Programme* card, dropped by a 12-year-old. This lad has to focus, says his school, on 'organisation' and his 'low level disruption.' A chart must be filled in by every teacher for every period of the week. 'Too much calling out,' wrote a teacher. Four 'Attitude to Learning Grades' were spelt out from 'A' (highly motivated/ arrives on time) to 'D' (unmotivated/afraid to fail.) A pathetic attempt to try to change the mind and behaviour of a disaffected child. And what a lot of work! Wouldn't it save time to base his curriculum on his interests? And matching him for sessions with a toddler could possibly make him feel useful, improving his life and his future.

Parenthood education isn't a panacea for all parenting and mental health problems. But if delivered for long enough, by the right people, in effective ways, for every student during their school life, then reinforced by services while people expect their baby and during the whole of parenthood, as they need, we hypothesise there will be happier parents, babies, children and young people; less crime, mental illness, drug addiction, alcoholism, domestic violence, inappropriate teenage pregnancy. Less people might choose to become parents: they'll have at least some idea what it's about, more likely to reflect on whether it's for them. Nothing prepares you fully. But that's no excuse not to prepare kids at all! We consider later the evidence, such as it is, for the effectiveness of this education; how to do it with children from age three in the most experiential ways. I'm not arguing there are no happy parents who bring up happy children who enjoy school. There are lots. Some school staff love their jobs, cope well. But I do say: the incidence of emotional suffering is so widespread at home and at school, with often shocking consequences, that a caring society would find and fully fund all possible preventive measures. Preparing students thoroughly for parenthood is one of those measures. The cost of not doing so is huge. And how much money would be saved long-term by core curriculum parenthood education? But parenthood has low status, not seen as a 'career.' That needs to change. And it's never too early to start to prepare. Let's now take a look at what is being done.

Part Two

Who is doing what now in UK secondary schools

Power2 (formerly Teens and Toddlers)

*Your support has benefitted my child [at risk of exclusion]
and myself enormously on levels that I can't explain.* Mother

Teens and Toddlers was the invention in the US of the remarkable, talented Laura Huxley (1911-2007), widow of Aldous, and a friend and mentor for 35 years of Diana Whitmore, an American psychotherapist. But Laura was not a practical person; the project didn't develop robustly. It was one strand of her non-profit organisation (1978), Children Our Ultimate Investment (COUI) which Diana brought from the US to the UK in 2001. Diana had led the Psychosynthesis Trust from 1980, then became international director of COUI UK. The positive approach of psychosynthesis forms the theoretical background of Teens and Toddlers. It aims to 'put the soul back into psychology' and has a bifocal vision: seeing not just the challenging behaviour but the whole of the young person. The Trust gave financial backing, and then space at its London premises, as well as training to staff.

In brief, a troubled teenager, usually a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) or at risk of becoming one, is matched with a pre-school child who could use more attention: some are autistic or refugees. They meet weekly, followed by an interactive group session for the teens, focusing on team work; communication; conflict resolution; avoiding risks; relationships.

As Huxley wrote: 'A toddler and a teenager are the two periods in human life when people are most egocentric. They are equally involved in themselves. These teenagers have all kinds of history, they don't know what to do with themselves, they have been in contact with the police. Usually, one parent is in jail. This is the last chance before they are given up. When they go to play with the toddlers, something new arises in them. All of a sudden, they think: "I am the model for this little one." The teenagers become suddenly important and bloom because they are given a chance to

expand themselves, not to be just criticised by society. Toddlers are so powerful and egocentric and teenagers are also so powerful, so egocentric. Here they are put in a school situation where they are to relate to these little giants and think about them, instead of thinking about their own needs and all of that, which is a natural thing for us all. When you're 14 or 15, it is even more so. The first insight is, after two hours of working with the children, they are exhausted. That's the first insight. Then they say, "What, I would have to continue with this for 24 hours a day!" The baby has all these needs, almost continuously, every hour you have to do something for the baby. They always decide to wait until they are 25 or 30 to have a baby. In the groups that we have made up in the North, there has been not a single unwanted pregnancy.'

Diana established the work with pilots in four London boroughs. Due to her persistent efforts, the work was celebrated by, for example, *The Guardian Charity of the Year* award (2014) and short-listed for others. By 2016, when Diana left, she'd reached about 10,000 children and young people. She moved to Scotland to found a comparable project, Growing2gether, with a stronger mental health focus. The original aims of the 16-week project were to reduce high rates of teenage pregnancy and promote the mental health of vulnerable teenagers aged 13+ who are not only at risk of early parenthood but have low expectations, self-esteem, ability to communicate and self-confidence, sometimes with difficult behaviour, certainly with poor life chances by conventional standards. Diana said that only once the project was in full swing and evaluated, did she appreciate the 'multi-layered outcomes of Laura's vision which even Laura was not aware of: self-belief, aspiration, relational skills, self-esteem, a sense of meaning and purpose plus a multitude of life skills.'

Teens and Toddlers in the UK changed its emphasis; in 2018 changed its name to Power2. It now runs three programmes: Teens and Toddlers; Young Leaders, set up when Teens and Toddlers graduates said they wanted a peer support network to develop life

skills, wellbeing, aspirations to get ready for work, and get help with CVs.; and Power2 Rediscover, a one-to-one ten-week programme aimed at young people who have struggled with wellbeing and school engagement as a result of the Covid pandemic. Parenting is not one of the subjects they ask for.

What is it about toddlers and teenagers that so many parents find difficult – and do the two groups have anything in common? Parent

Power2 now describes its aim as helping students aged 12-to-17 in schools to achieve various outcomes: improving school engagement, wellbeing, communication skills and aspirations of a vocational and academic nature. There's now no emphasis on parenting: understanding it is no longer an important outcome. I asked why. The reason seems to hang on what can be proven. Randomised controlled trials have shown less impact than before on its reduction of teenage pregnancy. Other charities in that field were getting better results. And to follow up the students for several years to check pregnancy rates or even exam results would take enormous research resources which they don't have. The charity believes that its work has an impact on teenage pregnancy but can't prove it. On the other hand, it is feasible to measure changes in 'soft' outcomes such as confidence, empathy and attitudes to education at the start, middle and end of each course. That makes it easier 'in the market' to prove its success.

How is the course organised? The project is selective, not universal. Schools choose students who are deemed at risk according to the charity's selection criteria: poor communication, low self-confidence, behavioural problems, disengagement in education and a poor attitude to it, with the risk of school exclusion. Seventy-two percent are girls, perhaps because it is easier to gauge things like low self-confidence in females.

Most participants are aged 13-to-15. The group can have anything between six and ten members. We heard that sometimes their peers ask to come too. Students are free to drop out; that does happen. Parents have to give permission and nearly all do.

Teens and Toddlers employs its own programme leaders to set up and run sessions, but aims at enabling school staff to train as assistants so the project costs less and is more sustainable (the school pays for the training.) But they don't train teachers. Learning mentors, teaching assistants and pastoral staff are trained instead. 'Kids don't always like their teachers,' Diana said.

Counsellors and the programme assistants collect the teenagers from school in the morning or afternoon once a week and take them to a local nursery or primary school. There is a 20-minute check-in session where they can get into the right frame of mind to be with their child. Assistants stay on site for the one-hour or one-hour-and-a-half while teenagers play individually with their child, giving it, as a 'befriender' or mentor, the extra attention it needs. Each teenager is allocated a child for 16 school weeks. (Whether not they are 'toddlers' depends on the definition you choose: authors define it variously as either one-to-three, or one-to-four-year-olds.) Afterwards, leaders and students sit in a circle for a See and Say session, usually at the primary school or nursery, and talk about the time with their child. They then work in pairs or small groups with a ten-minute refreshments break. On the flipchart, the leader writes words about emotions. The teenagers are asked what they like and what they don't like. They are given inspiring quotes, or asked, 'If you were a colour (or a fruit), what would you be?'

The manual has a full, intensive, mandatory programme including: what is empathy?; anger management; and self-esteem: what raises and lowers it? There is a topic each week, group discussion, role-play (e.g. mother and father ignoring the child; what is the child feeling?) The skills of listening and interviewing are covered.

These are the 16 weekly sessions:

1 *Welcome*: Who we are: getting to know each other. Making a choice: the qualification and the programme. Expectations. Confidentiality.

Group guidelines.

2 *Role Models*: Completion of guidelines. How to be with children. The importance of being a role model. My role in the nursery. What is empathy? Active listening and observation

3 *Caring and Communication*: Nursery tour, safety. Interpersonal skills: being on same level as another (role-play.) Core qualities.

4 *Communication and Developing: Interpersonal skills*. Role-plays; comic strips related to our experience. Discovering how interpersonal skills help

5 *Learning as Exploring*: Learning is exploring. Learning new life skills in new situations. Choices and consequences

6 *It's a Risky Business*: Risks children take. Traffic light game. Setting boundaries. Choice and consequence

7 *Positive Relationships*: Keeping is real. The value of healthy assertion. Behaviour and impact – assertion triangle: passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour. Value of respect and empathy

8 *Community Support Networks*: Bag of bits. When do I need help? Who can help? Levels of support

9 *Growth Mind-set: Human Potential*: Toddler potential. Challenge of nurturing. Being the best we can be. Our strengths and individuality

10 *The Helping Conversation*: Putting into practice my learning. Role-play demonstrating a supporting conversation – qualities and skills.

11 *Dare to Dream*: What do you really want? Visualisation of our inspired future. Goal setting: working with how to ensure results

12 *Blocks to Learning*: Learning through play, making up a learning game to support learning. How do we translate this to support ourselves?

13 *The Importance of Boundaries* *Getting More of What You Want*: Sub-personality mask. Developing our qualities and strengths to get more of what we want from life. Preparing for ending

14 *Contributing in My Community*: My value and my efforts. Who else supports? The value of community engagement

15 *Skills Celebration*: Skills audit. Celebrating success. What I can do to continue to learn and grow. Completion.

16 *Self-assessment and review*.

As you see, much of the curriculum is absolutely relevant to good parenting. Students see themselves, their own inner child, in the child they mentor, often evoking strong emotions. Each student has a portfolio, seen but not marked by the facilitator, and a journal in which to write - this helps them identify their feelings. In the last week, saying goodbye to their child can feel hard and they have debriefing to help. They gain a qualification NCFE Level 1 Interpersonal Skills, receive a certificate at the end, and attend a grand evening award ceremony to which parents and other schools are invited. A popular follow-up course is then offered to become Young Leaders.

It is interesting, in the light of this book's argument that parenthood-related education needs to be a long-term prospect, that the course lasted for 10 weeks when it started in the US but later increased to 12 weeks and now runs for 16.

In London, the charity has worked in 22 boroughs (not Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Croydon, Harrow, Havering, Hounslow, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, and Waltham Forest); outside London in Blackburn, Blackpool, Bristol, Bury, Halton, Kent, Leeds, NE Lincolnshire, Manchester, Merseyside, N Yorkshire, Northampton, Northumberland, Oldham, Redcar, Rochdale, Salford, Sefton, St Helen's, Stockport, Surrey, Tameside, Trafford, Walsall, West Midlands, West Sussex, Wigan and Wisbech. Some individual schools don't want to be named publicly to protect teenagers' anonymity. As of 2024, Power2 has been operating in Greater Manchester, London, Merseyside, the North Yorkshire, Surrey and the West Midlands. Its pilot in Scotland did not last due to lack of funds. And schools enrol and drop out all the time.

There are now five programmes, as well as Teens and Toddlers:

Power2Rediscover: A 10-week programme offering one-to-one support to young people in response to the negative effects of the Covid pandemic. It can be adapted for years 3-to-6.

Power2Thrive: This 16-week programme was created because young people were asking for more support for their mental health and wellbeing. It's like 'Teens and Toddlers' but with more emphasis on the teen mentors' mental health.

Power2Progress: Year 8 students mentor Year 6 students to ease the transition to the same secondary school that the Year 8s attend.

Power2 Advance: This is for 16-to-25-year-olds who are or have been in care, including support for those who are leaving care.

Power2 Aspire: Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are helped to work towards a career. There are work-based placements.

All these programmes report impressively high outcomes. See chapter..... And there are partnerships with, for example, the Violence Reduction Unit in the London borough of Southwark aiming to reduce exclusions from school, and the SAFE initiative, working in areas of serious youth violence. Power2 is commissioned by Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit to deliver the Another Chance programme to 14-to-25-year-olds involved in group-based serious violent offending.

Funding, the huge issue, is the main reason why schools drop out or don't enrol for Power2. But in the year 2017-18, 1,147 teenagers took part. In 2012, income from LEAs dropped from 60 percent to 18. Schools pay for the project, the fee mainly financing the programme leader and assistant, though the charity hopes to be

able to subsidise this from grants. Comic Relief funds some work in Hackney as part of its wellbeing effort. When the work has been offered for free, I was told, it has been less successful. The school is more lax, takes the work less seriously, doesn't feel the necessary ownership. Other funding has come from, e.g. the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Private Equity Foundation and the department of work and pensions. You can watch a Teens and Toddlers video *The Journey* (2014) on YouTube: young people speak movingly about the problems they've faced and how the project changed their lives.

Another barrier to schools joining is timetabling. The course runs from September or February, though February is less popular as schools are cramming kids for exams. So it's often, 'Not this year but next.' And there might be objections that students are swanning off to a nursery for a morning or afternoon instead of being in school. The charity points out that as these students aren't interested in lessons anyway, there's more point in their taking part in Power2. No one's likely ever to prove that Teens and Toddlers enables students to raise happier families one day, but it would be surprising if this enjoyable, memorable experience will not, in some cases, make a significant difference. All Power2 programmes are likely to develop qualities and insights which good parents need.

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Chapter Four

Teenagers in Playgroups

You learn about children's behaviour better than books and have more fun being with them than reading about them. Teenager

The Early Years Alliance (trading name of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, formerly the Pre-School Playgroups Association) has co-operated with secondary schools for years to place students in playgroups. In 1983, 27,965 teenagers in England and Wales helped in them. There are very useful publications on the subject - see Bibliography.

Playgroup staff should explain playgroups to teachers; there must be regular commitment by teachers to maintain continuity of adult relationships. Each school must appoint a liaison person. And playgroups have to provide sympathetic guidance and a friendly welcome to teens. Teenagers tend to be self-conscious and need to have instructions and a definite job. Support is vital. Put up a positive notice about them. Have a preliminary meeting and let them try out the playgroup activities as though they are children at a playgroup, meet the adults, ask their questions. Give them a short training: topics can include having favourites; cuddles versus rough-and-tumble; conversation with small children; getting down to the child's level; wearing comfortable clothes; letting children have their own ideas and independence; tears and tantrums (regular helpers should deal with these); clinging to mummy. Tell students: when in doubt, ask.

Make sure they can turn to helpers other than the busy leader. Give regular reassuring encouragement: teens are often sensitive and quickly feel stupid or small. Resources, networks and organisations for local parents should be researched so students will feel confident to approach these for themselves in future. When they leave, give them a proper goodbye, a smile and thanks.

Teenagers have little or no experience to draw on of younger children, what with small families, more divorce, families moving, high rise flats, unsafe streets and 'the modern tendency to divide people up into age groups for activities.' But if placing them in playgroups is to be worthwhile, 'a great deal of careful thought, discussion and hard work is needed.' After all, some mothers might be scared of teenage gangs; others feel inhibited about talking; and very young mothers might feel awkward to have teens around. But benefits can be considerable:

g) For small children: having a 'big brother/sister.' Adolescents are still children with something special to offer. Some have brought their snake or violin! And they have more time than staff/adult volunteers. Some children respond better to teens than to adults and can attach to a teen, settle, and calm down. It's good for little boys to mix with male teens. Don't underestimate depths of relationship which can develop;

b) For teens: Most respond well. It usually brings out the best in them. Some are 'difficult at school but wonderful with children; a walking disaster at home, everyone's favourite at playgroup.' It's exciting, they have responsibility, feel needed, are part of an adult team., develop real confidence, find the work fascinating, joyful and an eye-opener. They understand how they grew up and the pleasure they might have got from growing up. It can bring out the gentleness and sensitivity in male teens who tend to be very popular at playgroup and gain a great deal;

c) For adults: Teens help with chores and activities. Mothers can recapture their youth through conversation with teens. It is useful preparation for when their children become teenagers;

d) For schools: One teacher deemed the experience 'of inestimable value.' 'Child development and childcare courses are obviously much more valuable and understandable when they can be based on direct observation and experience with young children, compared with a purely theoretical approach.'

How to make the project work well? There are inevitably ups and downs but what's needed are: good preparation, good

communication, and continued sharing of ideas and experience. Everyone involved must share in the discussions at every stage, understand the plans, why the teens are there and see their school syllabus. It must be clear who is doing what. Expectations must be realistic. To prepare the children, you can say, 'Once upon a time there were two big girls whose names were.....' Schools should tell the teens' parents about the scheme and invite them along. And playgroups shouldn't be afraid to refuse to take any students for whatever reason: the children come first.

Which students should take part? Only those male and female teens who choose and agree to come, academic as well as less academic, usually aged 14-to-16, though 16-to-18-year-olds can benefit too. But avoid having too many at one time; children can feel overwhelmed; relationships are less easy; the group leader is too busy to deal with many, and the teens might have little to do and just talk to each other. The mother volunteers might feel not needed, and leave. Two teens at a time is good; one can be okay. And take them from only one school or college at a time. Don't have different students every day: continuity is all-important. It's been found to be good for teens from an ethnic minority are placed in a playgroup with families of the same ethnicity.

How long for? Half a term is the minimum; a full term is better. It takes teens time to settle in and understand. They normally come once a week, but it can be more often. It's best if they attend for a whole morning or a whole afternoon, like the other helpers. Some stay for a year, though others feel that is too long for them.

Tots and Teens 2011

Having a mix of pupils and playgroup staff brings the best of both: enthusiasm, energy, pupils' ideas, maturity, knowledge, experience of preschool childcare.

Tots and Teens

In the town of Haddington, near Edinburgh, a determined group of educational psychologists, staff from the Knox academy (founded as a grammar school in 1379, one of the oldest schools in the world) and the Early Years and Childcare team set up an unusual playgroup in a dedicated space at the school. One purpose was to give male and female teenagers a chance to learn about pre-school children. On three mornings a week, the playgroup welcomed 15 two-to-five-year-olds. At each session, two students joined the playgroup staff (six students a week.) They also attended two training sessions by the educational psychologists which they found useful and enjoyable, learning about communication, attachment and early child development, play, and pre-literacy skills. There were plans for them to take a certificated course, *Introduction to Childcare*, for one session a week for six weeks at what was the nearby Jewel and Esk further education college. It would be delivered both before and after the playgroup experience to gauge which timing was more effective. Evaluation showed the project to be very successful. Teens improved in confidence, meeting the steering group's outcomes:

- To engage in purposeful, meaningful work experience which relates to real life;
- To be responsible for the Health/Wellbeing of others;
- To develop a basic knowledge of child development;
- To learn communication skills with adults and young children;
- To know/understand responsibilities/demands of parenting;
- Last outcome couldn't yet be gauged after one term: to increase the number of young people going to a positive destination.

Chapter Five

Growing2gether: Scottish Youth Mentoring Pre-school Children 2016

We focus on bringing out the unique potential of young people, rather than seeing them as a 'problem.' Diana Whitmore

Diana Whitmore, whom we met earlier, is developing another programme of great interest. Her young people learn a lot about small children as well as about themselves. Diana established it, having left Teens and Toddlers: it's similar to that but with greater emphasis on mental health. Inspired by the evidence of Seligman's positive psychology, it is expanding throughout some of the most deprived areas of the Scottish Highlands, funded by the Scottish government as well as several other funders. Recently it expanded into Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Morayshire. Gavin Morgan has now joined Diana as co-CEO.

Keenly aware of rising mental health problems of young people, especially depression and anxiety, Diana explains the project encourages teenagers to seek professional help, or learn how to cope, in extreme cases, while waiting to see the Child and Family Mental Health Service. She explains the rise: early trauma; lack of early attachment bonding; lengthy screen watching; problems invisible to teachers and parents in good enough time. She finds disadvantaged Scottish young people are more depressed than English (who tend to be angrier,) lacking aspiration and self-belief. She believes they need mentoring rather than counselling.

The project has two strands: the nursery programme where young people act as mentors for children needing extra support; and youth Social Action projects in the community. The first is of particular interest to us. Young people are selected by schools on the basis of one or more of 14 criteria: for example, coming from a troubled family, having been in care, being a bully, disengaged, unhappy, or angry and acting out. These can bode ill for their future qualities as parents and their mental health and wellbeing. Facilitators work closely with schools to understand each student so s/he is matched with the right child, personality-wise.

Students, 42 percent male, 58 percent female aged 12-to-15 from over 12 schools, spend 1.5 supervised hours a week in a

nursery/infant class with a child aged 4-to-5 needing extra one-to-one support, followed by a facilitated peer-group session (1.5 hours.) Facilitators encourage students to reflect on their own behaviour by asking questions about the child's interactions and applying this to themselves. 'Young people can receive challenge and nurturing in a way which engages rather than alienates them.' Most receive a SCQF Scottish Vocational Qualification in *Personal Development: Self in Community and Self Awareness*.

Through this educational programme with a therapeutic outcome, 'at risk' young people learn and grow through the experience of mentoring their small child. They notice the child's qualities and potential. In doing this, begin to be aware of their own potential. In this non-threatening, non-academic way, it's much easier for them to learn, for example, about risk-taking and new behaviours through their experience. They reflect on all they learn and apply it to themselves and to their relationships. It's an action-research project for them: 'what works?', an opportunity, with support of skilled facilitators trained in positive psychology, to try new ways of behaving. They develop both work and life skills and 'discover their inherent character strengths.' The impressive 16-week programme has an outline curriculum; this is a summary. Participants decide whether to attend weeks 17 and 18.

Week 1 Getting started: Induction held in school. Young people get to know each other and set their own group agreement.

Week 2 Being a mentor: First day in primary school nursery. Meet head and staff. The importance of listening and empathy.

Week 3 Communication that shows you care. Apply their learning about the world and needs of a young child.

Week 4 Growing up to feel good about ourselves. Developmental stages; self-esteem and confidence; effects of unmet needs; individual, group and global needs.

Week 5 Does the way we think matter? Mindsets. Life as possibilities; barriers to living, loving and learning fully.

Week 6 Risks, choices and consequences. What risks can get in the way of their lives running well. Do children take risks and why? Risk as an avenue to learning; every risk has a consequence.

Week 7 So how do I learn? Mid-project self-review. What qualities make for learning; what factors get in the way? How it can change.

Week 8 Who am I in relationships? Personal boundaries; saying no; bullying and being bullied; saying it as it is and finding your voice; finding what feels 'right'.

Week 9 Exploring anger. Anger as a healthy emotion; who is in charge of our reactions?; what we can change and what we can't; knowing ourselves in hot situations.

Week 10 You and school. What works; what are the challenges; finding your passion; being true to yourself; rules; making school work for you.

Week 11 Our potential: endless possibilities. Unique individual qualities and strengths. Feedback from how they are in the nursery; aspirations; making a difference and a contribution. Values, meaning and purpose.

Week 12 Support networks. Local and online sources of help; how to ask for help; what stops you; gathering and exchanging information. Possible visit from youth worker or similar.

Week 13 Difference and diversity. Appreciating how diversity can enrich our lives; how it can generate obstacles to community life; living and working with difference; belonging.

Week 14 Dreaming into your futures. Name your dreams aloud; how your heroic qualities enabled you to overcome obstacles; what they want by the age of 24; belief in their futures; how they can begin now; the power of long-term goals.

Week 15 Setting achievable goals. End of year review: highs and lows; something they want to achieve during the Christmas holidays; how to achieve it with a realistic timetable.

Week 16 Saying goodbye to the children: positive experience of ending well; creating an ending ceremony; focus on what each has achieved through strengths/talents; where I go from here. Planning the awards.

Week 17 Completion of portfolio in school. They focus on completing their worksheets and diaries in class. They give themselves a score on how well they focused. The group decides how to end the next session.

Week 18 Completion of portfolio in school and of written work; school is given details of hours worked to help with college applications etc; discussion with facilitators about careers, voluntary work, agencies for support with problems (facilitators research these beforehand.)

Awards: Each school/group does the ceremony differently. Relatives, friends, staff, local people all invited. Young people are acknowledged for contributions to children's development and the community.

The programme's been found to have a stronger impact on boys: the first time they take the chance to talk, to soften. From 2020, a boys-only Growing2gether group has been piloted, funded by Global men and boys' health charity Movember, increasing the number of boys to 42 percent in all their programmes. The whole project aims to increase a sense of connectedness to others, using unconditional positive regard, coaching and mentoring. There's no explicit aim to prepare teenagers for parenthood. But it makes a significant impact, developing resilience, responsibility, self-esteem, confidence and self-knowledge; we can predict that young people's better mental health, if it persists, will make parenting happier and easier, for them and their children, maybe reducing the risk of, for example, post-natal depression.

Chapter Six

Virtual Babies

It was very hard, much more difficult than I thought it would be. Girl

Because lending teenagers a life-like baby doll to take home for one night or more seems such an effective, tried-and-tested method of preparing them for the realities of parenthood, I provide a detailed account of how this has been done in one very experienced school, saving you a lot of time and effort if you decide to try it yourself.

The techno-doll has advantages over previous poignant attempts, in the US anyway, to provide experience of looking after someone. Since

the early 1900s, 'some of the past efforts to simulate the responsibilities of parenthood include students parenting eggs, flour sacks, dolls, and potted plants. However, the students were able to enjoy taking care of the doll, egg, or plant without needing to get up for 2 a.m. feedings. Although students may have learned some of the responsibilities of parenting from these early simulations, the students could easily get by with not taking adequate care of their babies. Technological advances have continued to create more realistic learning opportunities.'

Some secondary schools own life-like baby dolls: 'virtual babies,' programmed by computer to cry, need burping, need a nappy change, need the head supported, and have to be held and rocked. The US company *RealityWorks* sells these in over 47 countries, with most customers from Colombia, Mexico and Costa Rica. An interesting example of their use in the UK is at Bacon's College, a Church of England co-ed secondary academy school in Southwark, south-east London. Due to the enthusiasm over several years of Norma Gould, the now retired vice-principal, the school has invited all students in Year 10 to volunteer to join its annual *Virtual Baby Programme* in March. There were ten places. The week's programme:

Thursday 8.45am to 3.20pm.

Students take part in a day-long workshop on parenting

Friday 1pm to 3pm.

They learn about the baby dolls and how they work

Friday 3pm.

Students take a baby home for the weekend

Monday 8.45am to 10am.

They bring doll back and attend a workshop to reflect on their learning.

Topics covered in the workshops included:

- The impact of race/culture on parenting

- Understanding the impact of drugs, alcohol and smoking during pregnancy
- The reality of being a teenage parent
- Safety and social/emotional needs of the infant and the parent.

The impact of this carefully designed and run programme can be gauged from the students' feedback. For example:

- Having the baby for the weekend meant my whole weekend was disturbed. My baby was constantly moaning. I felt angry all the time because my baby cried unnecessarily. I just didn't want to look after it. I felt I was a bad mother and couldn't cope with motherhood. To have a baby you need to be mentally prepared, you can't imagine how hard it is. *Girl*
- *I've been confused and frustrated most of the time especially knowing that the baby's neck is very fragile. I definitely think young people should wait until they're older. I'm not ready to have child at such a young age.* Boy
- My most difficult time was when I was unfamiliar with one of the baby's cries. I soon learnt that I had to cuddle the baby after a long time of crying. *Girl*
- *There were times when I wanted to harm the baby and quit the programme.* Boy
- My most difficult moments were trying to sleep when my baby slept. I wasn't able to sleep properly as the baby was always on my mind. Having it had a big impact on my activities. I barely had time for social media. I was given enough information and preparation for the baby as my SRE [Sex and Relationships Education] leader was very helpful and lovely. *Girl*
- *The Baby programme experience was a valuable lesson. There is no way I would want to be tied down looking after a baby.* Boy

Daniel's account is telling. 'When I was out and about in public, people seemed to be shocked. I did explain the situation and their reaction changed and then they began praising the school for such a good programme.' If members of the public are so approving of

this method of education, why is it not universally done? (It's impossible to discover how many schools provide it.) The vivid, honest accounts of students underline one of the main hypotheses of this book, that it is hands-on, lived experience of various kinds that has the greatest emotional impact and is far more likely to be remembered years later.

The programme at Bacon's has been careful to fully include parents/carers. Without their agreement, it would be impossible for teenagers to take a virtual baby home, even for one night, given its frequent crying and probable disruption to family life. It's not just a matter of getting parents to return a signed permission form to school via their child: the school has invited them in for a thorough discussion. Unless they attend, the teenager can't take part. Their feedback is of great interest:

- My daughter was very moody and lost her temper several times. She tried to get me to look after the baby when she was sleeping but I was having none of it
- *She has learnt to multitask. The baby was on her mind 24/7, she was not so happy but her time management skills improved. She only asked for help when she was desperate. She now knows you need to be patient and responsible*
- The baby weekend had a huge impact on him as he had to cancel all his plans
- *She was very tired and stressed but she didn't lose her temper*

Others expressed approval of the programme, gratitude for it and pride in their child. The experience might well have been good for relationships within the whole family:

- She was doing quite well till the baby started to interfere with her sleep, she was then very cranky. I really appreciate and love the fact Bacon's College do this programme, because I think

teenagers aren't taught in depth the skills needed to look after a baby, especially how to avoid teenage pregnancy. So thank you

- *I offered to look after the baby while she had a shower but she was determined to do it on her own. She did really well, she took her parenting responsibilities very seriously and approached the task in a very mature way. We are all very proud of her*
- This is a good programme, it makes them realise how important it is to be a good parent. I know he'll make a good parent one day.

The booklet at the parents' meeting began:

Dear Parent or Carer

Bacon's College has introduced the Virtual Baby Programme for our Year 10 students; this programme is designed to help our young people to explore the physical, emotional and social consequences of parenting.

The programme is designed to inform young people about the realities of parenting. An important element that affects you and your family is that much of the learning takes place in your home. This involves your daughter or son caring for a RealCare Baby (an infant simulator) over a weekend and aims to help young people understand three important facts:

- 1 Babies' demands/needs are unpredictable, must be met promptly
- 2 Babies require a great deal of time and attention
- 3 Babies change parents' lives profoundly

RealCare Baby will require care throughout the day and night. The Baby's demands are very realistic, being based on the diary of a real baby. When Baby cries, it will be the young person's responsibility to attend to Baby's needs. The young person responds to the cry by waving their ID across the Baby's tummy. The young person must then judge what kind of care Baby needs- whether it's feeding, burping, rocking or nappy changing.

Baby will also cry if roughly handled, held in a position it does not like, or if the head is not properly supported. Although Baby will disrupt your home for a few days, just as a new baby would, I am sure you will agree that the valuable lesson your daughter or son will learn far outweighs the possible inconvenience.

It will be your daughter or son's responsibility to keep Baby safe and cared for. You can help by making arrangements for Baby in advance – be a coach for this event, not a player. Offer advice, but remember your daughter or son should do all the actual work of caring for the Baby. You may wish to use the opportunity to discuss issues surrounding teenage and adult pregnancy, boyfriends and girlfriends and relationships. All parents try to have these conversations with their children, but sometimes the issues are difficult to broach. This is a perfect time for such discussions. You should be aware that the Virtual Baby Programme is designed to help young people make responsible, informed choices about parenting. If you have any questions about any aspect of the programme, please don't hesitate to contact me or your son/daughter's group leaders. Yours faithfully, Norma Gould (Vice-Principal, Inclusion/Behaviour)

The meeting for parents was then laid out like this:

A warm welcome to the virtual baby programme

Order of events:

- 6.00pm Meet and Greet, registration – Angie Little/ Jeanette Russell
- 6.05pm Introduction to Virtual Baby Programme – Mrs Gould
- 6.10pm Presentation – Juliette Marshall / Jeanette Russell
- 6.20pm Parents' meeting with individual SRE Group Leaders

There was a coloured photo of the four staff members in the Sexual Relationship Education Team with their names. Later in the booklet were eight photos of groups of male and female students in past years holding their babies.

The booklet ended with these Helpful Tips:

- Please be supportive but don't take responsibility for the baby
- Help your teen understand that as rewarding as having a child is, it isn't always fun – caring for a baby is a huge responsibility and a lifelong commitment
- Prepare your teen for the reality that she/he won't have as much time for the things she/he usually does
- Make time for listening as she/he shares her/his fears and anxieties about looking after the baby
- Keep baby away from pets and small children
- Baby needs to have a secure place to sleep e.g. use a box as a bed on the floor
- Encourage your daughter/son to rest & sleep when baby sleeps
- Use this opportunity to discuss sex, relationships with your daughter or son
- Encourage your daughter/son to hold baby correctly
- Please make sure baby is safe and secure when travelling by public transport or car
- You may want to collect your daughter/son at 3pm on Friday and bring them into College on Monday morning at 8.45am
- Most of all, try to enjoy the experience with your daughter/son

We would like to say a big thank you for your help and support. If you have any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us.

The school's commitment to the programme was evident by its expenditure on ten dolls and secondment of one of the reception staff to a midwifery course to enable her to teach their Sexual Relationship Education curriculum which includes parenting. By June 2021, due to Covid and change in staffing, the programme hadn't run for at two years, but the principal told me that it would resume in September 2021. The school's website used to say for Year 10, PSHE provides 'participation in "virtual baby"

programme, in which students are given an experience of parenthood.’ But it seems that the programme no longer runs.

The Mothers’ Union

Another provider has been the Mothers’ Union who have used virtual babies for several years in various parts of the country such as Wiltshire, Dorset, Coventry and Sheffield. It has been the main way they have been trying to help prepare teenagers for parenthood. Sadly, I learnt that the work no longer takes place in Coventry: the babies were given to social services, and the work in Sheffield seems also to have come to an end. Salisbury may be the only place where the Union still uses virtual babies.

The Mothers’ Union, started by Mary Sumner in a Hampshire village to support mothers, is a Christian organisation, now in 84 countries, with members of all faiths and none. Its origin is touching. ‘In 1876, when her eldest daughter Margaret gave birth, Mary Sumner was reminded how difficult she had found the burden of motherhood. Inspired, she publicized a meeting of mothers in the parish to offer mutual support. Her plan was quite radical in its day as it involved calling women of all social classes to support one another and to see motherhood as a profession as important as those of men, if not more so. The first meeting was held in Old Alresford Rectory, but Mary was so overcome by nervousness that her husband had to speak for her and invite the women to return next week. At that second meeting she had gathered enough courage to lead her own meeting.’ ‘The Mothers’ Union is concerned with refugees, domestic violence, modern slavery, runs holidays for stressed families, works in prisons and has a great interest in parenthood, having run accredited courses to equip people to facilitate parenting groups and support parents.

As of 2021, the Union, I was told, is evaluating and redesigning its family support programme that has run for 20 years. It is keen to

support teenagers ‘who unexpectedly find themselves as parents, parents in prison and all types of settings and formations.’

Suppliers of virtual babies

1 The US firm *RealityWorks* produces the dolls. The first one you buy costs several hundred pounds. It comes with all the accessories. Additional babies cost a bit less. (You could find cheaper, used items on Amazon.) The website shows an extensive range of other products, for example, the pregnancy simulator, worn to feel what it is like to be pregnant. You can also hire one of the Babies at £35 each.

RealityWorks provide a comprehensive *RealCare Baby Experience Workbook* with, for example, a specimen letter to participants’ families. This explains that each day the baby will be programmed for a different schedule. ‘Your student will be graded on learning how to keep Baby happy, their understanding of the full-time commitment of childcare, their persistence (getting through the care simulation without quitting), the care and condition of Baby and supplies and returning everything to school on time. Incidence of neglect, head support failure, shaking, rough handling, wrong position and other functions are recorded by Baby’s computer and will lower your student’s grade. Your student will wear a waterproof, hospital-type wristband with a unique ID that must be present whenever s/he is caring for Baby.

Parental form: If the Baby is abused or damaged or lost while in my student’s possession, I agree to reimburse..... up to £.....

2 A much cheaper, less sophisticated option is the Ready-or-Not Tot Parenting simulator, available from Nasco in the US, or from *HealthEdco* whose catalogue includes many other teaching aids (telephone 0845 180 0505.)

Opinions vary as to whether using these dolls is the best way to learn. For one thing, not all parents would agree to their teenager bringing one home. And it's not the real thing: a teenager consulted by the WAVE Trust said, 'It was a fake doll, not realistic at all. A good thing to do would be getting a teen parent to speak about what it's like.' But there's evidence they do make an enormous impact on students who have looked after them (see chapter 29.) The origins of the dolls are recounted in chapter 14.

Parents need as much support as their babies do.

Dr Berry Brazelton

Parenting is a job for which there is precious little training or preparation and no job description. Yet it is more scary than abseiling for charity, more challenging than white water rafting.

P White, Children & Young People Now 2004

Teenage Parents / Straight Talking Peer Educators

I didn't have a clue what motherhood would be like. I could barely look after myself, let alone a baby. All I knew was how to muck around with my mates.
14-year-old pregnant girl

This book isn't a plea to reduce teen parenthood, though that's a likely outcome of well-taught, long-enough parenthood and sex education. We now look at the subject from various angles and describe an inspirational project that was dedicated to preventing it, as well as promoting the overall wellbeing of young parents.

Is teenage pregnancy always a disaster? No. Views vary about the complicated experiences of teenage parents. The statistics are grim. Putting together outcomes from research studies, such as those by UNICEF and the Department of Health, there's no doubt about possible serious, negative outcomes: complications of pregnancy/birth; stillbirth; perinatal death; prematurity, low birth weight associated with increased risk of death, blindness, deafness, chronic respiratory problems, low IQ, mental illness, cerebral palsy, dyslexia, hyperactivity. There's a 60 percent higher rate of infant mortality than average. The babies are more at risk of neglect and abuse, more likely to have a fatal accident before age- one, or to have accidental injuries throughout childhood. The mothers are more likely to be single. Sure Start Plus discovered that 14 percent of its sample suffered from domestic violence during pregnancy. 40 percent have post-natal depression, with worrying emotional consequences for the baby. The mothers are less likely to start breastfeeding (60 percent compared with 83 percent.) Their relationships tend to break down, and they are often isolated, lack qualifications and find parenting difficult. Some have further unplanned pregnancies. You are much more likely to become a teenage mother if your own mother was one.

There can be life-long consequences for mother and child. Both are more likely to remain poor in future and in sub-standard housing. The children are more likely to be unemployed and have their own babies early. Sons are 13 percent more likely to go to prison; girls 22 percent more likely to become teenager mothers. Young fathers often do badly financially if they have to pay maintenance. And all this is very expensive for the public coffers in benefits and health and welfare services.

Teenage mothers face extraordinary prejudice. Complete strangers feel entitled to pass disparaging comments. Disapproval flows from all directions, from officialdom and from supposedly well-meaning friends and family. Health professionals can be patronising or judgmental.

P White, Children and Young People Now 2004

Many of these factors are preventable: the result of inadequate care, largely the failure of so many pregnant teenagers to enrol early at ante-natal clinics and attend regularly. From poor backgrounds, they are more likely to smoke, have poor diets and not realise the possibly disastrous effects of alcohol during pregnancy. Unlikely to have learnt much useful at school, their knowledge of contraception might be vague with little understanding of how to find free contraceptives or confidence and assertiveness in using them. There are projects, such as Family Nurse Partnership, to support, by home visits, those who have babies in teenage years.

Who are the teenage mothers? Most are from disadvantaged backgrounds with low socio-economic status. Girls who are, or have been, in care are three times more likely to conceive. They are more likely to have been the child of a teenage mother and more likely than average to have been physically and sexually abused in childhood and to have been involved in crime. An interesting perspective is a Europe-wide comparison. UNICEF (2001) studied the subject in 13 countries, concluding that although teenage parents were disadvantaged everywhere, 'the severity of their

position varies substantially between countries with huge differences in education, lone parenthood, mother's employment and family employment. Ireland is the worst place to have a baby while still a teenager;' those in Greece, Germany and Austria found it the easiest. It is arguable whether poor education and low achievement lead girls to have babies so young, or whether having a baby leads to poor education. No one claims to have the answer. But we can hypothesise that if schools taught well about real life, of intense interest to girls, some will be keener to go to school and less likely to fill the gap by early motherhood.

However, Sue Sharpe, in her book *Falling for Love: Teenage Mothers Talk*, recounts her conversations with 26 teenage mothers, and two of their mothers. 'Unfair assumptions' are made by people who don't know any teenage parents. Sue acknowledges the difficulties: the hard work, gains, losses (for example, education is postponed or abandoned), the extremes of ups and downs; but also notes the love, joys and pleasure when the baby responds, returning the love, making motherhood worthwhile. She argues that the main problems are often to do with the struggle with society's prejudice, accessing benefits, finding a suitable home and getting support from relatives. The attitude of other people is the worst problem; young mothers find them 'patronising, presumptuous and offensive,' however well meaning. The teenagers don't consider their life ruined or wasted, parenthood often adding 'invaluable love and meaning,' giving them inner strength and 'the determination to do something with their lives.'

This can apply also to teenage fathers. Malina Saval in *The Secret Lives of Boys: Inside the raw emotional world of teen boys* interviewed 17-year-old Tyrone whose love for his baby daughter 'saved my life.' He lived in violent inner-city Massachusetts, with a father involved in drugs. 'If she wasn't here, I know I wouldn't be. I'd be in jail or something crazy. Maybe I'd be dead. Having a kid is the best thing in the world.' Malorie Blackman's *Boys Don't Cry* features the

traumatised Dante whose girlfriend hands their baby to him and walks off, just as he prepares to go to university. But within a year, he can't wait to get home to see his daughter. 'Daddy loves you very, very much.'

What's needed is understanding, sympathetic sex education enabling girls to feel confident in obtaining and using contraception, and a good benefits system. A teenage parent and her baby or child living with benign, involved parents have far more support than an older mother (single or not) living in isolation in a tower block.

It cannot be right for a girl of sixteen to get pregnant, be given the keys to a council flat and be left on her own. Gordon Brown, prime minister 2009

Sue Sharpe's findings were confirmed by an experienced secondary teacher who had run a scheme for teenage mothers. Some, though not all, did very well and, because their own childhood was recent, had an understanding of what it was like to be young. She contrasted this with older middle-class parents she knew who had much less feel for how to parent. They had their careers, expected parenthood to be equally under their control and were nonplussed, to put it mildly, when their children didn't conform to what they had imagined. She believed problems often lay more in the lack of resources and society's prejudices than in being a teenage parent.

The rate of UK teenage pregnancy has fallen. There are several possible causes. First, it may be possible, though not proven, that sex and contraception education in schools and elsewhere has had an effect. Second, the government's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy has been shown to be effective. Third, cynics explain how teenage girls stay at home more these days, glued to social media, so don't have sex so much. And government statistics have changed, now citing only under-18s: before, they included those aged 18-to-20.

Straight Talking Peer Educators: ‘the nitty gritty’

Some who have been teenage parents vehemently advise other young people not to do the same. Such are the parents who worked for Straight Talking. Hilary Pannack, a youth worker, alarmed at high rates of teenage pregnancy in Britain, determined to do something about it. The rate is still the highest in Western Europe. She was the passionate chief executive until 2020 of Straight Talking, the national charity she set up in London (1998.) What made this charity unique? It used only the real experts to talk to young people in schools. The project Anstee Bridge reported: ‘We used to have nurses delivering sessions. They would come in and provide a wealth of information and whilst this was useful, it never got to the nitty gritty of the issues. The Peer Educators say it like it is and as a result the young people are more likely to listen to them.’ Hilary talks of the ‘bridge of trust in the classroom’ which developed between peer educators and the students, trust far less likely to exist with teachers.

Straight Talking had two aims: to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy and to support those who are teenage parents. Education about sex and relationships was damned in Ofsted’s report (2013) *Not Yet Good Enough*, pinpointing that over one-third of schools teach this poorly. It is offered at random. Few teachers are keen to provide it or are good at doing so.

Straight Talking invited any woman who became pregnant before the age of 20, and any man who became a father before 21 and was able to work in schools, to apply to be trained and supported as a peer educator, going in pairs into schools to deliver up to six sessions to (mostly) 13-to-15-year-olds for a payment of £20 a session plus expenses. They could become involved at all levels of the charity. Some got jobs in the head office or became a trustee. Nearly all entered education, training or employment with an enormous boost to their confidence, self-esteem and financial independence. A typical comment by an ex-gang member: ‘When

I started, I was really nervous and had no confidence but Straight Talking as a whole supported me. I have developed many skills not only for work but for life as well. Me and my son have an amazing life.’ Straight Talking could certainly break down barriers and enable a different life. But Hilary was clear that although a ‘vital intervention,’ it was not the whole answer. Also essential are high quality relationships and sex education, access to good sexual health advice and ‘youth friendly’ access to contraception.

The Office for National Statistics reveals where teen conceptions are highest in England (about half are terminated.) This is where the charity aimed to work, focusing on areas of deprivation where teenagers are socially excluded and disadvantaged, at risk of being NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training.) Those leaving care are especially vulnerable.

The charity worked in most London boroughs as well as several other parts of England. It recommended that at least three sessions were needed to have impact, though it was flexible and would work in one-off Drop Down days. If the charity had funding at the time, the service was free. Peer Educators told their own stories, not sparing the complex difficulties of single and teen parenthood. Domestic violence is strongly linked with this. The project also sought to educate about healthy relationships, grooming, coercion, child sexual exploitation, sexting, legalised indecent online material, finance and housing.

Other interesting ways of working were added over the years. The National Gallery had the peer educators in to relate, in front of a participating audience of students, the Titian painting *Dianna and Callisto* to current-day issues such as unwanted pregnancy, rape, gangs and betrayal. There was also very popular work at a young offenders’ institution; the charity shared its experiences with NHS staff with a view to improving services; and took part each year in

a two-day workshop about domestic violence in partnership with other organisations. Evaluations are in chapter ...

Before Becoming a Parent charity had the privilege of inviting Straight Talking to a session and witnessing how it worked. It was powerful. The two peer educators started off with a question: 'What would your parents say if you said you were pregnant?' There was then a discussion of these True or False statements:

- You can always stop a baby crying
- Fathers are just as important as mothers

Students went to one side of the room if they agreed, the other side if not. Discussion followed.

There was a lot about finances. In small groups, students were given sets of 15 small robust cards showing trainers, holidays, DVDs etc. How much would they cost? They were then given the amount you get each year on benefit: at the time, £11,237 for a single parent with one child. If you have no national insurance number, you can't work. Students learnt how many things they'd have to go without.

The two personable young parents then honestly told their stories. Ruben, a paid worker for Dadsteam at Straight Talking, a co-parent with a seven-year-old, had no social life, no holidays, unlike his friends. Connie's told us how she got pregnant at 16. She let her parents know only after seven months. Her father hit her for the first time. She cried every day throughout her pregnancy with no one to help. The baby arrived. Connie shared a bedroom with her sister who woke whenever the baby cried. Life was so stressful that she left home for a mother and baby hostel, then got a flat, but at first there was not a stick of furniture. Her parents took no interest in the baby, gave no money and no help.

A baby changes everyone in the family and your circle.

Straight Talking peer educator

She managed to get through college and university but her involvement was limited as she had to get home to the baby. She lost her friends who were out having fun. Childcare was expensive: £1,000 a month. The childminder charged £5 for every minute she was late. But there were positives as well. She was motivated to do well, had no regrets, invited the girls to ask questions and ended with her advice: 'Don't let your friends influence you,' and 'Don't be fooled by older men.'

A report by Action for Children, *The Next Chapter: Young people and parenthood* (2017) makes an interesting point: not only teenage parents face specific problems. 'Young parents' can include those up to age 25 (the age when the brain has become fully developed.) 'Whilst we need to sustain recent progress in reducing teenage pregnancy, and continue to offer support to teenage parents, we must extend the lessons learnt to young people between the ages of 20-to-25. They too should have good access to services to prevent unplanned pregnancy, and, for those who do become parents, support that meets their needs. Supporting them also means changing the narrative. It means looking at young parents, their experiences, achievements and struggles, in a more positive light, how to help them realise their potential, and the potential of their children, rather than only focusing on what might go wrong.'

If I Were Jack: Young Men and Unwanted Pregnancy

85 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it 'helped me understand the effect an unplanned pregnancy would have on a guy like me.'

From research results

The World Health Organisation advocacy of a direct focus on teenage males in reducing teen pregnancy inspired a randomised controlled trial (from 2014) of the *If I Were Jack* programme in eight Northern Ireland schools, plus an evaluation of the scheme in ten schools in England, Wales and Scotland. Universities in all four countries (Belfast, Cardiff, UCL and Glasgow) collaborated with the lead, the Northern Ireland Clinical Trials Unit. *If I Were Jack* ‘aims to help teenagers to imagine the situation of a teenage boy who has discovered his girlfriend has become unintentionally pregnant.’ Teachers using it in mixed-sex classrooms emphasise that avoiding pregnancy is just as much a responsibility of males as females. Students are encouraged to reduce the risks of pregnancy by delaying sex or using contraception. Results show a very small decrease in conceptions but confirm the project is ‘feasible and acceptable’ to teachers, students and parents. A much larger trial is seeing how far the project can achieve its goal.

Worldwide teenage births: up-to-date statistics 2022

The highest: some African countries, partly due to early marriage/low abortion rates. Highest in the developed world: the US, then New Zealand. England, Wales and Scotland have the highest rates in Europe (apart from former Soviet bloc), Switzerland the lowest; Japan and North Korea the lowest in the world.

Chapter Eight

The WAVE Trust: Parenthood and Relationships Education Project 2016

The Scottish government commissioned the WAVE (Worldwide Alternatives to Violence) to prepare a document, PREP Toolkit: Parenthood and Relationships Education Project: Raising the Best Generation of Scottish Parents. It’s for schools, youth workers or anyone working with young people. We describe only the basics of its 147-pages to give you some ideas. You can download it all free from WAVE’s website. It’s designed to be a flexible resource. You

can use it all, adapt it, or pick bits out according to how much time you have and your students' needs.. It overlaps with the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence's Mental and Emotional Wellbeing curriculum which has sections on parenthood. It is designed for 45-to-60-minute lessons for 14-to-16-year-olds.

The PREP themes are the five Rs of parenthood:

- Relationships
- Resourcefulness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Resilience

Each theme contains several topics. Or you can follow these modules if you have only four sessions:

- Why parents matter
- What parents do
- Understanding emotions
- Understanding relationships

The Toolkit gives guidance on delivering sessions, emphasising the importance of planning, positive modelling and great sensitivity. It provides facilitator notes, resources and suggestions for extension activities. There's a lot of excellent content about good relationships, self-esteem, mental health, asking for help, conflict resolution and communication. We focus in this section on the sections concerning parenthood in particular, such as the one about connectedness. The whole session is reproduced here as an example of how the Toolkit is carefully prepared in great detail. Adopt it just as it is, or add considerations of your own (for example, I'd include ambivalence in the part about parental love.)

Connectedness

Key learning

- How babies communicate with their caregivers and how to connect with babies
- Baby states and cues and why these are an important part of parenting
- Importance of listening and observing
- What ‘connectedness’ means and why love matters

Activities

Ice breaker (ten minutes)

Crying Baby. Divide the group into halves: half will be As and the other half a mixture of Bs and Cs. Explain that As are going to be babies, Bs sensitive parents, Cs unavailable parents. Ask them to imagine they are a newborn baby (facilitator can bring props - a blanket, teddy or dummy to make the role-play realistic.) If required, a crying toy doll could be used instead.

Set up groups as family pairs, some As with Bs and some As with Cs. Once in the role-play, the As (babies) should cry. Bs will respond each time and offer comfort (the group could suggest methods of comforting a baby, such as a *cuddle*, *soothing words* or a lullaby.) Each time the baby cries, Cs will not respond; they might look at their phone, look away or ignore them completely. Let this activity run for up to three minutes. (It might get noisy!)

Discussion points

- How did babies who had sensitive parents feel? How did sensitive parents feel about what they were doing?
- How did babies who had unavailable parents feel? How did unavailable parents feel about what they were doing?
- If there were couples made up of Bs and Cs, what might happen there?

Differentiation

Depending on the size of the group, you can allocate one baby to one parent, or have B and C parents work together as conflicted couples. For smaller groups or individuals, watch the Still Face Experiment together (find it on YouTube.) Follow up with a discussion about how the baby might feel at different points in the experiment.

Resources required

- Baby props (dummy, blanket, baby toy, or crying baby doll)
- Access to internet for video footage with sound
- IT access in pairs/groups
- Materials for creating posters
- Printed resources on the website

Intended learning and suggested success criteria

Learners should:

1 Understand how babies communicate

Learners can:

- Explain why understanding babies' cues is an important part of parenting
- Explain the six baby states
- Explain the importance of listening to and observing your baby

2 Understand the importance of connectedness

Learners can:

- Define love in terms of parent/infant relationships
- Know the meaning of 'connectedness'
- List five practical things parents can do to connect with their baby

Additional sources of information

- www.wavetrust.org
- www.zerotothree.org

- www.beginbeforebirth.org
- <http://www.your-baby.org.uk>
- <http://www.connectedbaby.net/>
- <http://growingupinScotland.org.uk/>

Activity One (20 minutes)

Understanding baby states

This activity is based on research into baby states: there are three 'awake' and three 'sleep' states. Learners are divided into six groups/pairs and allocated one of the six baby states as follows.

Baby sleep and awake states

- Quiet alert: Wide-eyed with a bright face, little body movement, ready for interaction. Parents should be prepared for baby to look away and take some time out, and to offer time and space during the interaction for the infant's response
- Unsettled: Alert but fussy, may cry or may be soothed. Lots of limb movements; may be more sensitive to light and noise. Sometimes babies may show they are over-stimulated through physical signs: e.g. hiccapping, yawning, sneezing, squirming, or throwing their head back as they move from this state
- Crying: Lots of body activity, grimaces and intense crying. Baby needs calming. Some parents find that babies who have been nursed in the hospital's neonatal unit are very sensitive
- Drowsy: Dozing or beginning to wake. Babies are usually drowsy when they are just waking up or falling asleep. Eyes open but glazed and heavy-lidded. Occasionally may startle; body movements generally smooth. May fall back to sleep or move into alert state
- Light sleep: Eyes closed or fluttering. May see rapid eye movements under the lids. Easily roused and may make sucking or smiling movements
- Deep sleep: Breathing steady and regular, eyes closed, lies fairly still and is more difficult to rouse

Once they have been allocated their 'state', learners can watch the two-minute video online to familiarise themselves with their state: www.your-baby.org.uk/baby-statesintroduction-sleep-and-wake-states

Now each group has 5-to-10-minutes to produce an A3 poster for parents to explain what to watch out for to determine that 'state.' Learners can be given a printed description of their 'state' to help.

Tell us (one-to-five minutes)

Groups explain their posters: the main characteristics of that baby state. Finished posters can be put up around the room.

Differentiation

Learners can use the Parenting in Pictures to understand baby cues and create posters based on these. Lots of resources on <http://raisingchildren.net.au>

Activity Two (20 minutes)

Baby brains

Explain that parents' interaction with babies actually grows their brains. This can be written on a whiteboard to facilitate discussion: **Love Grows Brains.** Research shows that babies who are played with, read to, taken places and loved are building a strong foundation for their future brain development. This can be an all-group activity or done by splitting the room into three groups so that each group can focus on one of the films.

Watch the following two-minute video from the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard university to introduce the topic of how connecting with babies can support brain development:

- Serve and Return: Interaction shapes brain circuitry (YouTube)

These videos can be shown on YouTube if learners are engaged:

- Experiences build brain architecture
- Toxic stress derails healthy development

Definitions

This exercise explores what ‘connectedness’ means. Explain that in the Serve and Return video, we see that interactions with infants help to develop their brain. This comes from the emotional connection that parents have with their baby. This is what we mean by connectedness. Babies are born ready to connect to other people. They are able to communicate and thrive on interaction. This video is a great example of connectedness: *Baby says I love you at 10-weeks-old* (YouTube.)

Another important part of the relationship between parents (and other close caregivers) and their babies is the bond between them. If this emotional bond is positive, nurturing and responsive, it will support the emotional development of the baby right up to adulthood. Bonding can be supported by reading babies’ signals and responding to their needs.

Learners can now create *Definitions* posters for connectedness and top tips for parents on how to connect with their baby.

Discussion points

- Why does love matter?
- What does love do to babies’ brains?
- How do babies know they are loved?

Learning points

The intention of this session is to show how the early interactions that babies have with their care-givers form pathways in the brain which act as a foundation for future relationships and behaviour. It is never too late to intervene or support people who have had traumatic early relationships. But as parents, the best thing you can

do for your babies is to connect with them by loving them. Love in parents is expressed as touch, eye contact, physical contact, playing, reading, singing and so on.

Final quiz (three minutes)

Activities to increase the parent-infant relationship. This can be done in pairs, groups or individually.

Resource: True / False quiz

If in pairs, learners can discuss and determine which statements are True and False. If in a group, one side of the room can be designated True and the other False. The facilitator reads out the activities, then asks learners to move to the side of the room they think is correct. Read each of the following activities and decide if they increase the quality of the parent-child relationship. If you think that it does, select True. If you don't, select False.

Cuddling	Breastfeeding
Putting baby in bouncy seat	Eye contact
Leaving baby in buggy / car seat	Skin to skin contact
Reading stories	Singing songs
Mimicking baby's expressions	Controlled crying
Not listening to baby	Talking to baby
Smacking	Baby massage
Ignoring baby's cries	Putting baby in a quiet room
Babywearing (baby in a sling)	Giving baby iPhone or iPad
Baby in childcare for long periods	
Putting baby in front of TV	

Additional activities (five-to-ten minutes)

Activity One

Watch *Begin Before Birth: Charlie's Story* (YouTube): an example of what can happen if the parent-infant relationship is not positive.

Discussion points

- What impact do you think Charlie's early life could have had on his teenage years?
- What kind of support could Charlie's mum have had?

Activity Two

An important part of parenting a baby is knowing when it's hungry. Crying is usually the last thing a baby will do to tell you he is hungry. What may he do before then? Answers can be shouted out individually and captured on whiteboard, or can be done in pairs/group work to identify four feeding cues.

Infant feeding cues

- Rooting
- Licking or smacking lips together
- Waving hands or feet around
- Knitting fingers
- Sucking noises
- Sucking fingers or hand.

If learners are unable to describe any cues, the internet will provide a good starting point.

Conclusion (five minutes)

Ask learners to complete an entry for the Ask It Basket. All must complete one. If they don't actually have a question, they can just write a comment or something they've learned. Making writing something compulsory allows those who want to ask questions to do so without the rest of the group knowing who asked what.

Facilitator notes

There's significant evidence that sensitive parenting, responding to babies' cries, is important for human development. Babies left to cry for long periods have more behavioural and emotional

problems as they grow. Parents' mission is to understand what babies are trying to tell us so we can respond to their needs.

a) Baby States

Baby States is based on research from the university of Warwick. Their website uses video to show health professionals and parents how to respond to a baby in a way that fosters emotional wellbeing. Learners could also download the smart phone app (Android only) to personalise it for their 'pretend' newborns.

b) Neuroscience

It is strongly recommended that facilitators are familiar with basic neuroscience concepts: the three films from The Center on the Developing Child (Harvard university) referred to in the activities will help. The final film, which can be shown along with Charlie's story, helps explain why the early relationship is so fundamental to healthy child development: in effect, why love matters. (Teenagers can research the very latest: e.g. every second, 1.7m new synapses develop in the brain of a 0-3-year-old!)

c) Difficult conversations

This session may raise some uncomfortable feelings in the group, or may lead to disclosure or difficult behaviour, particularly if young people have not experienced positive relationships with their own parents. Facilitators need to be prepared to deal with difficult questions, especially around the future possibilities for children who have had a poor early childhood experience. It is worth reinforcing here that it is never too late and that as adults we can work to rewire our brains to cope with life's challenges, regardless of our early childhood experience. The key message of this session is that everyone is capable of connection with their baby, even if they have had a difficult experience of childhood themselves. It is important that young people are reminded there

is a lot of information and research we know about today that their parents may not have known about.

d) ‘Good enough’ parenting

Another important message is about the continuum of ‘good enough parenting.’ Being a parent is a difficult job and it is possible that parents will have occasional lapses in attention to their child, which is not likely to cause harm if it occurs intermittently in an otherwise loving and responsive environment.

e) Supporting learners

If young people are concerned about how their early experiences have impacted them as young adults, they should be supported to discuss this with a qualified professional such as a guidance teacher, educational psychologist or support worker. Facilitators should be prepared to support learners with knowledge about what support services are available locally. DELETE LINE

The other sections which concentrate on parenting, as opposed to any other relationship, are:

Support for parents and infants

This teaches the stages of child development, what babies and children need at each stage, the need for support for parents and how to get the various kinds. Case studies are given about four families and the support they need.

Best start in life

A chart listing what is needed for babies, preschool children and older children. ‘What can be done to somewhat counteract the inequalities suffered by children born into disadvantaged and deprived situations’: for example, cuddling for babies, sensitive parenting for pre-school, reducing conflict in the home for older children. Each age has ten or eleven evidence-based suggestions.

What? Why? How? flashcards

Labelled: Parent-child connection, Control of child's behaviour, Parent-child conflict.

Nurturing authority

This covers the need for parents to be authority figures, to decide on rules, and use positive parenting skills to nurture the development of self-control in their children.

Parenting agree / disagree statements

Six statements are given, e.g. 'I wish my parent/carer was more of a friend than an authority figure.' Students can hold up a card 'agree' or 'disagree.'

Family group cards

These enable students to be placed into family groups of many ages to decide appropriate rules.

House rules examples

Thirty-seven examples are given (e.g. 'No using mobile in bed'.) Students can add their own ideas.

Positive parenting basics

A case study is given of a family in conflict. Students are offered six principles of positive parenting so they can discuss how to help the family.

Through the keyhole: facilitator

This section about empathy, respect and individual support in relationships includes scenarios between parents and teenagers for discussion. There are scene cards with short conversations relevant to parenting.

Practical parenting: section two

This covers safety, first aid, finances, budgeting and the responsibility of caring for a child every day. It looks at the reasons why babies cry, how to soothe them, all the tasks involved in twenty-four-hours care, and getting help.

Extension activity

A chart where students can write how to keep their baby safe at home, in cafés, at the doctor's, in the car and walking to town.

Budget planner

This is a detailed income and expenditure form to get students thinking about all the costs associated with setting up home with a baby and child.

Child health and wellbeing

This section encourages students to reflect on the modern world (less outdoor play, more parents working etc) and how these factors affect parenting. It then focuses on the role of parents in fostering physical and emotional wellbeing and understanding the importance of security, stability, happiness and love.

Back to the Future quiz: These are ten True or False statements about the current condition of children and young people: such as use of technology, levels of depression, and obesity.

Factors affecting health: A chart with 71 factors relevant both to parenting and to young people's own lives.

Mind map and word cloud examples: Diagrams showing the internal and external factors affecting child wellbeing, and a brainstorm design of words about them (reading, motivation, family centres etc.)

Buzz word definitions: About 50 words: each explains what's meant for children by the terms security, stability, happiness, love.

Job advert: A form giving the chance for students to create a parents' job advert detailing desired experience, qualifications, knowledge, some 'must have,' others 'nice to have.'

Parental roles and responsibilities: Students learn about how parenthood will affect their own lives, the qualities and skills needed to be a good enough parent, single parenthood, Maslow's hierarchy of needs; the long-term commitment of being a parent.

It's not just a pram: Six questions for students to discuss, covering, for example, single parenthood benefits, access to housing and postnatal depression.

Ideal parent ideas: Three lists of ideas from young people themselves about what's important when catering for babies and children – physically, mentally and emotionally.

Needs tree: A drawing of a tree with five branches: Safety, Love and Belonging, Self-Actualisation, Self-Esteem and Physical.

Needs tree headings: Each of the five needs to be put on a flip chart so that students can write their associations to each.

Needs tree prompts: Several words you can use to prompt students to think about what is involved in 12 important considerations for parenthood (shelter, friendship etc.)

Changing lives: 15 ways in which lives change with parenthood (career and job prospects, mental strain of having a baby etc.) Students are invited to note down how they think having a baby will affect each of the 15 areas.

The last four pages deal with evaluation and reflection by both students and staff.

Appendix One: Evaluation body

A drawing where students can write after each session: Something I enjoyed, Something I learned, Something I will take away, and Something I disliked.

Appendix Two: PREP exit ticket

Four times during the course, students can note: *Something I learned, Something I want to find out more about, Something I'd change.*

Appendix Three: Participation evaluation form

After every session, students are asked to mark their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements:

- I enjoyed today's session;
- I thought today's session was interesting;
- I learnt something new in today's session.

After today's session:

- I think I know more about being a parent;
- My opinion about parenthood has changed;
- Why?

Appendix Four: Reflective practice sheet

The last sheet is for facilitators. They are advised to complete it after every session. It asks:

- What went well?
- What would you like to improve?
- Identify any questions that arose which you were unable to answer, or any further support you require
- Identify any areas for further development of this session (e.g. timings, assessing learning, amendments to content/resources, anything missed, external inputs required, further training.)

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change.

I am changing the things I cannot accept.

Angela Davies

Chapter Nine

Before Becoming a Parent charity (B4BP) Courses in London comprehensive secondary schools

People forget what you said and what you did. But they never forget how you made them feel. Maya Angelou

Carefree Kids

I set up Carefree Kids charity in 2003 because I'd discovered, as a parent governor, psychotherapist and organiser of therapeutic activity after-school clubs, that many children in our primary schools were suffering emotionally, often showing 'difficult' behaviour but getting no help, or too little. Some help was at venues other than schools to which parents often didn't bring their child consistently. If schools employed counsellors, there were never enough hours for all the children who needed them. Charities working in schools usually limited weekly sessions to one-to-three terms, even if many years were required. Some charities were unaffordable by many schools or insisted on two dedicated rooms which schools couldn't always offer. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services were not only hard to get to by many parents, but had long waiting lists and restricted their services more and more to the most urgent, extreme cases.

I wanted to use my qualification and experience as a psychotherapist to bring therapy away from expensive consulting rooms and towards people who wouldn't otherwise be involved in it, either as therapist or patient. I trained at the Guild of Psychotherapists: one of its founders, Dr Peter Lomas, believed that providing psychotherapy was an 'ordinary' activity, needing personal qualities such as warmth, as much as formal qualifications. The Guild is one of the few therapy training bodies not to require applicants to have a degree.

Carefree Kids operated as something of a 'barefoot' therapy organisation, convinced that people with no academic or formal training or even relevant experience might turn out, with good preparation, support and supervision (all free of charge) to be therapists. This proved true time and again. We trained community volunteers of all ages and backgrounds to provide one-to-one weekly sessions of therapeutic play in schools for as long as needed. We took trainees on placement from therapeutic courses: play therapy, drama, art, and dance/movement therapies, counselling. They were all trained and supervised together in our weekly groups led by a qualified psychotherapist. All learnt from each other: a popular model which worked well. The charity closed in 2019 (lack of funding) yet the need will always be there. (The work has been revived by the new 'Carefree Kids 2020'.)

When (and if) a volunteer was ready, (this could take months or even years, there was no set time,) he or she was allocated one child or young person aged four to 16. Many went on to work with two or three. We charged a low fee to schools, making it more likely the therapy could continue for years if needed. Unlike other organisations in this field, Carefree Kids didn't believe in a pre-determined cut-off point. We found it could take three years for a child to, for example, be able to begin to mourn for a lost parent. Children were followed to secondary school if they, parents and school all agreed. Some volunteers, especially retired ones, stayed with the charity for many years, bringing life experience and often taking on additional roles.

The volunteers didn't always know much about the family background of the children. Carefree Kids sometimes met parents and offered support to them too, though few took it up. Many struggled with life and with their children. They worried about them, often didn't know how to respond to them effectively and might well have had problematic childhoods themselves, with no

experience of good enough parenting which they could then use, consciously as well as unconsciously, with their children.

There's a lot of talk about early intervention. It usually means trying to do something once there are problems, or once a child has been born. Is this early enough? There's talk about prevention. How about the prevention of fires? We try to prevent fires by installing smoke alarms. But we don't do everything we can about parenting. We talk about 'natural instincts' and 'parents knowing their children best' as if to reassure ourselves that we can leave well alone: let parents get on with it and all will be well.

For sure, there are countless parenting courses, but attendance is mostly voluntary (Parenting Orders being the exception.) Most parents never go, even those who want to. I have taken two very needy and overwhelmed mothers to local authority parenting classes. In both cases, they were deeply moved by their first class. One was amazed and delighted that a father attended. The other said how her heart had lightened. When I called for them to accompany them to their second class, neither opened the door.

We know that most emotional problems of children are usually caused, or partly caused, by how they are parented. We know that living in bad housing, in poverty, being subjected to domestic violence and all the other adverse social and economic conditions make good parenting much harder. In some cases, it is not easy to find a correlation between a child's emotional troubles and the way it has been parented. But there is an enormous amount of evidence of the long-lasting harm to mental health which results from the conditions in which children grow up, of which the quality of parenting is one of the most important.

There comes a time in organisations when there's an urge to go a step further, test a new idea. In the case of Carefree Kids, the logical next step, the new idea was to do something substantial with

people who weren't yet parents but who probably would be within five or ten years after leaving school. This meant local teenagers. I wanted to see if we could help prevent, or at any rate reduce, distress in future children by preparing young people, well in advance, about the realities of parenthood, the emotional needs of babies, children and parents and how these can best be met. So we wrote to the head of all 17 Waltham Forest secondary schools. No replies. The first success came through personal contact. We created a charity in 2018 for this work, *Before Becoming a Parent*. It has a track record of sessions in seven schools. Six are escribed here, with resources given in chapter 33. And we provided some B.A.S.E®Babywatching, is covered in chapter 19.

Our first school, 2006

The baby needs love and care, someone to just be there and hold it instead of just plonking it in the chair. Student after the course

On a visit to a school to discuss Carefree Kids' therapeutic work, we met an open, friendly English teacher and parent, John Tuite. This school had the lowest number of GSCE passes in the borough, in an area with high indices of multiple deprivation. We asked if his school might be interested in some work about parenting. This might be the school where we could start! We weren't disappointed. John introduced us to Linda Allen, the teacher leading the two-year health and social care BTech course for Year 9 students (13-to-14-year-olds) who chose it. She was committed to promoting PSHE as a trained counsellor and was comfortable teaching sex education. (She'd offered to teach sex for teachers who didn't want to, but no one took up her offer.)

It was a joy to work with her. We agreed to attend weekly for two terms for one hour during the BTech lesson. It fitted into her syllabus: the *Human Lifespan Development* unit mentions 'key aspects of development' including emotional ('bonding, independence'), 'life events' including parenthood, and 'self-concept' including

‘emotional health and wellbeing.’ The 19 students, (not all there each week), all female, included a wide ethnic mix: Pakistani, Caribbean, African, white British.

Without a preconceived syllabus, a volunteer and I (both parents, one black, one white) ran the course. We planned to bring in a mother and baby weekly to be observed. We hadn’t yet realised the value of drama but knew of the work of Roots of Empathy and Teens and Toddlers and based our plan loosely on ROE.

How to find a suitable local mother and baby? It didn’t occur to us to seek one from the parents of the school’s students. Even if we’d tried, there might have been few to choose from, as they all had a teenager, unlikely to have a new baby as well. We first tried the children’s centre near the school. We struck lucky at once: they referred Coco, a full-time mother in her 30s, very happy to accept. From China, she’d taught English, had an excellent command of the language and was used to talking to classes. Married to a Chinese man, she had a very cute daughter, two-year-old Maggie. This was a golden opportunity for them both. Maggie, a happy, outward-going child adored attention. Coco liked the chance to talk again with students. We ran the work from January till June. The first lesson plan by the teacher read: ‘Learning objective: Raise students’ awareness of the emotional needs of mothers and babies/young children.’

Coco’s visits were a dream. Articulate, honest, reliable, patient, familiar with schools and young people, she over time disclosed sensitive information, like physical fights with her husband due to stresses of first-time parenthood. She had a good sense of humour and visited nearly weekly for one term. Students sat in a circle, observing, captivated by Maggie and interested in all that Coco had to say. We’d discussed whether we wanted a parent and baby, or parent with a young child. As things turned out, we got both. Coco gave birth to a second daughter during term two. After a few

weeks of maternity leave, as it were, she returned with Maggie plus a tiny new baby, Martina, whom Coco breastfed in the class. One week, her mother, visiting from China, came too. All this added a huge new dimension. Coco and the students were able gradually to learn how one copes at the same time with a lively toddler, a very young baby, a husband and the strains of a marriage which was already far from harmonious.

It probably was useful that Coco's ethnicity differed from any of the students'. If the mother had been, say, African, it might have enabled less identification by the non-African students. None would identify as Chinese, so all came from the same direction. And it didn't seem to matter that Coco wasn't a teenager or in her early twenties. She could relate easily and sympathetically to teenagers. But as we'll see, age was an issue at other courses.

We used many teaching methods: role-play, whole group discussion, visit by a teenage mother to discuss challenges faced by young parents. We used videos. Topics included preparing for a baby's arrival, skills/qualities needed for good parenting, resources needed by parents, sibling rivalry, coping with parenthood's demands, balancing these with having an adult relationship, the reality of parenting, parent/child relationships, emotional/practical needs of children, differences between families, needs of parents themselves, family dynamics, abortion.

After discussing breastfeeding, we sang Janet Russell's song, *Breastfeeding Baby in the Park*, with guitar accompaniment. It was remarkable how much this song appealed to the most difficult student, a girl from a dysfunctional family who often truanted but who always turned up for this lesson. We've found it popular with every class we've worked with. It's cheerful and rhythmical: the words are in chapter 33. Janet gives permission for anyone to use it. Ask: who was breastfed? Who has been to Brighton? We also gave out true and false statements on pieces of paper about

breastfeeding to discuss (chapter 33.) At the end, we gave every student a certificate of attendance on the course: *Meeting the Emotional Needs of Babies, Children and Their Parents*.

Evaluation by the university of East London

We wanted an outside evaluation. Professor Irvine Gersch at the Psychology Department, university of East London put us in touch with Alison Dow, an MA educational psychology student who agreed to evaluate our work for her thesis, beginning her research after the sessions had ended and producing a substantial document which was useful in long-standing attempts to raise funds and engage institutions. See her work in chapter 29.

Drama lessons: one term for boys and girls

At the same school, we had the privilege of working with Paul Daintry, the friendly, welcoming head of performing arts, the sort of man to whom teaching seemed more than just a job (the writer Paul Goodman called such people ‘authentic professionals.’) He invited us to run a weekly session for his Year 10 drama class of boys and girls aged 14-to-15. The class had already had a lesson about teenage pregnancy, using discussion, song and drama.

Money was found to employ Selina Jeremiah, a local Black drama workshop leader and parent, experienced in working with teenagers. She’d grown up in the area. Paul’s lesson plan for the first week gives a good idea of the course. Devised by a teacher, it contains school jargon such as ‘learning objectives.’

Learning objectives

- To be able to understand motherhood through role-play;
- To be able to experience how it feels to be a child/mother/partner in a difficult situation.

Students' prior knowledge / understanding

- Students have been meeting with mother and children for several weeks/months; have discussed motherhood issues.

By the end of the lesson

- All students will have experienced how it feels to be in role as mother/child;
- Most students will be able to role-play particular characters within set contexts;
- Some students will be able to:
 - a) Understand motives behind actions;
 - b) Evaluate work of selves and others and link it to current scheme of work.

Key words on board: Role-play, motives, feelings.

Activity/ key instructions

Introduction (five minutes)

Class discussion of one-off drama session being run today and how it is hoped that through the work today, students will have a deeper understanding of how it feels to be a mother. Refer to learning objectives if appropriate.

Starter: one word response (ten minutes)

Ask students to think about how it would feel to be kept awake all night by a screaming child who will not stop crying. Ask them to feed back responses: one word or phrase each. Extension task: Limit responses to **one** word. Ask students to respond to the following situations with the first word that comes to mind.

- a) Haven't slept in two nights; your child now refuses to eat dinner;
- b) Have been working all day, came home to two children who haven't been fed, house is a mess and your partner is asleep on the sofa;

c) You're hungry, have just wet yourself and now your mother is shouting at you for making a noise.

Discuss answers and contrasts that have arisen. Why were some responses different to others? How easy/difficult was it to put yourself in someone else's shoes?

Second task (15 minutes)

a) In pairs. Explain that now we are going to role-play some situations in which mothers and children might find themselves. All students will be asked to participate, as it is through role-play that they will be able to empathise with the characters they are playing. **Stress** that only students who volunteer to share their work will; all students must complete set tasks, but only those who wish to share will.

b) In pairs, decide who'll role-play mother, who the child. The child is a toddler, is very tired, therefore grumpy. Mother is also tired, but frustrated also as the child refuses to do anything she is asked. If appropriate, show an example first so others understand the task. It's important students really try to understand the motive behind their behaviour, i.e. *why* mother/child acts in a particular way.

Workshop, and share if appropriate. Discuss how it felt and what was learnt from the exercise.

Third task (20 minutes)

Group size: in groups of four

Ask students to join up with another group and decide who will be mother, partner, baby and toddler. In this scenario, students focus on how the family dynamic works; who sets off who; who is responsible/irresponsible; who does the housework; who looks after the kids during the day/night etc. Create a scene where all four characters are interacting and think about how they would feel in the given situation *before* you begin rehearsing.

Plenary (ten minutes)

Discuss outcome of lesson and how/why students' views have been altered towards the following questions, now that they have experienced being in someone else's shoes.

- a) How it would feel to be kept awake all night by a screaming child who just will not stop crying;
- b) Haven't slept in two nights, your child is now refusing to eat dinner;
- c) Have been working all day, came home to two children who haven't been fed, house is a mess, your partner asleep on the sofa;
- d) You're hungry, have just wet yourself and your mother is shouting at you for making a noise.

Why has there been a change? What would you do in these situations, now that you understand **why** people behave in certain ways? Refer to learning objectives as appropriate.

Evaluation

We did not carry out a formal evaluation, but my informal talk with the class at the end of term showed that most, if not all, of the students found the course enjoyable and interesting. My talk was not in the presence of the drama leader or teacher in order to elicit honest replies. It was especially gratifying to learn that boys as well as girls said that they enjoyed the classes.

Drop Down Days

Secondary schools increasingly organise one day or more a year when the syllabus is suspended, outside speakers are invited to run sessions about PSHE-type subjects for all students, an hour for each class. They're variously called Drop Down Days, SuperLearning Days, Non-Uniform Days or Rise Up Days (not to be confused with 'Dress Down Days' - no uniforms, each child contributing £1 to school funds.) Our subject is the sort of thing schools might include. Some are replacing their regular weekly

PSHE lessons with Drop Down Days for reasons of ‘curriculum pressure’ (i.e. sticking to what they are told to teach and inspected by Ofsted.) We have experience of these days at three schools.

Our second school: mixed comprehensive in the borough:
No-Uniform Babylove SuperLearning Day (2012)

It’s been a practice of some pastorally-minded teachers to invite teenagers to write anonymous questions about anything, put them in a hat and for the teacher to reply honestly. Michael Duane, head of Risinghill Comprehensive in North London, did this in the 1960s. It gives students a chance, if they dare, to make explicit any embarrassing or anxious questions or thoughts they’ve been keeping to themselves. We often assume they know more than they do, or have more accurate knowledge than they have. So we adopt this method on every course. We gave out pieces of paper and a pencil for students to write their questions. It’s not always easy to decide if some questions are spoofs. Most seem genuine. They showed that Year 9 students had real curiosity and relevant questions about several aspects of having a baby, evidence that this subject is of interest to teenagers.

We worked with five classes of 25 students each over one day. A colleague and I (both parents) led the morning session which went well. In the afternoon, my colleague’s teenage daughter and toddler grandson came - of even more interest, confirming our belief that this is a popular topic for adolescent boys and girls and that visits by parents, babies and small children are an essential ingredient of parenthood education. It also showed us that bringing in a very young parent is of particular interest.

After school sessions: One term (2014)

We didn’t choose to run this course after school, we wanted school time, but it was useful experience. The school is in one of the most deprived wards in Waltham Forest and the top 20 percent most deprived in England. Some staff from our 2006 school had moved

to this one, following a popular headteacher, leaving behind the school which had become an academy and didn't suit them. We found some support for our course, had encouraging meetings with the young, enthusiastic, full-time PSHE teacher and also managed to meet with her senior, head of humanities. Unfortunately, the man who makes the decisions didn't agree to the course during the school day. He was known as a 'can't do' sort of chap. Disappointing: we'd put time and energy into negotiating, but accepted an offer to start at 4pm.

Once again, the head of performing arts was our most supportive contact. We gave short talks and taster sessions to several classes of 14-to-15-year-olds, inviting them to attend weekly from 4-5.30pm. Several boys and girls put up their hands to show interest. In the end, only eight students in Years 8 and 9 (aged 12-to-14) attended. After school, you're competing with clubs and students' wish to get on with their lives away from school.

Tony Cealy, an experienced Black actor, drama workshop leader, parent and step-parent, agreed to be the paid tutor for this course. We used the drama classroom. Over the term, five girls attended fairly regularly. Three others, including one boy, dropped in. The mother of one very keen girl refused to let her come. We tried to contact her (we imagined she might be worried that the course would make her daughter want a baby) but to no avail. These are the methods we used:

- a) Warm-up exercises to develop group trust (the girls knew each other already);
- b) Invitation in the initial circle to comment on how their last week had gone;
- c) Lending a life-like baby doll and a buggy to take home for the weekend. Parents had to agree: the dolls were programmed to cry loudly several times during the night;
- d) Bringing in a mother with her baby for two sessions;

- e) Role-play every week;
- f) Watching short film clips;
- g) Discussion of True and False statements;
- h) Preparing a play for last session to show what had been learnt;
- i) A certificate and a pack given to each girl with information about support services for young people and new parents.

Only two students agreed to take home the life-like baby dolls. The dolls were invaluable. The girls had to wake up three times during the night to comfort them, giving them a vivid, unforgettable experience of what it's really like to have a small baby. They were able to describe to the group their feelings of resentment, anger and exhaustion. The other group members learned from this. Without these dolls, there is no way that students could experience for themselves some of the harsher realities of parenthood. They might, as a result, be likely to delay parenthood, enter it with more understanding, and continue with further education or vocational training before becoming parents.

We worked on what it is really like to have a baby:

- The exhaustion;
- The crying;
- The long-term commitment;
- The importance of supportive partners;
- The dangers of domestic violence;
- The restriction on social life;
- The need of babies for attention.

Tony and I reviewed sessions after each ended. We learnt a lot:

- If students attend voluntarily after school, you don't get boys;
- You don't get many girls. Some of those you do get have other things to go to as well, so attendance is patchy;
- You tend not to get the girls from the most disadvantaged homes who might need the course the most. We got the

impression, without prying into the girls' backgrounds, that they probably came from relatively stable families;

- Bringing in a mother in her 30s, as we did, was less interesting to girls than a younger one would have been;
- Having a male tutor worked well for an all-female group;
- The end of term presentation was far more animated and impressive than we ever dreamt. The girls rose to the occasion and showed acting talent and enthusiasm that we had not seen;
- Despite inviting every member of staff via an attractive leaflet in each pigeon hole, and holding the show at a time when no other staff meetings were taking place, we got only one: the head of performing arts who had supported us so well already. Five girls were in the show, with four of us in the audience: the teacher, a trustee from Carefree Kids, the tutor and myself. Despite this, the show was felt to be a great success!
- The small numbers made the course expensive: we paid the tutor his normal fairly modest fee, using our grant. The school got the course for free;
- We gave the girls *Before and After* questionnaires. The results were encouraging and detailed in chapter 28.

Although the course had been positive for us all, we decided not to offer a second term after school, because we would not get high enough numbers to justify our time and money, and we would not get the boys. Only by running the course during school time would we reach significant numbers of both sexes.

Our third school (June 2015) mixed comprehensive

This school is in a poor area. The special educational needs co-ordinator liked the idea of a one-day course during their Drop Down Day for selected students deemed to be vulnerable. 20 out of a list of 21 turned up: 13 girls, 7 boys. Our drama workshop leader ran it, supported by a volunteer dramatherapist and me. A psychologist, expert in parenting education, observed, later giving useful feedback. Two teaching assistants stayed in the room.

The parents we brought in, a single father and a couple with a baby and a child, spoke honestly of their difficulties in parenting, and answered questions. The well-educated single father used some words which the class didn't seem to understand. These adults were probably of far less interest than a carefully selected teenage or early 20s parent would have been. A young father, too, would have been an ideal visitor for the mixed group of students. We then asked the students in small groups to write their thoughts about healthy and unhealthy parenting and the messages they would give to parents. They mentioned lullabies, 'taking all the time you have on your kids,' 'two is enough,' parents have good and bad experiences, you make sacrifices, no privacy, it's 'quite boring,' and an appreciation of the single father's story.

Evaluation

The *Before and After* questionnaires showed some students reported positive learning, felt keen about the idea of learning more. See chapter 29.

Our fourth school (Dec. 2017) mixed comprehensive

Seeking more chances to pilot our course, we emailed local secondary schools to offer our free services at Drop Down Days. It was exciting, even surprising, that one soon replied, inviting us to deliver a one-day course for four classes in Year 10. This school in an area of high multiple deprivation had been aware of sexual bullying of girls by boys and wanted to address the problem. The teacher who invited us had an idea that was in our agenda, though we'd made it clear that we were about parenting. Anyhow, we took up the offer with gusto, putting huge amounts of time preparing resources: a folder for each student with words of a song, plays scripts, a poem. We feared having too few resources and ended up with too many (preferable to too few.) Everything could be used at future sessions elsewhere.

I planned to run the course myself and wanted to visit the school to meet the teachers before the day to prepare by discussing the work with them but my request got no reply. In the event, this was unfortunate. One or even two staff members (a teacher and sometimes a teaching assistant too) sat in on each class. They varied in attitudes and behaviour. Some, interested in the course, contributed their thoughts well. Others were authoritarian, trying to keep discipline in a harsh way. Because there had been no chance to meet them, it was unclear who was 'in charge.'

I wanted the sessions to be fun, relaxed, different from usual lessons where you had to sit still and be quiet, so the subject of parenting wasn't linked in the students' minds with top-down discipline. I was happy enough to put up with high spirits of some students, boys in particular. After all, this was a special day with outside visitors. It's not natural for teenagers to sit quietly for long. Anyway, it was up to me to make the session interesting so they'd join in and listen. I asked the staff to leave discipline to me. The course went well, all things considered. The chairs were in a big circle. Each session was slightly different: what we did, the nature of the groups. Some were smaller, some noisier.

Plans: Timetable if no parent comes with baby: If she comes, she enters two-thirds of the way through. (She didn't.)

Beforehand

1Ask form teacher to fill in names on certificates (not possible);

2Ask form teacher to help me with hearing what the kids say (not possible);

3Ask form teacher who is the most disruptive kid and I will invite him/her to be my helper (not possible);

Put folders on seats if time. Each folder has poem *If...*, words of song *Breastfeeding baby in the park* and words of four plays. At the end, certificates will be added and list of True/False statements. (There was time to put out the folders for two classes but not when a session was back-to-back with another.)

Introduction

Warm up game: Sit in circle

'If you like chocolate, change places' (so they wouldn't sit next to their mates)

'If you're interested in knowing more about things like relationships and sex and babies and parents, change places' (to introduce the topic and get their attention)

Hands up and call out

- a) Hands up if you think you will become a dad or mum one day;
- b) Hands up if you live with a baby or toddler, or spend time with a baby or toddler
- c) An idea what is the most *difficult* job you are ever likely to do?
- d) Any idea what's the most *important* job you're ever likely to do?

Give out folders (if not on seats already)

e) Get volunteer to lead: All read out the poem *Children live what they learn* together. (Poem in chapter 33.) It was read out line by line by a confident girl; we all repeated each line after her. Using the poem for an artistic exercise would have been more effective: drama or art.

We provided short plays about sex and contraception (in Chapter 33.) These were popular. It was difficult to get volunteers to act; some acted in two plays. In one class, two boys acted as a boy and girl. Some students were reluctant to read standing up.

True and False statements /in between / don't know.

Say: 'You're not expected to have the experience to know.'

Lucky dip: all take two laminated statements on yellow paper from a gold box, including the teacher. Read out and discuss. They seemed to be of interest. I invited them to read them out one by one and all to put up their thumbs if they thought it was true, thumbs down if false and two thumbs if they strongly thought true.

Most had soft-hearted responses, though a few said it was possible to spoil a baby. There wasn't time within an hour for discussion. Discussion wouldn't have been the most memorable way to get across any messages.

7-pounder: Invite a student to the front to hold 7lb bag of flour.

- a) 'How many pounds do you think it weighs?'
- b) 'How heavy is an average baby when it's born?'
- c) Pass round bag. 'Can you imagine carrying this in your body?'
- d) Mention the placenta and amniotic fluid too – more weight.

Give out baby dolls – one each to every boy/girl pair. 'How does it feel to be in a pair and with a small baby together?'

Role-play (all):

Girl is exhausted at 6pm. Boy comes in from work.

Girl: Can you take him for a bit?

Boy: No, I wanna watch TV. I'm tired too.'

I'm not sure how much impact this had. Better to have played a recording of a baby crying loudly for a long time as a backdrop to the play, and ask them afterwards how that made them feel.

Seven role-plays

The plan: Three volunteers come to the front. One reads out the role-play. The others act it. See chapter 33.

Four plays about being a parent (see chapter 33)

These were acted and went down well. Students seemed to understand about the mobile phone problem. It's useful to have each play on a different coloured card.

Press cuttings about parenthood-related topics

Give them out for discussion. These seemed of little interest: no colour, too wordy. It's unlikely students read newspapers. Topics

in the cuttings could be put briefly onto laminated paper in bold type: content is often startling; could get students' attention. Go through newspapers regularly (especially 'red top' ones) to cut out some extraordinary stories: 'Baby born after mother died', or a woman giving birth to eight babies at a time! These won't fail to get attention and provoke discussion.

Photos of children and parents with emotional content

Give them out; ask students to show the class one by one; invite discussion. This went down fairly well, though the photos needed to be much bigger so everyone could see them clearly. They seemed to understand the problem of the parent standing with his back to the child. I asked who would bring up their child the same as they had been brought up. Only a few put up their hand.

Anonymous questions

Invite them to write their question(s) to put in the box. Tell them, 'I can come back another time to your class to answer them.' I did not get to their classes later in the term as there were no replies from the school about meeting the students again, despite several emails to the teacher who booked us, a letter to the head, and a letter to the chair of governors. Of the questions put into the box, many were about sex and conception rather than parenting and showed limited sexual knowledge. One asked if you should stay with an abusive partner. Some wondered about the best age to get pregnant, or whether you should breastfeed in public.

Certificates and folders

In the full-on, hectic heat of the moment, some certificates were given to form teachers to complete, others weren't. Few students took their folder away. I had not made it clear enough that they could. Because of the amount of materials, the time frame and with only one worker, aspects of the original plan were unrealistic.

An ambitious plan, but most of it got done. One teacher said the session was a success. It was clear from the facial expressions of

some students that they ‘got it.’ I was struck by the vast differences between students in the same class. Some were large, physically and with a big presence, confident, articulate, cheerful-looking. Others were small, timid, silent; some looked troubled. In a one-hour session, these differences couldn’t be catered for, only noticed. In a longer course, it’s important to adapt the contents and methods to include students who weren’t able, for many reasons, to make sense of what’s offered in one short hour.

The lessons I learnt:

- Meet teachers in advance;
- Talk to others - adults and young people - about it beforehand;
- Get there very early: setting up takes longer than you think, there might be unexpected obstacles; you need to feel relaxed;
- Preface the course by saying some of it might be upsetting. ‘If you’re upset, we can listen if you need to talk at lunchtime or after school, or we can suggest how you can get help for you or your family’;
- Emotional support is needed if some students become upset. Say they have the option of leaving the room;
- Some students have English as their second language (ESOL.) A teacher pointed this out. Invite volunteers to read out; don’t require them all to;
- Adapt what you do to the students’ mood;
- Adapt what you do to what’s possible;
- Have supplies of white and black dolls to use ad hoc
- Condoms get snapped up. One girl came back later and asked for some. I had no more but told her where to get them for free. A large supply is appreciated, plus a leaflet showing where to get them free at local venues;
- How to reach the sad students? Longer sessions are needed with more colleagues to share the tasks and reach all students;
- Disclosures need to be dealt with. Prior discussion with the school is vital;

- A co-worker or observer would be useful to give feedback and help to write up the sessions;
- How to make an emotional impact in one hour?
- Gauge students' engagement, or lack of it, by faces/eyes
- Take your own food and drink. You need breaks to clear up for the next session. No time to go out for food;
- Make it fun: in contrast, there's more impact by serious aspects;
- In a longer course, students might become open about themselves as trust develops;
- Are some upset, e.g. by talk of no father or domestic violence? Or are they in their own world /resistant to anything at school?
- If they see you're on their side, it's easier to tell them to be quieter or say 'sssshhh' if really needed, but not in a bossy way;
- Be prepared to join in plays and role-play. Ask the school staff to sit in the circle and join in;
- Get a model brain to show insights of neuroscience;
- Use their written questions to shape the next sessions if you see the class again;
- Write up the sessions as soon as possible afterwards. It's easy to forget. You can add bits later as you think of them. Keep a notebook in your bag;
- Ask staff who were in the room for feedback/ suggestions
- Create new materials so you don't get bored using the same ones time after time;
- Pilot the course in very different schools to see what adaptations are needed.

Bringing in a young parent

I hoped a young mother would agree to visit the sessions but this didn't happen. It can be difficult to find young mothers and fathers who reply to messages, commit, and turn up at the arranged time. Young people often have a casual approach to communication: a dwindling of traditional values of politeness and reliability. (Teachers, overworked with no spare minute, don't reply to emails,

especially to people they've never heard of. Most receive lots each week from people hawking their subject. The same doesn't apply to young people; their reasons are different.) What to consider when inviting young parents to talk on a course? It's best to include them, but they tend to be less reliable than older ones. It's wise to contact two, to maximise the chances at least one turns up. Other factors might prevail: illness of baby or parent, a crisis, just forgetting in the face of chronic lack of sleep. As it's such a useful part of teaching about parenthood to bring them in, with baby or not, let's see the best ways to recruit.

How to recruit a young parent

- Word of mouth: your friends, neighbours, colleagues;
- Children's centres (visit a group of parents to spot likely candidates, or ask staff to refer parents to you. Both methods have worked well for B4BP);
- Parents via local schools;
- Parent Teacher Associations;
- Teenage parents' groups and services;
- Family Nurse Partnerships, health visitors and midwives;
- Toy libraries, parent and toddler groups.

Qualities are needed in a young parent visiting

- Reliability;
- Articulacy;
- Honesty in talking to students;
- Ability to reflect;
- Ability to relate to teenagers;
- Ability to listen to others;
- Sense of humour;
- Some similarities with the students, e.g. social class, ethnicity.

Our fifth school (Spring-Summer term 2019) Girls

Some time after we approached this school, we were invited to run six one-hour lessons on alternate weeks during the PSHE lesson.

The full-time PSHE teacher (male: interesting at a girls' school) had an easy relationship with the pupils. The lessons were spread from January to May. Twenty-four Year 10 girls took part.

Our B4BP tutor again ran the course with his decades of experience leading drama workshops in prisons and other settings in many countries. I supported him by bringing in resources and arranging visitors. For four sessions, another B4BP volunteer, a retired secondary head, contributed. The PSHE teacher was in the room, joined in at times, and operated film clips. Most girls were Muslims, others from African or African Caribbean families. We discovered only later that the Koran tells mothers to breastfeed for two years - would have made an interesting discussion. Good idea to research religious backgrounds and cultures beforehand.

The questionnaires

We asked these questions in the *Before and After* questionnaires:

- 1 What do you think are the difficulties in being a parent?
- 2 What do you think are the most important things to remember when bringing up a baby or child?
- 3 What do you think are a parent's most important qualities?
- 4 What's the best age to start thinking about having a baby, and why?
- 5 Please write anything else you think about being a parent or anything you would like to know more about.

The same questionnaire was given to another Year 10 class as a control group. Some replies show much thought and wisdom and interest in the subject. For example:

- a) I think it's important to allow babies and children to develop their own opinions and thoughts and let them express themselves in the right way. E.g. instead of hitting a child for doing something wrong, explain why they shouldn't be doing it;
- b) They have feelings and remember what you do to them.;
- c) A parent: someone you can tell anything to;
- d) A parent shouldn't be too strict, it could damage the child emotionally.

Very few girls mentioned the male and the qualities they would like to find in him as a husband, partner or a father.

The sessions

Each session started with a warm-up/icebreaker exercise, an important beginning creating a good spirit and foundation - a different atmosphere from usual school lessons. Students transfer into another 'head space.' Laughter is good for everyone. When adults join in, it breaks down barriers.

- In session one, we offered girls a 7lb flour baby to keep with them all day every day. Three accepted them. We played the sound of a new baby crying. How long could they stand it?
- Session two focused on mobile phones and the effects on children of parent using them to excess. Girls acted out a short play and we read a poignant poem (see chapter 33)
- For sessions three and four, we brought in outside visitors. First were a young man and woman from the charity Straight Talking who had been teenage parents. Their mission was to impress student with the realities, social, financial, educational, of being a very young, probably single parent. They were experienced peer educators; students found them interesting.
- The next were two local mothers and babies aged 5 and 12 months. The girls were enormously excited at having babies in the room for the first time. The mothers were outstanding in their willingness and ability to give frank, searing accounts of what pregnancy, birth, early motherhood were like for them.
- We provided a Treasure Basket for the babies to explore. Once a baby can sit up (about six months,) you place a sturdy wicker basket (about 14 in. across, 4 in. deep) on the floor in easy reach, filled with objects with different sensory qualities. Invented by the educationalist Elinor Goldschmied (1948), the basket nurtures the baby's curiosity, develops motor skills and helps it learn about its world. The adult sits nearby, quietly observing, not talking, never interfering except for safety reasons. The baby

makes its discoveries for itself in its own time. The basket is not only good for babies, but can help a class of teenagers enjoy and understand how babies learn.

- We could also have brought in a pregnant woman or couple who visit again, once the baby has been born.
- We covered violence in the final sessions. Violence between parents was shown by role-play by the tutor and me. We darkened the room. The girls were asked to be five-year-olds asleep in bed. See Chapter 33. We then showed a 7-minute film, *An Indian woman talks about her violent husband*.
- Last session: physical punishment: arguments against it, what it does to children's mental health, the alternatives. Each student was given a statement on card to read out. We gave a laminated certificate to each student, a copy of the poem *Your children are not your children* and, in a closing circle, asked them to fill in the questionnaire and say what they thought of the course.

Our sixth school (Spring 2019) Girls RC, boys in 6th form One-off sessions for 6th form, using team of volunteers

Recruiting and using volunteers

This school abolished PSHE lessons; then hosted eight Rise Up Days each year. Having contacted the school, we were invited to work with their lower-sixth students aged 16-to-17. Boys constitute 10-to-15 percent of the sixth form. There would be nine classes, or we could address all of them together. We chose the former. meaning at least nine volunteers (the school couldn't pay fees) but preferably 18 so we could work in pairs. We recruited 16 (including four men), mostly parents or grandparents, with two working on their own. Eight were Black, important, as most students were from African or African Caribbean families. Recruiting all these volunteers was a lot of work but is recommended if you want a pool of local people you can call on in future if more Drop Down Days or other opportunities come up. It was rewarding, positive and enjoyable and made it possible to

reach may students at little financial cost. This is how we did it. We invited as many suitable people we knew as we could to two Saturday training days, using a free room at the fire station. They could come to one day or both and could invite other people.

Training Days

We brainstormed the topics we wanted to cover; looked at and tried various teaching methods, such as role-play; provided a buffet lunch and made the days fun, beginning with warm-up exercises. Some had to drop out: double-booked, too busy after all, personal reasons, e.g. the imminent arrival of a grandchild. Recruit more than you need. Some came to the second day too, as did new ones. We invited them to choose who they wanted to work with. That mostly worked out fine. Because not everyone could come to both days and new candidates kept turning up, we arranged more shorter training sessions with a small group or one person, so anxious were we to reach the desired number. We aimed to put a man with a woman, black with white, young with older. The volunteers included very experienced, mostly retired, active people (three are Quakers, interesting given the role of US Quakers in initiating this type of work, as well as baby watching.) They included a town planner, probation officer, special needs teacher, headteacher, mental health worker, Home-Start volunteer, charity organiser, family worker, group worker, play therapy volunteer, child advocate, nanny, conflict resolution group leader, and psychotherapist. Some had part-time or flexible working hours. A sophisticated bunch. Include people without these backgrounds if they have the right qualities.

Preparation in pairs

Each pair was asked to meet face-to-face at least once to plan their lesson and decide who did what. We agreed on a basic structure (warm-up exercise to begin, closing circle to end.) The pair could decide the topics they were most interested in covering, what methods to use and could ask the B4BP office for resources, e.g.

laminated True and False statements or emotionally evocative photos of babies, children and parents. Final arrangements were clarified at the last moment: there were last minute drop-outs, as well as unexpected volunteers suddenly making an appearance. If you copy this model, keep an open mind, don't worry, remain flexible and don't abandon your sense of humour!

How deep to go?

We agreed that with just one lesson, it's unwise to stir up painful emotions but even so, to preface the lesson by saying some of the material might be upsetting. In one lesson, a girl did become upset and left the room. Her friend followed her out to make sure she was safe. The form tutor knew her well and was not worried. She returned in time and joined in calmly. A volunteer in another class reflected that although her students didn't seem upset, there was no way of knowing if discussing the qualities of parents raised any difficulties for any of them and if so, who would deal with it.

The lessons

There were some surprises once we got to the school.

- c) We had been told each class would have 25-to-30 students. But each contained 8-to-17. Exams were imminent. Many students no doubt stayed at home to revise; attendance was not compulsory. It was pleasant to work with such small groups but the material got covered much faster!
- d) We were told we had 75 minutes but the lessons started earlier than we were told. We got only one hour. Many of us couldn't cover our entire agenda. Important topics had to be omitted, such as corporal punishment: some students had experienced it
- e) We didn't get the coffee in a room we had been told we would have access to. (Other schools provide a welcome room with refreshments and an interesting chance to meet other visitors);
- f) Classrooms were varied, not all the same as we had been led to believe. Some were up a lot of stairs, difficult for volunteers with limited mobility. Some were of a good size for our numbers but

could not have accommodated a whole class. One was full of computers and not the right shape to enable students to sit in a circle;

- g) Some had interruptions (one, ‘a steady stream’) of staff walking through the room: inappropriate for this intimate topic.

The lesson learnt: checkup more closely with school staff; warn volunteers things might be different from what we’d been told by our liaison teacher. Visit **every** classroom beforehand.

After the lessons

We went to the local Wetherspoons (spacious, cheap), to fill in a feedback form while lessons were fresh in our minds, hand in our lesson plans and have an informal post-mortem. We agreed that on the whole, sessions had gone well. Most students seemed keen, interested, open to learning, engaged, good at communicating, receptive, well-behaved, polite, respectful of volunteers and each other, and more relaxed as time went by. Most were thoughtful, pleasant and expressed themselves well. In some lessons they all contributed: some of us found the best contributions came from boys. Sessions were interactive; most participated in reflective ways with ‘sensible and realistic comments: great responses which made me feel our preparation and expectations were right.’

There was time in the hour to expand on issues. Some students were knowledgeable, enjoying both small group and whole group activities. In one class, there was some giggling at a picture. Some seemed less than enthusiastic, but there was no disruptive behaviour. A few arrived late; a few didn’t come when they learned the sessions were named (by the school) *Positive Parenting*.

We had a social some weeks later, a chance to reflect in retrospect. A few came. There was thoughtful discussion.

Content of the lessons

It might be useful to know what we did and how we did it.

- **No official symbols:** Don't wear lanyards or labels unless the school insists: they give too corporate an image. Never take notes during the session (but do so immediately afterwards so you don't forget anything;)
- **Chairs:** Get there early enough to push the tables to the wall and the chairs in a circle;
- **As students come in:** Play a recording of a song with relevance. e.g. *Lesley* by Dave or *On Children* (see chapter 32.) The song can be referred to during discussion; the words can be given to students to keep;
- **Introduce yourselves:** Explain briefly what the session is about and why you think it is important to prepare young people for parenting. Say what you'd like to achieve today: for everyone to enjoy the time together, share ideas of different ways of being a parent. Mention your own experience of parenting or caring for children, and something that made you happy as a child;
- **Names:** One volunteer who worked alone found a charming way to begin. 'When asked if they were curious about who I, a stranger, was, they said yes. They listened to my brief introduction, then introduced themselves and were greatly amused when I asked for the spelling and pronunciation of their names. I explained that I thought names were important and they agreed;'
- **Warning:** Say that the material might be upsetting. If so, you can leave the room (check with teacher) or see us later and we can signpost you to support (find out what school can offer;)
- **Warm-up/ice breaker exercise:** Move to different areas of the room if you've been to America/have a brother/are an only child/have looked after a young relative. Then Fruit Salad: everyone has to change places: guaranteed to make everyone laugh. My Name and a gesture to show something about me, then everyone together repeats the name and gesture. Or stand in a circle; grab finger of person next to you, then suddenly pull

it away. Or say your name, your favourite animal and make a gesture of the animal for everyone to copy;

- **Ground rules:** After some fun, you might briefly mention these (e.g. listening, not speaking over each other, respecting other opinions;)
- **Memory:** Invite them to say their name and something that made them happy as a child;
- **Swap seats if:** You want to be a parent one day. Then: If you don't. Then: If you aren't sure;
- **Their own childhood:** 'What would you do the same as your parents did?' 'What would you do differently?'
- **Poems:** Reading out the poem, a line or verse each, about mobile phones: *Mummy* (see chapter 33 with its poignant ending: 'Mummy have I told you/ That I wish I was a phone/ Then you could talk to me all day / And I wouldn't feel alone.' The poem *If (Children learn what they live)* was given out, each student read out one line;
- **Photos:** Pass round colour photos (as large as possible) of babies in different moods, e.g. crying intensely or gurgling happily. 'How do they make you feel?' 'Do you want to be a parent one day? If so, at what age?' Or invite one student to pretend to be the baby, speak as it and answer questions about how it feels, what it wants;
- **Flip chart summary** of feelings about parenting: e.g. scary, exciting, fun, responsible, stressful, expensive;
- **'What do young babies need from 0-6 months?'** Give out a list of 55 things (see chapter 33.) Bring out points about attachment, maybe the benefits of breastfeeding;
- **Short film clips**, e.g. *The Still Face* (on YouTube) with emotional impact followed by discussion. One features a mother and baby; another, fathers and their babies. Students can be asked to role-play the film and see how it feels to be the baby or the parent, and learn the effects of stress on the body;

- **Baby sounds:** 1) Audio recording of baby crying for about a minute while students close their eyes. 'What did you feel?' 2) Baby laughing with video. 'What does baby feel as it laughs?'
- **Qualities or 'person specification':** Brainstorm qualities needed for good parenting. Invite them to talk of their own experience of being parented. What is 'good enough'? Fill in a chart *A Parent Is...* They can write eight qualities. Our students all wrote positives; the volunteer was the one to list a few negatives to introduce some realism. Volunteers can tell the group two things about parenting they'd like to pass on (e.g. having fun, reliability, consistency, 'good enough' parenting;)
- **Obstacles:** 'What can get in the way of good parenting?'
- **The future:** 'Change places if...' e.g. if you think you will be a parent one day;
- **Drama triangle:** Games people play by being victim, rescuer, persecutor. How does this get played out in families?
- **True and False statements** on parenting: three ways to present them. 1) Students sit in groups of four, given at random True or False statements to discuss for two minutes. They then sit in pairs and write down attributes of the 'perfect' parent; their answers written on whiteboard or flip chart. The whole group reflects on the answers. 2) Each student has a parenting Myth card or a Truth card. They walk around to find their pair, a myth corresponding with a truth about parenting. 3) In pairs or three: each pair or group is given a statement to discuss amongst themselves and nominates a spokesperson to give the group's view. Or they can write words/images inspired by the statement. Whole class feedback/discussion;
- **Role-play:** Invite two actors. One is a small child, the other a parent continually on his/her phone. Act it out. How does the child feel? Invite students to intervene and change the action (forum theatre.) Then the adult puts the phone away, plays, smiles and laughs with the child. How does the child feel?
- **Facts:** Read out a fact. Then 'Go to the left of the room if you agree, right if you disagree, centre if you're not sure.' If space is

too limited: 'Sit if you agree, swap places if you don't, stand in the middle if unsure';

- **Quiz** to determine parenting style: either what you think your parent would choose, or what you would choose yourself. Are these the same?
- **Conflict:** Think of a conflict between a parent and a teenager. What advice would you give the parent? Discussion or role-play in small groups;
- **Interviews:** Divide students into 'children' and 'parents.' Invite them to interview their parents: what it's like to be a parent? What's easy? What's difficult? Tell us about being a parent;
- **Closing circle:** Important to provide a feeling of safety and emotional containment by having a closing circle: e.g. 'Something I'll remember from this session.' 'Something I think I'll remember when I am a parent.' 'What would you have changed about today?' 'What did we miss?' 'What was most valuable?' 'Any unanswered questions if we return?'
- **Object holding:** Each student holds object (e.g. a doll) while speaking about it. They can decide not to speak;
- **Optional homework:** Suggest that students build on the lesson by, for example, interviewing their own parents, or, in pairs, discreetly observing families on the bus or in the street;
- **Closing song:** Play a song, e.g. *Just the Two of Us* as they leave.

What helps

- **Keep moving:** Keep them moving physically and change the teaching methods several times in an hour;
- **Teachers:** When teachers join in with enthusiasm, revealing their first name if the exercise included that and talking about their own childhood or their own children, we found helpful and constructive. Some teachers used the time to catch up on their written work, some apologising. There was little chance for volunteers to discuss lessons with the teacher beforehand;
- **A variety of work:** In pairs or in the whole group.

Other comments / suggestions by volunteers

- Some students would benefit from conflict resolution or communication training. Perhaps a menu of workshops could be offered for future work;
- Take in a doll or flour baby to give a practical activity, e.g. changing a nappy, not just the emotional aspects;
- Prepare more activities than you think you'll need in case there is time left over;
- Volunteers wanted to know in advance how many students they would have, but the school cannot know that if attendance is optional. Some groups had eight, others 17. It was good to have a small group; 30 would have been too many;
- Provide students with written programme before the day;
- Volunteers who didn't use drama or role-play thought perhaps these would be useful during further sessions;
- It would be great to have a follow-up session with students to know what they took from session. Suggest the school has a whole morning or afternoon, and/or a commitment from the teacher to follow up the lesson;
- After all the preparation, it would be good to be able to use the materials again;
- Discuss the lesson afterwards with the teacher.

Youth clubs

Attendance at youth clubs is voluntary: no captive audience. It's likely that young people who go to them, unless a club is targeted at especially disadvantaged or anti-social youth, come on average from relatively stable families and seem less likely to become parents where there will be serious concerns. This appeared to be the case at the two clubs with which we had contact.

We had an informal chat with a group of four rather well-educated teenagers in Walthamstow, three girls and a boy. The girls showed a definite interest in our course though nothing resulted from our talks with the club's organiser. Through personal contact with local organisations, we managed to provide a Taster at a weekly

after-school club at a community centre in Leyton. The club attracts young people aged 11-to-16 from three schools. Our session was quite rushed little conversation. It was gratifying to learn later from the leader that the young people said that although they hadn't expected to find it interesting, they did.

This was maybe because part of the time was devoted to four short plays about sex and contraception which some of the young people read out. All were given a written sheet with the script. I was worried when I saw some 11-year-old boys, at the club and wondered if this was suitable material. Then I remembered news items about the high percent of boys at primary school who've watched porn. Compared with that, humorous education about how to avoid unwanted pregnancy and how boys shouldn't bully girls into having sex seemed innocent. For the rest of the time, members were given a slip of paper with a True or False statement about aspects of parenting and invited to read out their statement and briefly discuss it. We'd planned to bring a teenage mother with her baby to tell the club how she found parenthood. She agreed but it didn't happen. We wanted to meet her in advance but there was no reply to phone messages.

The session proved popular. The leader invited us to provide two longer sessions for the new intake, paid for by the club's BBC Children in Need grant. In the event, that didn't happen either: new recruits were young boys who only wanted to play football. We were told our course might be brought back if older members later joined. In the meantime, we tried to interest the leader of a girls' only youth club run, but answer came there none.

Other parent education in schools

PSHE Association: Healthy Relationships Toolkit

The PSHE Association was commissioned by the Department of Education to write a Toolkit for schools on healthy relationships. It contains two to three lessons with the aim ‘to understand the responsibilities and implications of parenthood, identify parenting skills and their importance to family life.’ The learning objectives were to learn about readiness for parenthood; and to learn about the qualities that make a good parent.

Learning outcomes: The learner will be able to:

- Identify the opportunities being a parent provides and the things they might have to, or choose to, give up;
- Understand how becoming a parent might affect their relationships and lifestyle now and in the future;
- Recognise how they might know when they’re ready to become a parent and identify experiences they would like to have first;
- Identify qualities they feel make someone a good parent;
- Explain which of those qualities they already have and identify ways in which they would like to change or develop before becoming parents;
- Evaluate the effect of good parenting on family life;
- Weigh up risks of having children very early or very late in life;
- Explain how the biological risks of becoming a parent are different for men and women.

Essential skills and attributes

- Building and maintaining healthy relationships;
- Maintaining a healthy self-concept;
- Respect;
- Empathy and compassion;
- Identifying links between values & beliefs, decisions & actions.

Key questions

- Why do people choose to become parents?
- What does it mean to be a good parent?
- What sacrifices do people make when becoming a parent?
- Are these sacrifices different depending on the age someone becomes a parent?
- What might young people like to do / achieve before starting a family?
- Is marriage important to starting a family?
- How will someone know when they're ready to be a parent?
- How does fertility change as someone grows older?

Additional guidance for teachers

- Re-cap ground rules and allow additional time for learners to discuss their thoughts and feelings;
- Be familiar with the school's Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) policy and agreed approaches to be taken regarding potentially sensitive issue;
- Refer to supplementary guidance *SRE in the 21st Century* (2013) and *DFEE SRE Guidance* (2000) and *PSHE Association* members' briefing on teaching about puberty, pornography, sensitive issues, ground rules, consent etc.;
- It is important to liaise with the science department about their curriculum coverage on reproduction.

Programme of Study

The Association wrote a *Programme of Study* for PSHE Education for Key Stages 1 – 5, a framework to support schools when structuring their PSHE content. It includes three core themes: health and wellbeing; relationships; and living in the wider world. It suggests a number of opportunities for young people to explore parenting through the PSHE curriculum including:

- Key Stage 3: The roles and responsibilities of parents, carers and children in families;

- Key Stage 4: Parenting skills and qualities and their central importance to family life including the implications of young parenthood; to be able to make informed choices about parenting, including issues around breastfeeding;
- Key Stage 5: Understand and appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of delaying parenthood; understanding the potential consequences of unintended pregnancy and what parenthood has on their lifestyle and future career aspirations.

This was revised to take the 2020 statutory guidance into account to support PSHE Association members. There's also a *Toolkit* covering all PSHE education aspects: health, economic wellbeing, careers, relationships and sex education. *Toolkit* resources provide guidance on learning opportunities, objectives and outcomes to help teachers to write their own lessons and explore each idea in class. It's not a full programme, but suggests 2-to-3 lessons 'to understand the responsibilities and implications of parenthood, identify parenting skills and their importance to family life.' (And it's worth knowing of the 'very strong evidence that high quality PSHE learning has a positive impact on academic attainment,' especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.)

Explore Relationships

The session made me realise how important it is to keep talking and listening to the other person in the relationship. Student

It was shocking to discover that this charity (founded in 2000 by Rex Chester MBE, honorary president later) which educated secondary students and young people in other settings like youth organisations and pupil referral units about couple relationships, closed in December 2023. It had a beautifully simple method. It's of interest to us because it 'helped young people consider the roles and responsibilities of parenthood.' With a Christian ethos, it used marriage as a case study for a committed relationship, 'enabling young people to explore the realities of lasting relationships' which

are long-term, positive, stable and healthy, not something they've all witnessed at home.

It recruited all types of married couples as volunteers to sit in front of a class of up to 25 teenagers (usually 14-to-17-year-olds) for an hour, talk openly about their marriage and answer questions. It welcomed applications from married same-sex couples. It recorded a dialogue with two couples – one same-sex – answering the most common questions which students ask, specifically about their relationship, enabling Explore to continue to reach young people while schools and youth organisations were closed during the Covid pandemic. I observed two Explore sessions and can vouch for their freshness and honesty. If students heard from more than one couple in a longer session, all to the good. Explore also arranged half-day workshops (ideal for Drop Down days) and full-day conferences. It operated in England: Berkshire, Bristol, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hampshire, Kent, London and Wiltshire. The first lesson could be free.

What made the charity's closure all the more disappointing and frustrating for staff and trustees was that the 2023/24 academic year was set to be the most successful for a very long time. Explore had already completed 61 school sessions in 2023 and had another 117 booked or pending up until July 2024, with repeat bookings expected from every school visited in 2023.

Northern Ireland

It was pleasantly surprising to discover by chance that every pupil in every state-maintained secondary school in Northern Ireland has to learn something about parenting awareness and skills. (There are no academies.) *The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order 2007* by the Northern Ireland government lays down that schools have to teach 'personal development and mutual understanding in the local and wider community.' The long political divide and struggles in that country between Catholics and Protestants could

be why so much care has been taken to encourage young people to understand each other and to avoid conflict. There are long and detailed curricula for every subject, organised by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA.) A minimum statutory content is specified, and detailed resources provided. Schools have some leeway in how they adapt or elaborate each section.

What interests us here is the parenting content. At Key Stage 3 (11-to-14-year-olds), the *Learning for Life and Work* module specifies, under home economics, and ‘home and family life labels,’ that ‘pupils should have opportunities to develop an awareness of parenting skills’ and (tactfully put) ‘explore strategies to manage family scenarios.’ This is a minimum statutory content. At Key Stage 4 (14-to-16-year-olds), schools are required to provide every pupil with access to developing ‘an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parenting.’

Teachers in private schools, which have no legal requirement to follow this curriculum, can attend CCEA training. It’s unknown whether schools in other parts of the UK adopt (or know about) this curriculum, but they are invited too, for a fee.

As well as the statutory minimum, pupils can choose to take a GCSE in Learning for Life and Work. This qualification includes modules about responsible parenting and ‘the three Cs’: commitment, challenges and consequences. ‘These three Cs will remind you of the detail required for your exam.’ Methods include multiple-choice questions and some ‘fun’ cartoon-type videos. There is one short paragraph (occasionally two) on many topics to do with roles and responsibilities:

Under *Creating a safe and loving home*, we have food and clothing, money, health, vaccinations, support and spiritual development

Creating opportunities to learn and develop cites schooling, social development, morals, values, interests and skills;

A changed life for young parents (which probably means teenage ones) includes difficulties with education, career prospects, social life, social stigma, financial burden and mental health;

Challenges that all parents face deals with single parents, older parents, carers, step-parents and same sex parents;

Impact on parents includes social/emotional/economic changes

Impact on the child includes impact on mind, body, relationships.

Scotland

There are attempts by the Scottish government, which aims to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up, to help achieve this by funding ROE in any primary school that wants it, and commissioning the WAVE Trust to produce its curriculum on relationships and parenthood for use at any secondary school. Parenthood education is now compulsory in all Scottish schools. We look forward to learning the impact of WAVE's curriculum at schools which choose it. It remains to be seen whether the English and Welsh governments can be persuaded to follow the Scottish example. Scotland calls its curriculum *Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools (RSHP)*. The *Guidance for Teachers within the Curriculum for Excellence* (2014) mentions parenthood three times in its introduction:

1 The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people receive high quality relationships, sexual health and parenthood education (*RSHP*) in order to respect, protect and fulfil their human rights as they grow up. We are committed to working with them, along with parents, carers and staff to make this a reality for schools in Scotland in order to create a more positive culture around relationships, sexual health and *parenthood* in Scotland. (My italics)

2 *RSHP* education is a key part of health and wellbeing within Curriculum for Excellence. *RSHP* education focuses on equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills and values to make

informed and positive choices about forming relationships. It can assist with making safer decisions about their sexual and emotional health and wellbeing in a responsible and healthy manner, as an important part of preparation for adult life. Children and young people develop an understanding of how to maintain positive relationships with a variety of people and are aware of how thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values and beliefs can influence decisions about relationships and sexual health. *They also develop an understanding of the complex role and responsibilities of being a parent or carer.* (My italics)

3 The Scottish Government gives high priority to provision of good quality *RSHP* education in all schools, based on good practice, informed by evidence. This guidance is designed to ensure information about relationships, sexual health and *parenthood* is not given in isolation but as part of a programme considering a range of issues re personal/ social development, healthy living, values and beliefs which reinforce self-worth, respect for others and a sense of responsibility. (My italics)

The Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association, whilst welcoming the ethos of the Curriculum for Excellence of which RSHP is a part, points out the difficulties in its implementation: not trusting teachers' professional judgement of students' progress; and pressure to assess, evaluate and evidence its success. 'This promoted the continuation of traditional methods that measured what could easily be measured' leading to 'excessive teacher workload.' Nevertheless, Scotland is trying hard to improve its communities by putting health and wellbeing at the centre of its education and will no doubt learn from any teething troubles.

The Solihull Approach 2014

Dr Hazel Douglas MBE, a clinical psychologist and child psychotherapist in the west Midlands, developed the Solihull Approach there in 1996 with other therapists and health visitors and is its director. Initially designed for health visitors to use with families whose child had difficulties, it created an ante-natal, relationship-based eight-session course for young people,

Understanding Yourself and Parenting, encouraging them to consider what babies need socially and emotionally. It now runs a 10-week course for any parent with a baby or child up to 18, as well as a free online course for parents, and training for school staff in a whole-school approach to understanding students' behaviour.

In 2014 the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Dumfries, Scotland contacted Hazel to see if she was interested in providing work at an even earlier stage. 'Of course we were!' Hazel told me with a refreshing 'can do' attitude. The first pilot in schools was launched in 2015, evaluated through written and focus group feedback from students: a thorough process. 'From this, the course was redesigned, with more pilots, tweaked each time in response to feedback till everyone, facilitators and students, was happy with it. The course was released in 2017.

It's 'nine session/lesson course (45-minutes a lesson) about parenthood has been designed for delivery in schools for teenagers. It has mainly been delivered to adolescents aged 14-15 years, but it could be delivered to younger adolescents. It is based on the Solihull Approach model, so it emphasises the importance of relationships, emotional support and the relationship with the baby. It introduces adolescents to their own brain development in order to engage them in the baby's brain development and the key role that parents play in this. It has (hopefully) a lively mixture of interactive learning activities and information. The Manual has detailed lesson plans and includes all the information needed for the course. It includes an optional session with a mother and baby. Teachers/facilitators need to have completed either the two-day Foundation Training or the Solihull Approach Whole School Training before delivering this course.'

Session 1 Relationships and preconception health;

Session 2 Baby brain development;

Session 3 Relationships start early! ;

Session 4 A baby's experience;
Session 5 Your brain development;
Session 6 Being a parent;
Session 7 Babies are sociable and play;
Session 8a Meeting a parent and baby *Session 8b* Parents and babies;
Session 9 Your key messages.

This course now operates in schools in Scotland, England and Wales which are already familiar with the Solihull Approach. The course is evidence-based with a strong theoretical model integrating psychoanalytic theory, child development research and learning theory. It's been evaluated; Solihull welcomes more research. A school can buy the *Facilitators' Manual*. The Solihull Approach operates throughout the UK and internationally: for example, in Australia, Barbados, Nigeria, and Sweden,

Mellow Parenting

It was good to hear from Raquib Ibrahim, Mellow's CEO. 'I fully agree if we are proactive and educate our young people about relationships and becoming a parent during high school and college years, they will be in a much better position to become parents when they are ready. For this reason, we have developed a preconception relationship-based programme for this age group.' The programme, *Mellow Ready*, was offered to 11-to-17-year-olds. It encouraged them to reflect on their relationship with themselves and others: parents, peers, partners, schools, community. The aim was to enhance their self-esteem and understanding of how to identify a healthy and unhealthy relationship. It explored becoming a parent and what that means. It has been replaced by the new *Mellow for Young People*, online or in-person, a 12-session programme specifically created for 'potential parents of the future. We recognise that enabling young people to make sense of their own experience and how it shapes them will support them to attain and build better relationships. This training takes into consideration the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and

the need for a whole family approach so children will grow up loved, safe and respected.' The learning outcomes are: Coaching in the Mellow approach to group work; developing a relationship-based framework; focusing on young people's strengths and development; tools to understand and support emotion regulation. Included are: Facilitator's Manual and Free Downloadable Materials and Resources, Access to Reflective Consultation/Evaluation Pre- and Post-Group and General Support whilst Setting Up and Delivering

ASDAN: a 'charity on a mission'

The course is varied, relevant and engaging. We love it! Liz, PSHE tutor

ASDAN (*Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network*,) an education charity, offers courses for young people in formal or informal settings to develop personal, social and work-related skills and transform life chances through learning. Courses aim to 'engage and motivate students, promote achievement, inspire children, young people and teachers to be ambitious about learning, build belief, confidence and self-esteem, and release potential.' They've been used in 3,000+ schools and other settings in over 30 countries. See its website. A contribution to the national compulsory Relationships and Sex requirements, their *PSHE Short Course* has *Families and Parenting* as one module. There are various topics or 'challenges' in the current and past modules:

- The group discusses the role of a parent, lists the main tasks. identifying easier and more difficult ones; recognise different sorts of relationships and concepts of family; understand the legal status of different relationships. There is a resource sheet;
- The concept of forced marriage (Powerpoint);
- Recognise roles & responsibilities. What makes a good parent?
- Understand the impact parenthood can have on your lifestyle;
- Groups of three share ideas of the sort of parent they'd like to be and design a poster illustrating parental roles;

- Parents have many choices to make, especially financial ones. Students pretend they're about to adopt a five-year-old boy, with £250 to spend. They consult catalogues to see what they can buy and what they might have to forgo;
- Either: Consider how parents can make best use of their money **or** Consider what to buy if your adopted child was a baby, or had a visual impairment, or used a wheelchair. Write down five ways in which this child differs from the five-year-old.
- Sharing time with children: enjoying activities together, handling difficult situations, modelling behaviour;
- In a group, brainstorm, discuss or watch on video activities that families can do together. Make cards showing activities you have done with your family and friends; rank them in order of their degree of fun; Rank your cards on a continuum according to expense, inclusiveness (not just one or two people,) suitable for all abilities, and amount of preparation needed. Reflect on how you can enjoy being with your children as a parent;
- In a group, write a three-minute script about either an effective way to behave with a child throwing a tantrum; then a less effective way or an effective way to get a child to go to bed at bedtime. Each group has time to act the scripts to the group;
- Create a list of golden rules about parents' behaviour and consider how parents' behaviour affects children's behaviour. Do students agree about all the rules?

Tutors have been encouraged to evaluate sessions with students, such as: How useful were they? Easy or difficult? Have your attitudes towards your parents or carers changed? Will you use what you have learned now and in future?

Bounce Forward

This charity used to include Parents Under Construction, at a special school as well. Now it has a little about parenthood as part of its Resilient Relationships lesson:

- Understand there are different types of relationships;

- Consider the role and responsibilities of successful parenting;
- Explore the financial and lifestyle costs of having a baby;
- Discuss what needs to be in place before having a baby.

Citizenship

Schools don't have to teach this. The curriculum covers Key Stages 1 – 4. The closest thing about parenting is in the 7-to-11-year-old syllabus: children should 'be aware of different types of relationships, including marriage and those between friends and families, and develop skills to be effective in relationships.'

Wales: A whole school approach

Wales reviewed its curriculum for 3-to-16-year-olds, now called *Sexuality and Relationships*. 'High quality SRE starts early; is adaptable; needs-led; offers a spiral curriculum; collaborates with external providers; is of sufficient duration; is engaging, participatory; creates a safe, respectful, confidential learning environment. A review of international research on children and young people's views suggests these contribute to good SRE provision. A whole school approach is the most important element for effective SRE, reinforcing key messages across the curriculum and in different areas of the school.' It includes 'an awareness of how families, relationships and parenting are shaped by social and cultural norms and laws that change over time.'

Parenthood education in other countries

Australia

Educating the next generation of parents

Renowned Australian child abuse and family violence expert Dr Adam Tomison wrote encouragingly (1998): 'There has been a growing perception in the 1990s that education should not be limited to purely academic areas but should be strongly involved in preparing young people to function in society. A primary prevention strategy which has been adopted across Australia is the development of life skills and healthy relationships courses. Many of these courses incorporate components where young people are taught parenting and child-rearing skills. The provision of explicit training in non-violent conflict resolution, problem-solving and child-rearing techniques has two benefits: a reduction in corporal punishment and abuse, and the disruption of the intergenerational cycle of violence.' Australia also increasingly embraces NEWPIN for parents who need intensive help.

Tomison has described parenthood education in Burnside, New South Wales, Australia: *The Starting Out Project* (1998.) This aimed to reduce child abuse by preparing young people at secondary school, before they became parents, about child development and the impact of abuse on children. It used role-play to teach about the demands of parenthood and to reflect on how they themselves were parented and how they wanted to parent. It emphasised the importance of social support for parents; students role-played being parents and seeking help, making it more likely that they will find it in future. '*The Starting Out Project* creates the possibility for breaking cycles of negative parenting and reinforcing more constructive and nurturing forms of parenting.' It is now impossible to find on the internet, suggesting that, like many good projects, it no longer exists.

Austria

The psychoanalyst Alfred Adler, who had a particular interest in socialisation, created child guidance clinics in Vienna with a difference (1922), teaching parents, teachers and any interested adult how to work with children with problems. There were public demonstrations with families; his clinics were connected to schools. By making them an integral part of the school, adults, as well as children, could learn effective methods for co-operating and living democratically.

Colombia (see front cover 2018)

It was exciting to see an article in *National Geographic* magazine about the use of virtual baby dolls in Colombia. Latin America has the third-highest teenage pregnancy rate in the world. In Colombia, one in five mothers is aged between 15-to-19. There's a week-long sex education/teenage pregnancy prevention programme, originated in the US, *Baby Think it Over* for 13-to-15-year-olds. Students spend 48 hours with their babies who resemble one-month-olds. An exhausted 15-year-old boy said, 'The baby woke me up at ten, twelve and four in the morning.' At his school, 100 students are enrolled, with their parents' consent: an immense expenditure of money and staff for a poor country. Students write an essay or make a video about their experiences with their babies. One study showed that the programme in one region reduced teenage pregnancies by 40 percent. The largest sales of dolls are in Colombia, Mexico and Costa Rica.

New Zealand: The Brainwave Trust

The Trust has various programmes. One includes work with adolescents in schools: teaching about, for example, the importance of secure attachment for babies. The Trust fosters the understanding and valuing of the protective factors that support the development and wellbeing of young people and others.

Nigeria

Physical punishment, ‘legalised violence against children,’ should be eliminated in all settings (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006.) ‘In some African societies like Nigeria, parental use of physical methods to discipline children is widespread,’ states a paper by three Nigerian educational researchers. Their blog (2018) draws on BERA’s article *Review of Education: Child Discipline and Violence in Nigeria: A Community-Based Intervention Programme to Reduce Violent Discipline and Other Forms of Negative Parenting Practices* by Dr Dorothy Ofoha, senior lecturer in educational psychology at the national open university of Nigeria. Parents don’t realise the harm that physical punishment causes, they say, but children see it as the norm. Without an intervention, they will do the same and beat their own children. So the authors have developed an effective course aiming to change parents’ behaviour. The evaluation, with a control group, by Ofoah, Rotimi Ogidan and Rosemary Saidu, showed that this eight-week community-based parenting education programme (PEP) across Nigeria, delivered for two hours a week, does bring about changes in the behaviour of parents with a child aged three-to-twelve. There is less corporal punishment and more use of praise and ‘redirecting.’

The authors call for a reduction in rampant physical punishment. Encouraged by their success with parents, they now advocate parenthood education in schools. Their paper, *Integrating a Parenting Education Programme into the Primary and Secondary School Curriculum in Nigeria* reveals UNICEF’s finding: 91 percent of the 2-to-14-year-olds whom it surveyed in Nigeria have experienced violent discipline at home. They hope that ‘policymakers in the education sector can be sensitised to introducing parent education so boys and girls will begin to imbibe appropriate child management skills early to help break the intergenerational cycle of punitive violence and ultimately help improve positive parenting skills.’

Singapore and fathers

There has been a lot of thought in Singapore about fully involving fathers in family life. Women have joined the work force in greater numbers but still bear the brunt of childcare. The late 1970s saw an emergence of independent efforts to promote the role of dads. The first Centre for Fathering was set up (1999), followed by ADAM: Association of Devoted and Active Family Men (2004.) Government interest began in earnest after a national survey on fatherhood was published (2009) and funded Dads for Life in conjunction with International Men's Day. Co-parenting is one of the many things encouraged in order to enrich family life. The True Way Presbyterian Church English Congregation in Singapore is passionately in agreement with these initiatives. Their article *Prepare tomorrow's parents* (1992) cites parenting education in US schools 'where public school personnel, given the right tools, are eager to help prepare students for fatherhood.'

Trinidad and Tobago: SERVOL (Service Volunteered for All). In 1970 a remarkable Trinidadian Catholic priest sowed a seed. He couldn't have known how long and how well the results would blossom. Father Gerard Pantin was a biology teacher at a prestigious middle-class boys' school in Port of Spain near Laventille, but it wasn't enough for him. 'I was suffering from a guilt trip,' he told the press. 'There were these thousands and thousands of black youths throwing stones and burning things – all those youths in Laventille, and I didn't know one of them. I was caught up in the middle-class, teaching at St. Mary's. I started to search my soul.' Living conditions in Laventille were dreadful, public life in turmoil. Pantin, aged 41, in 'a moment of madness,' and Wes Hall, a famous cricketer, went there with no plan or money, asked youth on the street how they could help, gradually winning their trust. There started what must be a unique project, Servol, based on respect - carefully listening to people about what they wanted, not assuming what they needed. It has become substantial, focusing on the needs of children and young people.

Pantin died in 2014 aged 85. The part of great interest here is the *Adolescent Parent Programme*.

Dr Elaine Arnold, who was part of Servol, happened to give me a leaflet so pertinent to this book and current levels of street violence in London that I reproduce it in full. Servol has received awards, e.g. from the *Right Livelihood Foundation* for ‘fostering spiritual values, co-operation and family responsibility in building society.’ Work with babies and toddlers continues as part of the *Adolescent Development Programme (ADP)*. As of 2024, the ADP, the starting point of the Servol skills journey, is a three-month programme with the following core modules:

1. Spirituality: your connection with God;
2. Self-awareness: "who am I?," discovering oneself;
3. Parenting: this looks at human physiology and breast feeding; students interact with infants and are allowed to feed and bathe them, read them stories, put them to sleep, prepare meals, sanitize play areas etc.

At the end of the ADP, trainees are evaluated before they move on to their respective skill.

‘The problem of family life: Have you ever wondered why there’s so much crime and violence in contemporary Caribbean society, why there’s such a high incidence of drug abuse, why so many vagrants and mentally disturbed people walk around with no one to care for them? There are many reasons for this but Servol has been working in the disadvantaged areas for 15 years and found there’s one pivotal reason for almost all our anti-social behaviour: the breakdown of family life, in particular, the failure of the fathers of families to play their important role in bringing up children. The phenomenon is not confined to low-income groups. It is present in middle-class society and practically every country in the world that has been subjected to industrialisation and urbanisation. The need to make more money to buy the consumer goods advertised on

radio and TV brings people flocking to the bright lights of the city to crowd into shantytowns and ghettos.

It's said that the Japanese hate three things: earthquakes, fires and ... fathers! A significant story comes out of Peru. A nun who was helping in a men's prison was besieged by requests for cards when mothers' day came around. Determined to be prepared for fathers' day, she ordered hundreds of fathers' day cards and waited expectantly for the results. She didn't receive a single one! In some US prisons, the one prayer they never teach young inmates is the 'Our Father'; their image of their father is so negative that this would lead them to hating God.

Many social workers and voluntary organisations are trying to help the vagrants, the drug addicts and the young criminals and this is very valuable and necessary work. However, the way we in Servol see it, this is just putting a sticking plaster on the sore and we are running out of sticking plasters while the sores continue to multiply. So Servol embarked on a highly innovative, exciting solution to the problem: *we're training young people how to be parents*. We have been doing this for eight years in our Centre. The results have been so fantastic that we want to spread this programme through all the schools and youth institutions of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. We call this programme our *Adolescent Parent Programme*. Here is how it works. The young adolescents who come to Servol, come to learn a trade and we teach them a trade, since a future parent (both men and women) must be equipped to find a job; but we do much more for them. We touch them in the deepest regions of their heart and open them up to caring, sharing and loving.

Personal development: We begin by talking to them about themselves, getting them to tell us how they've been hurt and scarred by callous, indifferent parents, guardians and teachers. We explain the reasons they feel so badly about themselves, how they have acquired complexes and prejudices, why they're convinced they are failures. Last, most important of all, we just love them. Not in any sticky, sentimental way; in fact, we can be very tough with them; but we tell them over and over again that we accept them as they are, that they are really beautiful people. It takes

us about three months to get this message to sink in but you wouldn't believe how they change. They come to us sullen, hostile, unmotivated. They are transformed, not into angels to be sure, but into young people who have HOPE in the future as they have experienced our LOVE and have learned to have FAITH in us.

Teaching them to love others: The next step is to challenge them to love others and help them discover the tremendous capacity for love which has been dormant in their hearts for years. We begin by asking them to show **practical love** for two categories: **old people** like vagrants and bed-ridden senior citizens; each day small groups go to the tiny homes of the old people and help them, to clean, cook, feed and even wash them; some go to the Servol Life Centre in Duncan Street where they join other groups in feeding the vagrants; and **handicapped children:** other groups visit the Servol school for special children on Sunshine Hill and under the teachers' supervision, learn how to care for mentally retarded and autistic children. You would not believe how the young people enjoy and look forward to these visits. More important, it has opened their hearts and brought out the caring and loving instinct, so that they have learned to form loving relationships with: each other, the old and neglected, the handicapped child. They are now ready for the final and most important part of the *Adolescent Parent Programme*.

Teaching them to be parents: While they are training to be carpenters, nurses, plumbers, daycare assistants, welders, caterers, masons, seamstresses, electricians and auto-mechanics, they are given an intensive course in what is involved in being a parent.

a) First month, we concentrate on babies. The young trainees are led into the world of child development from the moment of conception to one-year-old. Even more interestingly, they're made to spend at least three hours a week learning how to wash, feed, dress and play with babies under the supervision of trained staff.

b) Second month, the emphasis is on the toddler and the trainees are given theoretical and practical knowledge of dealing with toddlers

c) Third month, the course leads them through the development of the pre-school child, supplemented by sessions in nursery schools.

d) Fourth month focuses on the special problems of dealing with handicapped children. Visits to special schools reinforce theory.

The results: The young trainees, boys and girls, simply love this programme and clamour for more. It is one of the most beautiful experiences to see a husky young male apprentice pick up a child and see the expression on his face as the infant looks up at him trustingly and smiles. In that moment a new type of parent is formed. Adolescents thus exposed to the fascinating mystery of child development from conception to the age of five cannot but be impressed by the important issues involved in bringing a child into the world and fostering its development. We're certain from the experience of the last eight years that this programme will strongly challenge the prevailing attitude among Caribbean adolescents, among whom casual sex and just as casual pregnancy is the standard pattern. We also hope this programme will eventually deal the death blow to the machismo image of male adolescents which is an inseparable barrier to their being considerate husbands and attentive fathers. By awakening the latent tenderness which has been covered over by centuries of unenlightened macho behaviour, they'll be free to take their rightful place in the family.

We need you! Just think of what our country would be like if we could build nuclear families which gave careful attention to their children, where father gave his sons and daughters an example to be loved and admired, where handicapped children are accepted and loved, and older people are not pushed out on the streets but revered and cared for. Servol will not rest until this programme is spread to every single school in Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the Caribbean. But we can't do it alone. We need dedicated teachers and instructors to train others in the administration of the programme; we need money to pay staff.

This is where you come in. How many times have people scratched their heads and asked: 'What Christmas present can I give someone who has

everything and will receive 40 other presents he/she doesn't need?' How many times I have heard managers of companies say, 'I suppose we have to give a cocktail party for the staff,' while the staff is saying, 'I suppose I have to go to the manager's boring cocktail party?' How often have families felt obligated to have yet another Christmas dinner when everybody is trying to lose weight? That's why we've prepared a special leaflet which allows you to contribute to our Adolescent Parent Programme and inform your friends that money you would have spent on a present, a party or a dinner has been contributed to Servol's Adolescent Parent Programme. In contributing to this programme, you are making an act of faith that our society can become loving and caring, that young men nurtured by love and respect of their parents will not need to wreck their vengeance on society by crimes of rape and other forms of violence, that the streets will be bare of vagrants as they will be cared for by children they have loved. Isn't it worth trying? And isn't it infinitely preferable to another superfluous present, a meaningless cocktail party, another dinner you could do without? We need your help! Please don't turn your back. Servol Caribbean Life Centre, 91 Frederick St, Port of Spain. Each donation will be matched by the United Security Life Insurance Co. Ltd.'

Human maturation is exceptionally long and wearing on the parents' resources. Although children are a huge blessing, even an ordinary childhood demands an immense amount of time and mental and emotional resources from parents. Anon

Part Three

The Central Role of Drama

Drama should infuse the total curriculum of any educational institution. The curriculum is what takes place between teacher and student.

Richard Courtney, *The Dramatic Curriculum* (1980)

Chapter Twelve

**‘I don’t usually like working much, do I, Miss?
But I could have worked on that forever.’**

Drama is absolutely essential in all stages of education. Too high a value cannot be placed upon child drama. Sir Herbert Read

Drama is so important in the teaching of parenting that it occupies Part Five all by itself. A chief recommendation of this book is that this powerful method should be used sensitively with every student in every school. There’s an indisputable case. Drama gives students *experience*: they are not *shown* by others but *feel* the material for themselves. We want students to be *deeply moved* by their involvement, for it to be so significant that it enters their unconscious as well as conscious memory, making it less likely they will forget what they’ve learnt, once they become parents. We want them to understand other cultures, not just their own, *from the inside*, to be able to put themselves in the shoes of other people of all ages and varieties. Drama develops students safely in emotional, empathic, cognitive, communicative, imaginative, physical and collaborative ways. It promotes the whole self. Which other subject does that?

The teacher Francis Gilbert has written poetically about drama at his East End comprehensive. ‘The inspector noted that the kids probably learnt more language in their drama lessons than in all the other lessons combined. Teaching English within those drama lessons was like polishing up the windows of a lovely, cosy cottage. The physical environment which we worked in may have been appalling but we inhabited a higher spiritual sphere there; the children were enfolded by red plush chairs and a well-tended house and were probably having the happiest experiences of their school lives - for some, perhaps the whole of their lives.’

Arts education and practical activity have a long history. Ancient Greece taught its kids poetry recital and dance. In medieval times

this stopped when the Puritan church condemned things like that, though the 16th century priest Richard Mulcaster used drama within the teaching of all subjects as head of Merchant Taylors' school. John Dewey in the 20th century advocated learning by doing and recommended the use of drama to teach reading.

There are now fascinating controversies within the drama education world about what to do and how to do it. For example, should it be used as a tool for teaching other subjects? Or kept within a drama department as a discipline of its own? What are the benefits of drama through participation rather than as theatre? But everyone would probably agree with the publication *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools* (2011) by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, no less. 'The study of drama, dance, music and the visual arts helps students explore realities, relationships and ideas that cannot be conveyed simply in words or numbers.' So let's look at a few proven ways by which to teach parenting through drama with three examples. There's also a consideration of the contributions of some of the historic greats, and an audit of all the methods from which you can choose.

Example One: Domestic violence

Considering the extent of physical and verbal violence between couples, regardless of social class, and the psychological harm it does to children and young people who hear or see it, it is important to deal with it full on. This is how *Before Becoming a Parent* addressed it with a class of 14-year-old girls in their PSHE lesson. The role-play gives them a powerful experience when the drama is acted out by three adult facilitators, ideally with experience of drama. The lights are then put on. Students are invited to sit up and say how they feel. The atmosphere is likely to be heavy. The teacher is sensitive to the possibility that some students have witnessed something similar at home. One-to-one private

conversations could be necessary soon afterwards. There must be enough time for debriefing for the whole group.

Example Two: The mobile phone mother

A widespread phenomenon of our time is the prevalence of the mobile phone. It seems that many parents are oblivious of its potential effects on their child.

Half the class are mothers collecting their five-year-old from school. All have a mobile phone stuck to their ear, talking incessantly.

Half the class are five-year-olds at the end of the school day.

Kids rush out of school looking jubilant and excited and wanting to see and touch their mother and tell her what they have been doing. 'Mummy, mummy....!'

Mothers hardly look at their kids, make no physical contact and keep talking on their phones.

The kids (played by teenagers) crumple. Students feel what this is like.

Then the roles are reversed, so everyone gets the experience of being a mother and a five-year-old.

Then replay the scene, with the mothers approaching their child, bending down to hug and kiss the child, showing interest, putting their phone away, smiling and listening.

Each student has the experience of being both types of mother and a child who is neglected and then welcomed.

And see the playlet in chapter 32.

Example Three: *Forever*

This play has helped us to make personal and social education directly relevant to our pupils. It should be repeated for all PSHE classes. Headteacher

The play *Forever* by Mary Cooper, commissioned by Rochdale's M6 Theatre Company due to the high rates of under-age sex and pregnancy, made a huge impact on teenage audiences (aged 14-to-16) in 2000, in the north of England: shows in 48 schools and 18 youth projects, gave them a real taste of what parenthood can be like. It was shown to health professionals and funders ('excellent'; 'should be compulsory for all Key Stage 4 pupils'; 'a huge contribution'), played at theatres in Lancaster and Manchester, even in Westminster for government advisers and MPs. The play continued to be in demand, touring again in the north in (2001-to-2003) to the top ten percent of boroughs with the highest teenage pregnancy rates. A resource pack gave teachers many opportunities to use the play to develop teaching the subject.

In 2009, the Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch, Essex produced the play as a part of its annual Theatre in Education for secondary schools, in association with the *Havering Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board* which entirely funded the show. There was a higher-than-average incidence of teenage pregnancy and abortion in Havering borough. The play visited 14 schools and two youth centres with 24 performances (including a launch at the theatre), a very high uptake. Performances were free of charge, enabling them to reach deprived parts of Havering. The workshops which followed were led by a peer mentor - a teenage mother or father from the *Young People's Project*. A counsellor was available.

A teenage couple in a serious relationship have an unplanned baby. Everything changes in a trice; the chap eventually walks out. The actor playing the baby is also the narrator, acting the part of the baby when a grown man. The action shows the effects of a baby on a couple and the effects of the couple, rows and all, on the baby and future adult. It focuses on the needs of the child, 'the real human being in the centre of family dilemmas.' There is specially composed music, sound effects (e.g. baby noises), a striking set and

first-class acting. After the 55-minute performance, the audience can question the actors still in role and participate in a 40-minute workshop with re-enactment, hot seating, inner thoughts, frozen images and discussion.

There was a full evaluation by Penny Sharland of the work in the north. 'Some young people thought,' reported a teacher, 'that watching a play was more interesting and realistic than a discussion on parenthood.' And a headteacher said the play should be 'an integral part of every school's personal and social education programme. *Forever* could shortcut hours of worthy but limited discussion in the classroom.' It was funny but also poignant, non-judgmental, didn't sermonise, preach or dictate, was true to life, thought provoking and proffered dilemmas, not solutions. A full third of students said it evoked 'strong feelings.' Feedback forms from twenty-one schools were unanimously positive, teachers describing students as mesmerised, absorbed, challenged, stimulated or gripped by the show. 'They came to understand parents' difficulties better, became more knowledgeable and thoughtful. It was timely, as parenting has recently become part of the national curriculum for the first time.

Penny concluded: 'There is no doubt that the play made a significant contribution to the preparation for adult life of many young people from very different backgrounds.' Asian students reported that despite the actors being white, they recognised aspects of their own home lives, adding that in their culture they were unlikely to become parents while unmarried, that the females would do the childcare and that their extended families would give support. There were performances at four special schools, 'a bit of a hit' there; the students' reactions were similar to those of mainstream young people. And boys from all schools seemed just as interested as girls, even if they often had a different take on the drama.

An evaluation was also done in 2009 in Havering with stunning results. Teachers and all 2,360 young people were given a short questionnaire soon after the project and most filled it in. Ninety-four percent of students enjoyed the play and workshop and said it gave them a real understanding of being a teenage parent. A full 97 percent thought it was relevant to their age group. Teachers were just as keen. 94 percent rated it as excellent for its relevance to the age group and its educational value. 92 percent reckoned it was excellent for holding the young people's attention.

What contributed to this overwhelming success? The reports identify the commissioned upbeat, modern music which suited the audience's taste; the colourful, imaginative set with its immediate visual impact; the exceptional acting; the realism of the 'beautifully written' script; the high relevance of the subject to local teenagers. All this enabled students to believe in the story and empathise with the characters. Of special interest were the young workshop leaders. 'Young people seemed able to ask questions about sexual health using their own language and vocabulary. They were responded to in the same manner. This placed them at ease and they were not pressured into speaking or using the "correct" language.'

Professor Anthony Jackson discusses the play in his fascinating book *Theatre, Education and The Making of Meanings: Art or Instrument?* (2007). Defining six types of theatre, he places *Forever* in the 'playful' category. That's what makes it effective. Playful theatre emphasises entertainment, laughter, relaxation. It 'unblocks mental attitudes,' like entering a game, 'serious, funny, disturbing, sad from moment to moment.' There's music, a non-naturalistic setting; it 'combines playfulness with seriousness.' The message is 'undetectable' even if there's an 'educational agenda.'

As for learning outcomes, he describes those identified for the funder, the *Nationwide Foundation* (2001), as 'admirable,' but

concerned more with the aims of PSHE than art. *M6* had to ‘explain and justify their work.’

Learning outcome: Increase knowledge of parenthood

Forever production M6 Young people learn that parenthood involves complex relationships that bring both difficulties and joys;

Learning outcome: Develop appropriate attitudes re parenthood

Forever: Young people learn that parents may have to be considered alongside the needs of other family members;

Learning outcome: Develop appropriate skills for parenthood

Forever: Young people learn that they need to develop a range of responses to family difficulties;

Learning outcome: Feel more prepared for parenthood

Forever: Young people recognise the full-time responsibilities and demands of parenthood.

Jackson also researched the play’s theatrical impact, talking to students just after the performance as well as two to three months later, finding that ‘the play was still vividly in their minds.’ The quotes are telling. ‘I’ve heard it a lot of times: don’t get pregnant when you’re young, but I think the play were more descriptive, it didn’t like give you a message, it showed it to you in a different way. You had to watch it to realise what it were like.’ All agreed it was just right for their age group. The strong language and strong feelings went down well. ‘It got across to us better. They didn’t treat us like kids.’ And there was a sense of ownership: the play came to *their* school hall, the actors near them with eye contact, the fun and liveliness was right in front of them. ‘I felt more like a friend of the actors.’ The issues and warnings felt real. ‘You understand more if you see it.’ It had an impact on boys as well as girls. ‘I felt at the very beginning that it was going to be fun and totally different from anything I had ever seen before.’ It felt personal, far more so than something on a screen. In fact Channel 4 TV network (4 Learning) adapted it for their educational service

to schools. But the production lacked the playfulness of the real thing (and was ‘truly dreadful,’ said one significant viewer.)

As Mary Cooper told Jackson, ‘If you touch them emotionally, make them feel something, you bring them in this way closer to the issues. They can think, “This is me.” Change may take years and theatre won’t change people on its own. But it can be part of the process.’ What impact did *Forever* have on teenage conceptions? By 2005 there was a 15 percent reduction in Rochdale where *M6*’s play, ‘dramatic dialogues’ and workshops had been brought to every secondary school. In 2019 a teacher who had seen the play in 2009 asked Mary for the script to use with her class. It has stayed in adults’ minds too. Maybe it will be revived as a result of this chapter.

Some historic greats

Dorothy Heathcote: Mantle of the expert (MOE)

MOE motivates far more children than any other method of teaching.
Teacher

Probably the most influential pioneer in this field was the remarkable Dorothy Heathcote (1926-2011), an 11+ failure, West Yorkshire mill worker and ultimately an MBE for services to drama in education. You can get videos of her talking from Concord Media. She never trained as a teacher, maintaining an ‘innocence of vision and expression,’ later studying under Laban. She calls on teachers to be ‘self-obsessed’ so they can know themselves and better be themselves. Her method, MOE, can be used in nearly every subject in the curriculum and certainly lends itself perfectly to the high dramas of parenting.

Drama, she states, is a communal experience. You don’t stand and tell the students things but let them be the experts in working out situations and problems. Grab their attention, let them call the

tune. It's all there in them. Listen to them. Sit on the floor, join in with their story. This is an experience, not a performance. Take a role, intervene. Meet the students where they are, see the world through their eyes, use empathy to sense the general mood of the group, but contribute to deepen their perceptions. 'I won't water down drama. Drama is a real man in a mess – never leotards and fairies.' The aim: to 'build on the pupils' past experience and give them a deeper knowledge not just of themselves but of what it is to be human.' Students and teacher sit in a circle, symbolising a shared bond.

The idea of a teacher actually joining in was more than my traditional teacher-training and attitude to professionals could stomach! Gavin Bolton

Heathcote quotes an example of parent participation. A class of eight-year-olds were examining child-rearing practices in an invented tribe. Their parents came into school in the evening to continue the work. One mother realised that she never talked with her son, only interrogated him and told him what to do.

There's a wealth of feedback from both teachers and students on how this method transforms daily life at school, all from primary level but applicable to older age groups. A few quotes from many:

- Overall there is a BUZZ! The work is real, meaningful and relevant. *Headteacher*
- It's not like a boring teacher saying do work, do this work, all boring.. This is work but it's fun work. *Girl*
- It's fantastic and exciting, I really like the way it has taken away some of the routine ways of learning. *Parent*
- MOE is an excellent way of getting into a topic. All the children were engaged completely and participated in role as experts. *Teacher*
- The work relies on looking at the whole subject from the inside. *Teacher*

Children of every level engage well. Teachers say:

- I witnessed reluctant children who normally find group work difficult participating and feeling confident;
- I have seen pupils of all abilities come alive with the possibilities opened up. I have never seen children so engaged, motivated and in tune with the learning, they become totally absorbed. Many of my low ability children have shone. It also has extended and engaged my Gifted and Talented pupils;
- MOE is especially good for reaching those who can otherwise tend to be withdrawn.

This is not just cognitive learning but deeper and more memorable. Teachers say:

- The main issue for me is that it attracts an emotional engagement from the children. Once they have this, the learning follows;
- It provides a powerful and meaningful learning context, engaging pupils at a deep level and developing them as thoughtful, enquiring and empathetic individuals;
- What children learn is extremely memorable because they have been active participants in their learning.

Teachers realise that learning in this way impacts on the rest of students' lives:

- By using MOE, you see the big picture and consider the children's learning as a life-long process;
- I strongly believe in children receiving a rounded and whole education based on what they need to succeed in life and have a future. MOE is right for the children at our school;
- They learn essential life skills in a safe but exciting environment.

It makes a huge difference to teachers' experience. Two used the word 'transformational'.

- My relationship with the children has radically changed.

And two comments are especially weighty:

- I heard a wonderful quote which sums it up for me:
'The purpose of the curriculum is not to cover but to uncover.'
That means more than just subjects. It means opening children's eyes to what it can mean to be human;
- I don't usually like working much, do I, Miss? But I could have worked on that forever.

Other pioneers

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863 – 1938) believed that actors need to feel authentic emotion whilst on stage and, to do so, they could draw upon feelings they'd experienced in their own lives. He developed exercises to encourage actors to explore the character's motivations, giving performances depth and realism. This technique came to be known as the Stanislavski Method or The Method, the act of experiencing, rather than representing. It means that you imagine your character's circumstances so well that you just know how they would respond in any given situation. It gets you into the head of your character, how he or she thinks, feels and reacts. You can take on more than one character. You develop 'sense memory,' you recall the physical sensations surrounding an emotional event. That's appropriate. We want students at school to *get inside the hearts and heads* of the parent, child or baby they are acting.

If play is the actual manner of a child's way of life, then play may be the correct approach to all forms of education. Peter Slade

The earliest pioneers in Britain of drama education based on the experiences of children were Elsie Forgerty, who founded the Central School of Speech and Drama (1906), Harriet Finlay-Johnson (1871 – 1956) and Henry Caldwell Cook with *The Play Way* (1886 – 1937.) Peter Slade (1912 – 2004) wrote in *Child Drama* (1954) of its many benefits to both teachers and young people: the absorption. You are completely wrapped up in what you are doing, teachers describing it as ‘the only sure basis for learning. Child drama tells the teacher who and what the child is and where it has got to in life.’ Children gain in confidence, imagination, tolerance, consideration for others, sincerity, authenticity and the ability to observe. Taking part in drama feels natural, satisfying, expressive and deepens perception through identifying with others, getting in their skin. Drama is relevant to preparation for parenthood. ‘Pre-experience of possible later life experience is encountered and dealt with. This brings a steadfast wisdom.’ Slade welcomes reinforcement. ‘Memory is aided by trying things out and repeating them.’

*The emotional brain responds to an event more quickly
than the thinking brain. Daniel Goleman*

Drama can release repressions and inhibitions and can have a preventative role. Slade realises that teachers might resist. ‘Some people are a little worried at the idea of acting out. But children who act out their ugly home life in front of you are doing you the honour of extending a confidence.’ Success in drama education depends on ‘where the teacher has got to in themselves.’ He believes teachers, not outside practitioners, should deliver the work. They know the children. They can foster group intuition and group sensitivity, awareness of ‘body speech.’ It is one method which doesn’t depend on the teacher’s superior knowledge. Brian Way (1923 – 2006), a colleague of Slade, also pioneered child-centred drama teaching, his work leading to the first *Theatre in Education* company.

Another innovator was Brazilian Augusto Boal (1931 - 2009) with his *Theatre of the Oppressed*. He was seminal in the development of many drama techniques, e.g. forum theatre, seen as a tool to change society as well as a means of personal development. As performing arts lead teacher Paul Daintry expressed it, 'Forum theatre offers so many opportunities to use participatory drama as a tool for personal change: not just the modelling by others of new ways to talk or behave but the chance it gives to embody the suggested ideas for change herself, live the experience of the new idea rather than just watch someone else do it.'

Indeed, impact from drama is more likely to result from this active participation as an agent, with young people inventing and rehearsing their own dramas, than from observing others act. It's the difference between intellectual processes (reading, writing, discussing) and learning from direct doing, where students can devise something from within themselves, improvise and develop it, repeat it without the stress of performance. 'In all my classes,' Paul said, 'there are students who fear performance but create wonderful work when they know they won't have to show it to anyone but me. This process is for them, for their learning and self-development. Performing it to the class won't necessarily enhance that experience. Over time this de-stressed approach builds their confidence so that eventually they can (and want to) show their work off.'

How long do the benefits of teaching through drama last? I tried long and hard to find evidence that what you learn through drama you remember. I'd like to believe that you remember it for much longer than you would through traditional methods such as discussion. But there seems to be no well-known longitudinal study proving this, only a wealth of experience, literature and anecdote. Staff at London's *Institute of Education's* English and Drama department, I discovered, don't know of research which would

prove to scientifically-minded sceptics that drama education has long-lasting effects. One drama teacher wrote, 'I wish I could direct you straight to some evidence, but I don't have any. I believe it's true, of course, but don't have any documentation. There are all sorts of stories about CEOs of Apple, Microsoft etc. saying that they'd rather employ arts graduates who think creatively than people with a bundle of relevant qualifications, but again that's just something I hear over and over without citation. You might want to look at Ken Robinson's *Out Of Our Minds*.'

So it was a treat eventually to discover a longitudinal study in 2009 from the US. James Catterall followed a cohort of students into their mid-twenties 'and found the persistence of strong connections between arts learning in earlier years and overall academic success ("doing well") and pro-social outcomes ("doing good".) The advantages in performance of the arts-involved students relative to other students have increased over time. Most strikingly, arts-engaged low-income students are more likely than their non-arts-engaged peers to have attended and done well in college, obtained employment with a future, volunteered in their communities and participated in the political process by voting.' Then I heard about DICE.

DICE

DICE (***D**rama **I**mproves **L**isbon Key **C**ompetences in **E**ducation*) was a two-year EU-funded project (2008-10) in the Czech Republic, Hungary (lead country), Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK which was represented by the *Big Brum Theatre Company*. DICE used stringent research methods, with a control group, to measure not only qualitative but also quantitative results of many types of educational theatre and drama projects for nearly five-thousand 13-to-16-year-olds, and the teaching processes which led to the results. DICE did not rely on self-reporting questionnaires by students or individual paper and pencil tests. It was, to its

knowledge, the largest research study in this field with the largest sample and most complex design. It concluded, 'Drama education makes a significant and objectively measurable impact.'

The research findings are noteworthy. Those relevant to us state that students who've been involved in theatre/drama education:

- Feel more confident in communication;
- Are better at coping with stress;
- Are more empathic: they have concern for others;
- Are more able to change their perspective;
- Show more dedication towards their future, have more plans;
- Spend more time with family members and taking care of younger brothers and sisters;
- Do more for their families;
- Have a better sense of humour;
- Feel better at home.

DICE failed to get funds for research into longer-term outcomes. But you might like to learn that in addition, the *DICE* students were 'assessed more highly by their teachers in all aspects; feel more confident in reading and understanding tasks; like going to school more; enjoy school activities more; spend more time in school; are more likely to be a central character in the class'!

Anecdotes also show drama outcomes. A friend, teaching English to a group of refugee children, wrote a play and they acted it, repeating rehearsals time after time. They learnt English better and faster than a similar group taught by someone else by traditional methods. Then I spoke to Chris Lawrence from *London Drama Charity*. When his daughter was nine, he gave a lesson in her class about Native American Indians. She dressed up as one. She still remembers it vividly and talks about it - at the age of 40.

The most distinguished practitioners, including Gavin Bolton ('there is an argument for placing drama at the centre of the

curriculum’), have no doubt of the profound impact that drama can make on young minds. Some stress the significance for the individual of ‘child’s play’ and how drama education is an extension of that. ‘Wherever there is play, there is drama,’ said Slade. And to quote Froebel: ‘Play is not trivial but highly serious and of deep significance.’ Others, such as Heathcote, see drama as a shared communal experience. What they all have in common is commitment and a passionate belief in it as an essential part of the development of the whole child and young person.

Drama sets you free: headteachers talk

Any school or college which relegates drama into being merely an adjunct of the English curriculum fails to get the best out of the subject. What is really needed is a good supply of specialist drama teachers aware of all the other subjects of the curriculum and how drama can enhance them but especially aware of the emotional and social needs of young people. Peter Miller 1998

In 1995, the SHA (the *Secondary Heads Association*, as it was then called) was worried that drama in schools didn’t feature enough, or well enough. Although drama was compulsory till the age of 14 in the national curriculum from 1989, Thatcher’s government (1979 – 1990) had made cuts to drama education. So the SHA produced a report *Whither the Arts*. This was followed up by the lively, friendly booklet *Drama Sets You Free* (1998) funded by the Gulbenkian and Esmée Fairbairn Foundations, lamenting that ‘drama does not feature as a distinct subject in a considerable number of schools. It seems to be an all-or-nothing subject, strongly supported where it occurs but often absent from the curriculum.’ The booklet makes an unanswerable case for its prime importance, quoting from a huge number of respondents: vehemently enthusiastic heads and drama teachers confirming the findings and insights of DICE and the other practitioners we have considered. About the multiple benefits, the words ‘enormous’, ‘immense’ and ‘massive’ feature frequently.

Teachers most often specified confidence, communication skills, teamwork and understanding, all important for good parenting. Students can develop positive attitudes to school through good drama experiences. Drama can teach boys in particular how to deal with feelings and learn a vocabulary about them. Awareness and empathy develop. For those not good at academic work, or who feel they have failed in traditional subjects, here's an opportunity to shine, have a sense of self-worth, 'success if not available elsewhere. Drama provides an opportunity to explore issues without the block of writing and reading.'

One section is particularly relevant to us. 'Those who appreciate that social wellbeing is founded on personal maturity and emotional literacy know the value of drama and dramatic techniques when dealing with topics such as social pressures, bullying, parenting and citizenship. Morality and civic responsibility can't be taught didactically; to be effective they have to be felt. What better vehicle than educational drama? Personal and social education, assemblies and other subjects using role-play benefit most.' Although drama techniques can be used to enhance many subjects, they are especially useful in addressing emotional and social needs which drama does so well, possibly because it is not a compulsory subject in the national curriculum and does not suffer from those pressures and restrictions. 'It is saved from the grey bureaucracy of grinding assessment, detailed prescription and constantly changing rules.'

Again, there is mention of anxieties. Teachers who are not drama experts 'are often nervous about using drama, fearing some loss of control. Staff feel concern about the contrasting atmosphere in lessons using drama and those requiring a more orderly environment.' But the headteachers' organisation refreshingly states: 'If we can't cope with a bit of chaos and disruption from time to time, we're not as good as we like to think.'

And as DICE says: 'When you throw the dice, you don't know what number you will get. There is a moment of excitement, of anticipation, expectation even, as it rolls. This is the excitement, anticipation and expectation you should seek when doing educational theatre and drama. You will never know exactly what the next throw of the dice will bring. It is the same for each stage of a drama or theatre process, because all the participants have an impact on each step of the way. And even if you do not always score "the highest number" in your drama work, like in a game of dice you always get another chance. And sometimes a number one is just as useful as a number six. You can act upon the outcome from any roll of the dice.'

'Teachers sometimes feel isolated in their work. The pressures of a punishing schedule and a relentless routine engender forgetfulness: of things that once invigorated us and our students: inspirational moments, the thrill of sharing something new and challenging. Sometimes the pressure stops us from looking to find different ways of teaching or enriching what we already do. If you feel there is a need for change in your classroom or at your school, however small, you can take the first steps.'

Back to the headteachers. Drama can have a destabilising effect. Some drama teachers expressed reservations about the use of role-play by non-specialist staff in whose hands the practice could be dangerous. Strong, disturbing emotions can be stirred up with teachers not knowing how best to respond. There's also worry about drama used merely as a show. 'As head of department I worry about bad drama organised by non-specialists for entertainment in assemblies. It does not promote the subject, rather it damages it.' Others condemn the idea of a 'glossy' performance to bring marketing kudos to the school. However, if done appropriately, it can be positive. As Peter Miller, president of the *Secondary Heads Association*, said, 'Performance can provide one of the most memorable experiences of a young person's life.'

Indeed, a teenager described her school's performance at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield as 'the best day of my life.'

Respondents to the SHA said that drama:

- Is vital for a pupil's personal and social development and should be compulsory in all schools at least till the end of KS3;
- Is a catalyst: speeds up maturity, especially in areas of emotion and self-confidence;
- Is incalculably beneficial in allowing and encouraging pupils to see through others' eyes, develops their empathetic understanding of the feelings of others;
- Extends 'child's play';
- Leads to more sensitive relationships with peers and adults;
- Is therapeutic; helps pupils deal with the demands of growing up, to explore issues in imaginative, thought-provoking ways;
- Deepens and extends understanding of self and society;
- Enables vague impressions to be brought into sharp focus, alarming ones to be faced;
- Is a unique contribution to the education of children: engagement with the inner self is vital;
- Is an excellent means of expressing difficult ideas and feelings;
- Is a welcome relief from formal lessons.

To be successful, drama teaching needs:

- A safe, controlled environment;
- Training for staff in a counselling role (of value to them too);
- The active support of senior staff;
- The support of governors;
- The support of willing parents;
- Enthusiastic, talented, confident, interested teachers: *all in a real partnership.*

Teaching through drama

Let us conclude by looking at all the methods that schools can use to make the most of drama. How can we ensure that teenagers get a real understanding of the reasons behind the behaviour of a baby, child, peer or partner, and the reasons for the best responses? For example, why does a baby usually stop crying if it's picked up and held close? We can do this in various ways:

- The use of drama and other arts (dance, mime, puppetry, visual arts, ceramics, poetry, music);
- The use of scientific information using photos and diagrams: e.g. how neglect and abuse affect an infant's brain formation, emotions and overall development; what happens to a baby's body and brain when it is distressed and left alone. This would be discussed *only after the experiences through drama and the arts*;
- Observation of, and experience with, babies, young children and parents, at school and in the community.

Drama methods

Continuum, simulation and role-play

Role-play seems to be one of the commonest methods used. William Rice describes an interesting progression towards it. A teacher might start with *continuum*: simple classroom conversations which can lead to more exhaustive discussion. That can progress to *simulation*, then *role-play* which both involve emotion and deep insight. Or, he found, 'a brief, spontaneous end-of-session chat might get to the heart of the matter.'

Simulation involves a storyline or a scenario where students play themselves. It 'can permit you to explore various courses of action without having to actually bear the costs of a wrong or dangerous decision.' It gives you the feel of the pressure and urgency of a situation, and nurtures co-operative relationships.

Role-play 'may promote greater perception of, and sensitivity towards, the events of daily life.' It has fewer rules than simulation. The actors decide the characters, they don't play themselves. It helps you to see through the other person's eyes, can be moving, enables problem-solving and leads to empathic understanding that fosters confidence. Students can role-play a day in the life of a parent of a baby, twins, toddler, primary-aged child and adolescent. They act 'as if.' Michael Argyle in *The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour* (1968) states that role-play can lead to lasting changes in thinking and possibly in behaviour, 'a stage further than discussion.' Simulation and role-play enable teenagers to *really feel* what it is like to be a baby who cries and cries when no one comes.

There can be surprises if sessions are improvised and unplanned. Teachers' anxiety can be reduced through getting to know colleagues and a good team spirit. The work has three phases:

- Preparation via films, plays, reading;
- Introducing simulation and role-play with reassurance to students so that they feel as secure as possible. Topics at first are neutral, dealt with briefly and simply. As everyone relaxes, sessions are more frequent and topics more relevant. Emotional heat is not an end in itself but when it happens, can be both felt and learnt from. Teachers need to be immersed in the work, 'right in the middle,' not on the fringe and must obey the rules, albeit having their privacy respected. Debriefing is very important. Enough time has to be allowed;
- Each group plans its own scenario: members might write it down. This is active learning. Discussion without structure might occur naturally in the class. Teachers to play it by ear;
- All these methods will fail if the atmosphere isn't right. There must be freedom to move, no desks in the way. Chairs are best arranged in a horseshoe shape. Everyone must feel physically relaxed and be close enough to each other to see subtleties and changes. And plan carefully to use the limited time you have.

Practise in advance with a stopwatch to time the activities so you don't end unexpectedly on an over-emotional note.

The pros and cons of role-play have been described in this way:
The positives are:

- Students can express hidden feelings and problems;
- It is student-centred; addresses their needs and concerns;
- It allows the group to control the content and pace;
- It enables students to empathise with each other and understand others' problems;
- It portrays social problems;
- It brings alive academic subjects such as historical facts;
- Less articulate / non-articulate students can engage in it;
- It shows importance of non-verbal/emotional responses;
- It gives practice in various types of behaviour.

Problems could be:

- The teacher might lose control over what is learnt and the order in which it is learnt;
- Simplification can mislead;
- It could dominate learning experiences to the exclusion of solid theory and facts;
- Dependent on personality, quality/mix of students and teacher;
- It might be seen as too entertaining and frivolous.

Warm-up games and exercises

It's essential to begin a lesson with relaxation and humour, breaking the ice, nurturing a trusting group atmosphere, paving the way for emotional awareness. With everyone sitting in a circle, it can be as simple as: 'Change places if you like chocolate' or 'if you have a pet.' *dramaresource.com* is David Farmer's excellent website has a wealth of ideas and references: '1 2 3' is a game (you receive a new one every Monday if you subscribe.) In pairs, one claps her

hands for 1, says 2, bends her knees for 3. Once everyone's had a good laugh, it's easier to introduce the subject matter of parenting. Avoid games which are challenging. They could cause anxiety and alienation for students who can't keep up.

Forum theatre: Any member of the class can intervene in a role-play to change it by modelling another way of talking or behaving, so the situation has a different outcome.

Role reversal: This is based on Gestalt methods. For example, sitting opposite each other, one student talks as a child, the other as a parent. Then they change places and swap roles.

Mantle of the expert: The class is set a task and functions together as experts, with the teacher joining in.

Hot seating: One student or teacher pretends to be a baby, child, teenager or parent ('as if') and tells the class how they feel, what they need. Members of the class ask them questions.

Still images and freeze frames: A small group forms a sculpture of, for example, a violent domestic row and stands still while the class walks around to observe facial expressions and body language. Then the sculpture changes to a more peaceful scene. The class observes the differences in how each individual behaves and seems to feel.

Thought tapping or thought tracking: These quick strategies are described in David Farmer's book *Learning Through Drama in the Primary Years*. They enable children to verbally express their understanding of characters and situations without the need for rehearsal. They gain confidence to speak in front of others, preparing the ground to move into extended improvisation. It is surprisingly easy for pupils to identify with a role and express their thoughts after holding a still image for a few moments. *Thought*

tracking is a natural follow-up to still images and freeze frames. Once children have made an image, explain that when you tap them on the shoulder, you would like them to speak aloud the thoughts or feelings of their character. At first this may just be one or two words but they will soon gain confidence to express themselves in longer sentences. It doesn't take long to thought-track each child in a group so that you reveal a wide range of attitudes and feelings from different children.

Voices off or ghosting: Useful for introducing and exploring difficult ideas. Actors off-stage speak the words of a scripted play while actors on stage act the scene in keeping with the words, liberated from the stress of remembering them or acting with a book in hand, able to explore the relationships and actions fluidly.

Puppets

People young and old love using puppets, quickly give them names, characters, personalities, find them difficult to put down.

Chris and Stella East, puppeteers

There are enormous benefits to using puppets with any age group. They grab everyone's attention, are irresistible and fun. Lessons become attractive. They enable shy students to express themselves more confidently and take risks without feeling self-conscious. The attention of the class is on the puppet, not the puppeteer. Self-esteem and confidence grow because there is a good response from others. Difficult subjects, such as domestic violence, are less threatening to deal with (possibly after watching a Punch and Judy show.) You don't need a puppet theatre. In fact it's best without one. Students can be invited to make their own puppets. Those with limited academic ability might surprise you by the quality of what they create. Students with special needs can respond particularly well to puppetry and other arts and crafts.

Masks or half masks: Using masks can be fun but also very powerful. A full mask covers the entire face, a half mask just the

lower part. There needs to be a large hole for the mouth so the speaker can be heard. Because facial expressions can't be seen, actors must use their whole body with exaggerated movements and gestures to make the meaning clear. The Geese Theatre Company uses masks in prisons, stressing how 'everybody wears masks,' raising awareness of the difference between one's outward appearance and inner emotional life. Actors can be asked to lift the mask to explain what they are really thinking and feeling. Masks and puppets have endless uses when dealing with the subjects of parenthood.

Mime: Mime uses movement, gestures, actions, facial expression: the ultimate non-verbal communication. No words are allowed (you can make expressive sounds.) Mime suggests the actor's mood, character, behaviour, conflicts; can be comical as well as serious. Students are asked to guess what classmates are portraying. They learn a lot about emotion and body language.

Writing a play: Students can write their own play about parenting and perform it in assembly, to parents, governors, other schools or community groups. It should be put on video as a permanent record of their achievement and understanding.

Theatre In Education (TIE): A TIE company performs a play and encourages students' feedback and participation, often in PSHE lessons. TIE is a significant development in drama education, created by the *Belgrade Theatre* in Coventry who provided free sessions for schools (1965-1996). A small group of professional actors visits one or two classes for one session or more, each actor taking on several roles. There's a simple portable set, simple costumes. Each play deals with one topic. It could be parenting, as in *Forever*, and involves the students. It's high impact, child-centred, interactive, after the performance using role-play, discussion and factual information. Because the audience is so small, students are likely to feel free to take part. TIE and other

drama organisations' work suffered with the Tory government's cuts from 1979 and the Education Reform Act 1988 with its emphasis on 'standards,' SATS, national curriculum etc. ('The new national curriculum meant that a range of popular subjects such as childcare were abandoned as not meeting the new criteria.' Book about Queen Elizabeth Girls' School, Barnet.)

The theatre of debate: Another method used by visiting theatre companies. The *YMCA Touring Company* (closed in 2014) worked in young people's venues including schools, performing plays about the difficulties of adolescence. After the play is performed, the actors stay in role and have a live debate with the audience. There is now a *Theatre of Debate* theatre company.

Playback theatre: This must be one of the most fascinating uses of drama. In the mid-1970s not far from New York, educators Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas, conversant with the work of Freire and Boal, invented it. They wanted it 'to be a place where everyone could tell their story and be heard.' A small group of visiting actors, along with a musician and a 'conductor' to guide the session, hears the story of one audience member. It can take place in a school or any other venue. The group then acts the story out. It's a powerful, moving chance to see your life or someone else's played out in front of you. Students would be free to contribute their story involving parenting and their childhood. As Penny Sharland has said, 'Everyone's story is affirmed as unique and worth telling.'

The importance of play: Try an experiential session about the importance and sensations of play and the cheap or free materials which can be used: big cardboard boxes, home-made play dough of many colours and textures, wooden spoons and saucepans. Students who missed out on play can pretend to be little kids and make up for it.

Debriefing: The lesson might have included sensitive/upsetting material, evoking painful feelings. Ensure you always leave time for a closing circle for students to express, if they wish, how they feel and for you to discern if any seem to need individual support that day. It's helpful if a student reveals, for example, that the role-play about emotional neglect brings up personal memories or applies to a sibling. Others might say nothing but feel relieved they're not the only one. Often people don't realise that they're not alone in having had specific bad experiences.

Other drama settings: Secondary students can opt for a rather academic GCSE or 'A' level in it, sometimes via a distinct drama department. At primary level: drama is part of English curriculum.

Wales: Since 1998 the Welsh Assembly has been in control of education and arts funding; it believes in creative learning. TIE and other travelling drama companies have been funded to offer services in schools throughout Wales.

Teacher training

Child drama helps the teacher to become a friendly and sensitive person. It can move him emotionally. Peter Slade

Last but not least, trainee teachers could find that learning to include methods like improvisation and role-play in their chosen subject can make their professional lives richer, creative, an exciting contrast to safe, scripted, rigid lesson plans, even if some might find that scary. (Medical students have been taught empathy through drama. 'Drama is life with the dull bits cut out' (Hitchcock.) They'd do well to realise students learn better that way than by traditional methods. Drama could have a well-deserved place within many subjects. It's no longer a compulsory subject in the secondary school national curriculum. As David Farmer told me, 'It's government policy to reduce the impact of the arts.'

Part Four

Who is doing what in US secondary schools

Virtual Babies in US Secondary Schools

Profitability alone does not define our success. We measure our impact by how many lives are changed in positive ways and how profoundly they are changed as a result of our efforts. RealCare

One of the most effective ways to teach parenthood is probably the use of life-like baby dolls. It's delicious to learn of their origins. Rick Jurmain from San Diego had been an aerospace engineer working on space shuttles. In 1972 he became unemployed and anxious to make some cash. His wife Mary had been laid off work. They were exhausted, in debt with a new baby and a four-year-old who'd left them sleepless for his first year. They happened to watch a TV sex education program showing teenagers carrying around eggs and bags of flour. 'But bags of flour don't wake people at night,' he told the New York Times (1994.) 'So then my wife said, "So make one that does".' So he did. He read a book on electronics. In the garage he and his son inserted electronic parts in circuit boards, soldered them in a frying pan, and hired sculptors to make head and body moulds. He and a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher in Wisconsin, developed ways to use these dolls. They called it *Baby Think It Over*. Mary became CEO, appearing on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

The only way to get the doll to stop crying was to hold a key in its back for 20 minutes, the average time it takes to feed a newborn baby. The idea of the dolls caught on nationally at schools and health clinics. Rick contracted the work out and patented it. Despite his interest in preventing teenage pregnancy, he admitted that altruism didn't come into it. 'I was desperate to find a way to feed my family.' Each doll cost \$220 and he had 10,000 orders. 'The doll doesn't teach values,' he said, 'it teaches sleeplessness which is a compelling rationale for not getting pregnant.' Schools mostly used the eight-pound dolls in home economics or personal development classes. Teachers were surprised that students

returned them so promptly ‘since they aren’t usually on time for anything.’ The punctuality was due to the intrusion into their personal lives and the frequent night waking.

I wish that every teenager could spend a few nights with Baby Think it Over because this is the closest thing we can come to giving someone a real child.

Barbara Hillman, Madison High School

RealityWorks (‘Live It Learn It’), an employee-owned company in Wisconsin, took over Rick’s business. The dolls, RealCare Baby, are now sold to about 90 countries. Some of the largest markets are Australia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Germany, Mexico, Taiwan and the UK. Since 1995, two-thirds of the US school districts have used them. One of the company’s specialities is providing resources for hands-on experience of virtual pregnancy and parenting, aiming to show teenagers very vividly the full-time commitment of parenthood. There are four types of virtual babies, much more realistic (but much dearer) than flour babies. The *RealityWorks* website’s 30-minute video explains the use of the dolls in detail. You can buy a healthy male or female doll in various skin colours; a drug-affected doll; one with fetal alcohol syndrome; a premature baby; a choking one; and one to show the effects of shaken baby syndrome. There’s a highly sophisticated method of programming the doll to cry and assess how well the students do on several counts while they take them home overnight. The doll, like a real baby, deprives teenagers of sleep, disrupts their social life and attracts disapproving looks in public.

A 50-page Guide shows you how to organise it. You can buy strap-on items to give male and female students the experience, as far as possible, of what it’s like to be heavily pregnant. e.g. there is a rib constrictor belt that promotes shallow breathing. Students are told about a bladder weighing 25 pounds in late pregnancy. And there are car seats, blankets and bags to buy.

RealityWorks introduced a 'pregnancy profile' suit that gives wearers a sense of third-trimester burden. I tried on the \$375 apparatus. Hard plastic balls dug into my ribs to mimic fetal limbs. A warm weight pressed on my bladder making me have to pee. And when I bent over to pick up a pen from the floor, the 30-pound belly almost tipped me over. Esme Deprez 2016

RealityWorks provides curricula to help you teach:

- Basic Infant Care for childcare career skills
- Healthy Choices: relationships, sexuality and family planning; pregnancy prevention;
- Parenting: A Guide to Parenting Skills for Life: parenting and child development 0 – 3 years.

Infant care and development in the womb are covered, plus Sudden Infant Death, common ailments, demands on money and time. Students learn the life-altering consequences of parenthood. The company is welcoming, eager to help; its blog is regularly updated; you can join their email list; watch videos; link up on Facebook; contact them with questions. We related in chapter seven how a London school has used these dolls. There seems no evidence that students who've used them and learnt about the possible dire consequences of, for instance, drugs, alcohol and shaking become better parents, because as far as we know, no one's done a longitudinal randomised controlled study, once the students have had a baby, but common sense suggests that it would be surprising if at least some students won't be better parents in at least some ways, unlikely to forget the great impact of their experience while at school. Whether or not it leads them to delay having their first baby is discussed in chapter 29.

Chapter Fourteen

Educating Communities for Parenting (ECP) 1976

By using the healthy parent-child relationship as the role model for all relationships, the mission of Educating Communities for Parenting is to provide parenting education and youth development programs that cultivate independence and responsibility in young people and families, break the cycle of child abuse and neglect, and build stronger communities. ECP

ECP was founded by the remarkable early years' teacher Sally Scattergood who recognized that providing parenting education would have a lasting impact on generations of future families. Thousands of teachers, parents, children and youth have benefited. It reaches out to youth and parents from a wide cross-section of socio-economic backgrounds and life situations throughout Greater Philadelphia with its four programs.

1 Power to Parent for pregnant and parenting teens and young adults. Fifty participate a year, e.g. in schools and shelters.

2 ECPconnect takes students who've completed Power to Parent and are able to act as peer supporters and advocates to pregnant and parenting teens. ECPconnect also gives ongoing one-to-one support of various kinds to graduates of the program.

3 Empowerment Zone reaches parenting/non-parenting youth, substance abusers, youth leaving foster care, parents who've been homeless, those in youth custody, and women in recovery.

4 Babywatch. School students observe a parent and baby for one year. They observe, ask questions and predict changes in the baby's development. A teacher said, 'ECP is not just a program that principals and teachers should want in their classrooms but rather one they need in their classrooms. The program is so well integrated with real world situations and problem-solving that it is a program no school should be without.'

Chapter Fifteen

p.a.p.a (Parenting and Paternity Awareness) 1988

Almost all the current textbooks on this subject [teaching parenthood] are remarkably weak and without a clue regarding the importance or even the meaning of the fatherhood idea. What do we wish to tell a 15-year-old boy about what a good society expects of fathers? David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting our most urgent social problem*

The outstanding feature of p.a.p.a, a program in Texas, was its universality. 'It is now a mandatory component of the state's health curriculum, the first large-scale effort in any US state to educate students on parental responsibilities using child support and paternity as its basis,' it wrote. It differed from other programs in its emphasis (amongst much else) on the benefits of legal paternity and fathers' financial responsibilities, married or not. It encouraged youngsters to complete their education, start a career and have a committed relationship before having children.

Texas's very high rate of teen pregnancies, mostly outside of marriage, costs taxpayers \$1b. a year. Most Texan children spend little of their childhood living with both parents. An extreme situation led to attempts at a solution. The 80th Legislature HB2176 directed the State Board of Education to work with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG, 2008-9) to develop a parenting and paternity awareness program that schools '*must* use in the high school health curriculum.' (My italics) This was passed by a huge majority. So the Child Support Division of the Texas OAG developed and used several innovative projects to reach youngsters before pregnancy occurred. The leading example was p.a.p.a., established back in 1988. The 14 p.a.p.a. one-hour sessions covered the importance of fathers' involvement, the value of establishing paternity if parents are unmarried, legal realities of child support, financial and emotional challenges of single parenthood, the lifetime commitment, benefits of both parents' involvement in a child's life, healthy relationship skills, and preventing of violent relationships. Students were asked: 'Did your parents raise you differently from how they were parented?'

Becoming a parent is more than giving birth. It impacts on all areas of your life and is a life-time commitment. p.a.p.a. worker

Teaching methods were interactive in order to engage students: group activities, handouts, workbook exercises (in class or as homework), flash cards, voluntary research assignments, and material introspective exercises relevant to students' lives. Its short video shows young black and white men and women who were teen parents, talking about the 'nitty gritty': realities, telling one's parents, childbirth, parenting costs, restrictions of one's life, the role and legal position of fathers. Free monthly training for teachers, school counsellors, school nurses, teen parent program staff and parent educators in the community is still offered. It's been compulsory for health education teachers to receive it.

The teen parents in the videos did a great job. They made me change my mind from someone who wanted to be young and pregnant to someone who thinks that I want to be able to provide for my baby. Student

p.a.p.a still seems to operate in Texas schools in very limited ways (but no longer has its own website.) The university of Texas at Austin said that the p.a.p.a curriculum is still mandatory in the health curriculum in Texas. But one problem: teaching health is no longer mandatory. So many schools don't offer p.a.p.a. as they don't offer health. And it's not strictly enforced: some schools don't offer it within health, even though they're supposed to. See: www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/child-support/programs-and-initiatives

Chapter Seventeen

Parents Under Construction (PUC) 1991

There is an unusual and fascinating history to ChildBuilders, a charity in Houston, Texas, operating since 1974, started by a group

not of professionals but of parents concerned about the lack of mental health services for young people. It was instrumental in creating some of the first residential treatment facilities for children in Houston. The focus then shifted from treatment to prevention. 'In 2010 there were 55,000 reports of child abuse and neglect in Houston alone. Without education, the cycle of dysfunctional parenting and abuse will continue to plague our communities. Our Parenting Education program can prevent this.' Its aim is to teach children, teenagers, teachers and parents about healthy decision-making skills 'proven to prevent risky behaviour and abuse' and to promote healthy social and emotional lives. It has received six awards; it's approved by the national authority, CASEL. There are staff members, a Board of Directors and an extensive Advisory Council. It organises events; the website offers detailed information for parents. Funding is from an impressive list of foundations and individual donors.

PUC is one of its programs, created in 1991, was taught to 5-to-17- year-olds, as well as to parents. Currently it teaches only in middle and high schools (12-to-17-year-olds) by a ten-lesson course, mainly in Houston. A lesson lasts 30-60 minutes. The material can be integrated into lesson plans of various subjects. Gretchen Lash, ChildBuilder's curriculum developer, told me, 'Most of our interest comes from schools who have pregnant or parenting teenagers, but we promote the program to all students.' Its trained facilitators use group discussion, role-play, interactive activities, writing, demonstrations and videos. Some UK schools have used the program for year 10 via Bounce Forward charity.

PUC emphasises the connection between the quality of parenting and children's mental health, quoting Adverse Childhood Experiences. Lessons include parenting styles (myths and realities); communication skills; non-violent conflict resolution; mental health; emotional abuse. The curriculum (in English or Spanish) increases knowledge of parenting responsibilities, demands, and

costs; details child development and infants' needs; parents' influence on development of self-esteem; building resilience; the role of humour in parenting; solving problems; getting help. It develops empathy with children and parents; enhances knowledge of mental health and an understanding of the relationship between parenting practices and the child's mental health. It offers a wide range of positive discipline techniques and teaches how to create a nurturing environment for children's wellbeing. There is homework after each lesson and an exam. See lesson details on the Childbuilders website.

Facilitators (teachers, school counsellors, nurses, volunteers) receive experiential initial and in-service training and one-to-one consultation. Mainly in Houston, PUC operates throughout Texas and the US. It's also been run in Latvia and the Virgin Isles. Benefits to teachers: students become more co-operative, the classroom more peaceful. The training is engaging, fun, professional development for teachers who get payment if they take part in evaluations. They learn to manage behaviour better. There've been no fewer than 16 independent research studies, as well as a five-year follow up. Janet Pozmantier e/m 27 3 24

Parenting skills aren't an innate instinct but rather learned behaviour based on individual parental experience & the personal process of trial and error in raising children. Although positively motivated, many parents don't know how to raise their children effectively.

Paediatricians ... Rivara & David Farrington 1995

Family and Consumer Science (FACS) courses

Why do we require training and a license to drive a car but have so little regard for preparing students to be parents, workers or family and community members? These skills are not innate and should be taught K-12 [ages 5 – 18]. Life is the final exam! Marilyn Swierk, Vice President, US Association of Family & Consumer Sciences

In 1909, Ellen Swallow Richards founded the American Home Economics Association. FACS is its new name. It addresses the four basic human needs: safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. The syllabus includes parenting, childcare, child development and other subjects to prepare middle and high school students for family life, work and related careers. Some teachers have used the programs *Baby Think it Over* and *Dads Make a Difference*. In 2008, ‘these teachers ‘were and are the backbone of parenthood courses but some of their positions are threatened by the emphasis on reading and maths,’ says Dr McDermott. As a result, parenting education has sometimes been reduced to ‘brief coverage in a physical education class.’ Marilyn Swierk has been central to setting standards and training FACS teachers in parenthood education. Here are condensed versions of three lesson plans from her book *Parenting Rewards and Responsibilities: Parent and Home Involvement*. They appear among the treasure trove material on Prepare Tomorrow’s Parents’ website.

1 Understanding Emotions

Helping young people understand and talk clearly about their emotions now will increase their understanding of themselves and others, including their own children, in the future. Keep this chart for your whole family for a week, or assign your students or youth group to do this activity at home with their own families.

- Create a Family Emotions Chart to post on the wall or fridge with seven columns listing each day of the week and at least eight to ten rows that list a variety of emotions on the left. Solicit young people's suggestions of which emotions to list;
- Assign a different color crayon/marker to each family member
- At the end of each day, have each family member mark a big colored dot next to the emotion that best describes how he/she felt that day. If necessary, mark more than one emotion;
- At the week's end, family members connect their dots with their crayon color;
- Review the week's chart as a family. Discuss what you see. Was this a typical week? Which weekdays felt best or worst? Did the weather affect people's moods? Which family members had similar feelings, which had different feelings and why? Whose moods were even, whose varied? Does seeing the chart help your children understand themselves and their family better?
- Bring the charts in to school or a group meeting to share and discuss as a class, and discover the many emotions other children and adults have every week!

2 Making Parenting Decisions

Parents make countless important decisions every day. Help young people develop the skills they'll need to make wise decisions by practising these decision-making processes:

- First, make up a few decision-making scenarios. Examples: 'Carol would like to have a baby, but suspects her husband is becoming an alcoholic. What should she do?' or 'Children in the neighborhood are picking on Bill and Carla's son. Bill and Carla want to help him. What should they do?' Let your family, class or group choose one or two scenarios to explore;
- Use the six steps of the decision-making process to work together to find a resolution to the scenario. Be sure everyone contributes his or her ideas to the process. If necessary, write responses on separate sheets of paper first.

The Decision-Making Process

- Identify the exact decision to be made;
- List all the options;
- Create a two-column chart to list the pros and cons of each option;
- Consider your values. What's important to you and your family?
- Make a decision and take action;
- Evaluate the results of your decision and take responsibility for the consequences.

3 Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS)

As a class, group or family, find out as much as you can about SBS. Take action to prevent it in your community:

- Have your children, students or youth group use internet, library, calls to social service agencies and paediatricians to research what SBS is, how often it occurs, and why it happens;
- Discuss reasons why people might shake their babies, how the problem can be prevented, and where parents can go to get help. Discuss what your children or students can and should do if they suspect someone is abusing their child;
- Talk about why babies cry, and ways to soothe a crying baby;
- Work with your family, class or group to help prevent this problem locally by raising people's awareness of SBS. Actions to take together might include creating and handing out flyers outside grocery stores or malls, creating and hanging posters around the community, writing a letter to the editor of the local paper, and writing an article for the high school paper.

Only about 25 percent of students take FACS courses.

Child Development Education (CCCDE) 1997

We hope to facilitate a cultural shift, in which concern for children's development and social practices that protect and support healthy children, becomes a central part of public awareness and public policy. With the break-up of the American family and the absence of extended family and community support, children fall deeper and deeper between the cracks. The result is a deeply wounded society that is amplifying the cry for help. It is too late by the time people end up in jail. CCCDE

As well as campaigning, this Coalition has developed and delivered a detailed, interesting curriculum for middle and high schools (12-to-17-year-olds.) They started with an 'informal mock run' within a chemistry class, then ran five years of pilots at two high schools (Killingly and Woodstock.) Sadly, the pilots could be run only with students who'd already chosen a child development course, but the Coalition had to go with the art of the possible.

Its entire seven-module curriculum is too long to include here but very well worth a good look on its website which includes Powerpoint slides. There's a short course of 'essentials' which can fit into existing health or science courses if a full course is not possible, though the Coalition advocates a full course at high school in child development taught by a Family and Consumer Science teacher. Otherwise there is an advanced course within a social-emotional learning program teaching health education, empathy, social skills, emotional regulation, psychology and so on.

They suggest this pattern. For nine weeks, students study child development during the first two days of the week, then work in teams during the next two days on a project together, observing and discussing a parent and child, or children in a class, or in a natural setting. The last day would include student teams reporting on their projects and class discussion. This pattern can be varied, depending on the teacher's style and the requirements of the

students. Or it could take place for only 45 minutes once a week for a short time, or for a whole school year.

‘This course cannot be taught without live modelling,’ they hold, such as regular observation of parent and infant. Not every school has a nursery attached where students can observe or get involved. A teacher at Woodstock got round this. ‘We have to expose students to children in other ways. In all the child-related classes, we have guest speakers come in weekly or even twice a week with their child(ren). Sometimes it’s a pregnant woman. My students get to ask questions of both the parent(s) and the child if it is old enough, and play games with the child. We often have a craft or fun activity prepared to do with the children while the parent talks. In two of our four courses we also have internships scheduled on a rotating basis. Once a week students and teacher go on a bus during class to either the local daycare, the elementary school or the middle school to get exposure to kids of a variety of age groups.’ And at Killingly school, its daycare centre had a one-way screen in the teenagers’ classroom. ‘This is the optimal set up,’ writes Dr Robert Margolies, a psychologist who has been deeply involved in the Coalition for many years.

Not designed as a parenting course as such, the Coalition’s course gives students information about children and child development, mental health, parenting skills and how under-fives are best nurtured, drawing on the burgeoning amounts of scientific understanding. It sees relationship skills as the basis of good decision-making in, for example, selecting a non-abusive partner.

The course is an ‘add-on’ so that schools can insert modules into existing lessons. Teachers can choose what to include, omit or expand. The whole curriculum would take nine weeks or longer. (CASEL, the Collaboration for Social-Emotional Learning, states that 20 sessions are enough for ‘thoroughness and retention,’ but for how long is the input retained? Until parenthood?)

The course can be used online by students outside of class, so that classroom time can be spent on group discussion and presentations. The Coalition aims for students to be active learners (probably more applicable to the more able.) ‘We have designed the course to be more than a content mastery exercise. We rely on students to explore, observe, find information, assess what’s useful and relevant, collaborate with peers and teacher, conduct analyses through critical thinking, and communicate their findings in written, oral, digital or artistic expression.’

In addition to the simply and clearly laid-out curriculum, there are excellent PowerPoint presentations for all seven modules with pictures and videos. You can download everything for free from their website: ct-coalition-for-child-development-education.org
Here are the objectives of the seven stand-alone modules:

1 Humans and the human family are special

Students will:

- Describe the effects of life events during childhood on an individual’s physical and emotional development;
- Explain the role of adult nurturing on the growth and development of children;
- Explain the role of support systems in meeting the growth and developmental needs of children;
- Explain potential consequences of parenting practices for the individual, family and society;
- Analyse common practices and emerging research about discipline on human growth and development;
- Determine the possible impacts of abuse and neglect on children and families and describe methods of prevention.

2 How your life began: what happens before and after birth Students will:

- Explore and be able to describe prenatal development;
- Appreciate that genetic and environmental influences interact from conception onwards to shape a person. The uterus is the unborn child's environment;
- Be able to discuss the effects of prenatal exposure to toxins including alcohol, tobacco and other substances of abuse;
- Appreciate that physical health, mental health and quality of life of a pregnant woman impacts her unborn child;
- Explore birth and birth complications.

3 Your first year: A look at infant development

Students will:

- Explore physical development in the first year;
- Understand how to keep an infant safe from common hazards;
- Explore preventive health and vaccination of infants;;
- Explore cognitive development in the first year
- Be able to define temperament and discuss the role of infant temperament in shaping relationships with caregivers;
- Appreciate the importance of the first year of life to emotional development;
- Define 'trust' and 'attachment';
- Explore how an infant begins to learn to love;
- Appreciate the special role fathers play in the lives of infants.

4 A look at toddler development Students will:

- Explore physical development in the toddler period;
- Understand how to keep a toddler safe from common hazards;
- Explore preventive health and vaccination of toddlers;
- Explore cognitive development in the toddler period;
- Appreciate the importance of the infant/toddler years for emotional development;
- Define self-regulation; understand concepts related to the self;

- Explore how toddlers develop competency;
- Appreciate the special role fathers play in the lives of toddlers.

5 Pre-school care Students will:

- Explore physical development in the preschool period;
- Explore language and cognitive development in the preschool period;
- Explore the role of play in development;
- Appreciate the importance of the preschool years to conscience development;
- Define self-concept, gender identity and self-esteem - concepts related to the self;
- Explore what it means to be ready for school;
- Appreciate the special role fathers play in preschoolers' lives.

6 When will you be ready for parenting? Students will:

- Explore adolescent and early adult development;
- Explore the role of parents in greater detail;
- Consider healthy dating relationships and the importance of choosing the right partner

7 Working together for child safety and child-centered careers Students will:

- Examine the complementary roles of parents, schools, and community organizations in keeping children safe and healthy;
- Explore the prevalence and causes of child maltreatment;
- Explore the hardships children face around the world;
- Consider the issue of children's rights;
- Explore careers that involve working with children.

The Coalition invites contributions and feedback from curriculum users, welcoming views of students who participated.

The need for child development education for all students

This paper was prepared by the CCCDE for an international conference on infant mental health, Australia, June 2021: a useful summary of the case. ‘The Coalition aims to make sure all future parents have the skills and knowledge to ensure all children reach their full potential. Its mission: To embed child development education in schools’ K-12 curriculum, and other community settings to promote the health, safety and learning of all children.

Why child development education is needed in schools

- A society in which parenting is a valued occupation undertaken by prepared adults will help assure children are well-nurtured, emotionally healthy and capable of reaching their full potential.
- Early experiences impact a child’s brain, impacting life-long potential for learning, relationships, mental and physical health.
- The years from birth to school age are the most important for developing the psychological stability and the empathy and social, intellectual and emotional skills that a child needs to succeed in school and in life, but many parents do not know good ways of doing this because they have never been taught.
- Although some children are getting some of the social, emotional and intellectual guidance they need from trained teachers in pre-schools, only about 25 percent of our children are in pre-school. Consequently this vital education is not reaching most of the children in our state;
- Even if we establish universal pre-school in this state, children still will spend the majority of their time with their parents;
- Empathy and nurturing skills can be taught;
- Young people who have empathy and nurturing skills are less violent and less likely to become abusive parents;

- Knowledge of child development, children's needs and effective parenting lays the groundwork for better intellectual and mental health in future generations;
- Teaching all young people about child safety, child development and the needs of pre-school children can help prevent child abuse and neglect;
- Understanding the responsibilities of raising a child encourages teens to postpone undertaking this demanding role;
- Social and emotional literacy improves learning by creating caring classroom environments;
- A child development/parenting education program in schools that reaches all children is the only way we can reach all potential parents.

Why this is important

- 80 percent of all Americans become parents. It's the most important job in the world and comes with no training;
- There are about 1.8 million reports of child abuse a year in the US: about 1,300 children a year die from child abuse (National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect information 2004);
- Most people don't take a parenting course after they become parents (surveys range from 5 to 30 percent who do.) How will they know all that research has found about the best ways of providing for children's emotional, social, intellectual, physical needs from birth to adolescence if it's not taught in schools?
- Although an elective child development course is taught in most high schools, only about eight percent of students in our state take it, according to a survey done a few years ago by psychologist Bob Margolies;
- One-third of America's children live in homes without their fathers; two out of five of these haven't seen their father in more than a year. A 25-year study found that young men who grew up in homes without fathers are twice as likely to be arrested and imprisoned. They also have higher rates of teen suicide, substance abuse and neglect, and running away from home

(Preparing Tomorrow's Parents Today 2001.) Every young man in our country needs to be taught this and taught that his responsibilities, if he fathers a child, include much more than financial support of the child.

Core competences in child development

- The responsibilities of parenthood;
- How to keep children safe (e.g. knowing that shaking a baby can cause brain damage and death; childproofing a house; the danger of leaving a baby alone in a tub etc.);
- The importance of nurturing, loving care in infancy, cuddling babies, responding promptly and adequately to their needs; research shows lack of this care can cause severe emotional problems, even sociopathic behavior in children and later life;
- Good ways of guiding children's behavior other than spanking (time outs; withdrawal of privileges; distraction for two-to-three-year-olds; delayed gratification; rewards for good behavior; natural consequences; logical consequences etc.);
- Child abuse, including emotional abuse: what it is, why it occurs and how it can damage children;
- How to communicate effectively with children;
- Stages of child development; what a child can and can't be expected to do at different stages;
- The impact of parental divorce and separation on children; how to handle these situations to minimise impact on the child;
- How and when to teach a child such key social and emotional skills as: responsibility; respect; empathy; good manners; handling his emotions; self-control etc;
- The importance of fathers to a child's wellbeing, success and sense of identity.

US States requiring child development, parenting, or family life education

This information might be incomplete and out of date, but at least shows what has been done:

- **Alabama:** Statutes mandate that students in Grades 7-12 receive instruction in parental responsibilities. Content is included in existing required courses.
- **Florida:** Life skills concepts are found throughout curriculum. In high school, Family Living is a required half-credit course.
- **Mississippi:** Requires that all school districts offer coursework in responsible parenting and family living skills. High school course is called Family Dynamics taught by FACS teachers.
- **New Jersey:** There is a mandate for New Jersey's Family Life Education program for Grades K-12. Teachers certified in biology/FACS/social studies/health/physical education may teach courses with family life education content
- **New York:** Implemented a new state parenting education requirement for high school graduation several years ago.
- **Tennessee:** Has a mandated family life education class K-12
- **Virginia:** Has a required family life education course. Also offers parenting course, but not required for all students.

Some states where child development/parenting programs are or were formerly in use in schools

1 Connecticut: Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education.

2 Hawaii, New York, Oakland, Oregon, Washington, Washington DC: Roots of Empathy (as of 2024.)

3 Pennsylvania/ New York: Educating Children for Parenting.

4 Texas and other US states: Parents Under Construction.

5 Texas: p.a.p.a.

6 Thirty-eight US states: Educate Tomorrow's Parents.

7 Two-thirds of school districts: Realcare Baby program.

8 Wallingford, Connecticut: FACS: Basic parenting/child development information is presented to all middle school students at no extra cost by utilising the middle school family and consumer science program. FACS teachers, who have training in child development, are already there. The FACS program is required in many middle schools.

All sixth-graders have ten classes in which they learn about child safety, the responsibilities of parenting, and activities to do with children. All seventh-graders have ten classes in which they learn about good ways of communicating with children, good ways of managing children at different age levels, and more about responsibilities of parenting, the danger of shaking a baby, what to do if a baby cries etc.

In eighth-grade, there is a quarter-year of parenting education/child development instruction: more detail is given and students learn about the social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of children and how to satisfy them at various ages. However, students have a choice of subjects in this grade; only about 25 percent take the eighth-grade parenting/child development classes.

Ideal Child Development/Parenting Program

Child development taught through the K-12 system:

- In early primary grades, a mother visits with infant each month. Children see how mother deals with the child, learn why babies cry, see how mother responds to its crying, comforts/nurtures it, see how baby develops and new things it can do each month;
- In later primary grades, they can learn appropriate ways to respond to a baby's crying, build trust between parent and child, promote self-esteem and learn some positive communication skills and positive discipline techniques;
- Middle school: parents' responsibilities, needs of children, good ways of communication with children, information on child abuse: what it is, occurs why it occurs, how it affects a child;
- High school: parenting and child development from pregnancy to age five; include a nursery school component in which

students actually interact with children and learn how to communicate with them and guide their behavior.

Research in chronological order, showing that child development/parenting education in schools works

- Joan Gritzmacher et al (1981) found significant positive impact on child development and parenting knowledge and attitudes among secondary students in programs in five states.
- Jacy Showers & Charles Johnson (Ohio 1985): Child development, child health and childrearing knowledge among urban adolescents: are they adequately prepared for challenges of parenthood? The study concludes there's a need to assist adolescents/young adults to acquire the knowledge and skills.
- Luster & Yonatt (1989) Michigan State university: Assessed whether there were benefits to students who took parenting education. They found these students were more knowledgeable about child development than the control students; less likely to believe infants are spoilt by responsive and affectionate care; more likely to emphasise the importance of talking/reading to children; more likely to believe infants should be given considerable leeway in exploring the home environment; less likely to be authoritarian in their parenting';
- L O'Connor *Education for Parenthood and the National Curriculum* (1990): Addresses parenthood education as 'a neglected, low status area of curricula, despite a professed belief in the family as a stabilising influence on society.' Makes recommendations;
- C Tyree et al (Atlanta 1991): Restructuring school curriculum to include parenting education. Gives overwhelming support for parenting education programs in the school curriculum.
- James Gaudin, *Child Neglect: A guide for intervention* (1993): Concludes schools are in a key position to offer preparation for parenting from kindergarten onwards. Available online.
- Hope and Sharland (UK 1997): When parenthood education is delivered well in school, there is a measurable positive impact on students' knowledge, skills and understanding.

- N D Reppucci et al. *Preventing child abuse and neglect through parent education* (Baltimore 1997): Explains the ideology behind parenting education classes for youth directed towards preventing later child maltreatment.
- Joan Barbuto *The need for mandatory parenting education in high schools* 1995, available on PTP website.
- Kyle Pruett: *Fatherneed: Why father care is as essential as mother care for your child* (2000): Draws over two decades of research at Yale Child Study Center to offer a groundbreaking understanding of the father's role in child and adult development, making clear that children need both parents, for different reasons.
- *What Grown Ups Understand about Child Development: A national benchmark survey* (2000.) This survey measured the level of knowledge Americans have about child development and found significant gaps in knowledge. www.zerotothree.org 'Early connections last a lifetime.'
- Dana McDermott (2001): *Rationale supporting parenting education in schools*.

Educate Tomorrow's Parents (ETP) 2005

I became haunted by all the children aching for love and praying for their parents to change. Randi Rubenstein, Founder

Educate Tomorrow's Parents is another project started through personal experience. Randi Rubenstein worked in health research and education for 30 years and has an MA in Public Health. But it was her experience of fostering ten children that motivated her to start this program. Fostering was challenging, but the compulsory parenting classes were surprisingly useful. 'My discovery of this valuable information illuminated a serious gap in the way we prepare people for parenting. Doesn't everyone who becomes a parent need to know how to provide for and protect a child? Why aren't we taught before we have children?' A good question: one-fifth of US children have experienced two or more ACEs.

So she created the *Healthy Foundations for Future Families* program (2005), piloting it in schools and finding that teachers, students and parents were receptive. This led to the birth of Education for Successful Parenting, later changing its name to Educate Tomorrow's Parents (ETP), begun in Orange County, California now thriving from its headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina. As a non-profit organisation with a board of directors, it could attract grants and donations, making it affordable for the schools and students who were seen to need it most. (In the US they call the equivalent of charities 'non-profits' which are still considered a business or corporation. The 'ownership' is different; a non-profit is owned by the public for public-benefit, not for private-gain. In most other respects, it functions as a business.)

ETP's mission is prevention: to improve children's wellbeing by preparing teenagers for parenting before they conceive the next generation. It offers an innovative curriculum and group instruction for young adults, educators, parents and professionals

and ‘envision[s] a world in which all children can reach their full potential, and adverse childhood experiences are eliminated.’

It is vital that students grasp the basic concept of parenting as a decades-long endeavor, with life-long impacts. Randi

Its core curriculum, *Healthy Foundations for Future Families*, educates 13-to-21-year-olds about the responsibilities of parenting. It is mainly implemented in public high school health education classes, a US course that’s generally mandatory. It’s been used with young people up to 21 who are fostered; social workers have bought the materials to use with parents. It meets national Essential Standards for Health Education and Family and Consumer Science courses. ETP now works in 38 US states.

Instead of preaching what not to do, ETP invites teens to apply their newfound knowledge to shape and fulfil their life goals. Randi

This curriculum is research-based, factual and drawn from multiple disciplines. Students learn the many factors affecting children’s health and wellbeing with the aim of improved knowledge, attitudes and behavior of teenagers so they can make informed and healthy choices before having children and be better able to care for them. All cultural and religious values and socio-economic backgrounds are respected. ETP is accessible for students of all levels, including those with learning difficulties. It draws inspiration from studies on the prevention of the maltreatment of children. ETP wants to help reduce stress factors (poverty, poor health, lack of social support) by guiding teenagers to set goals, make good choices, resolve ambivalence, and become conscious of how they might move to or away from their goals.

ETP teaches about children’s needs and development. It makes them aware how to cope by looking at problem-solving skills which they might not have learnt from their own families. It

focuses on strengths rather than weaknesses: how to create a personal, positive vision of their goals for parenthood. It aims to be fully inclusive, engaging both males and females. Students with limited literacy can answer the workbook questions by speaking or drawing, or have the questions read to them if they are too embarrassed to ask for help. Advanced students can be given supplements to the workbook, involving research/ presentations.

Healthy, achievable parenting goals are based on what parents will do for and with their children, not on what children will do or be for the parent.

During the interactive program, each student completes the centerpiece of ETP: a personalized *My Life-Plan for Parenting* (a 28-page workbook) as they learn about children's needs. PowerPoint slides provide current scientific facts and statistics, props, discussion, videos, role-plays and activities. For instructors and parents, ETP offers the *My Life-Plan for Parenting: Discussion Guide* (200-pages) with lesson plans, examples of teenagers' completed workbook pages, references and a description of ETP's methodology and what they call 'the logic model' – a visual diagram of how ETP leads to good outcomes, prepared parents and healthier children. The new *Instructor's Kit* includes slides, props, videos and much else. They offer onsite training for schools and organisations, and a program for parents and carers of teenagers, *Generation to Generation*, (full details on the website.)

The contents page of *My Life-Plan for Parenting* workbook makes useful reading:

The dream of a family

Importance

Priorities; parenting in my life plan; my childhood;

Purpose

Reasons for having a child; feelings about not raising one;

Goals: for me as a parent; for my child; for my family; creating my personal plan;

Forming a Family

Relationships: who do you love? family relationships and children; planning for the unplanned;

Timing and health: planning and preparing ahead;

Meeting a Child's Needs

Provide: my financial plan; time and money considerations;

Protect;

Nurture;

Managing a Family

Child management: what's in my parenting toolkit? applying my skills

Life management: resources; applying my skills;

My parenting pledge: Students have written: *I promise to take care of you and never let you cry yourself to sleep like me / I will be the best father ever, just wait!*

As an example from the workbook, this exercise prompts teenagers to reflect and plan:

My childhood: what I know about parenting so far (list three things for each of these):

- a) Things I experienced that I want to do the *same* for my child
- b) Things I experienced that I want to do *differently* for my child.

Child development material is translated into 'plain speak': students are inspired and motivated to try new skills with true stories and case studies. Both males and females are engaged, reinforcing the role of fathers. When ETP has the chance to deliver a longer course, maybe over one semester (half-a-year), it has time also to make use of poems, lyrics, and cartoons.

Classroom management is a breeze because the lessons are fun, interactive and meaningful. Randi

To make it flexible, and to accommodate those with limited time and specific needs, the curriculum is designed in modules with distinct topics. ‘Specific needs’ include those of fostered youth, teenage parents or children of migrant farmers. Components can be used separately or together. For instance, some groups use only the workbook. The program can last between three and thirty hours. Topics include goals, healthy relationships, perils of teenage parenting, preconception/pre-natal health including the risks of pre-natal alcohol and drugs, fatherhood, absent fathers, prevention of child abuse and neglect, and positive parenting techniques. Instructors choose the topics and components according to the needs and interests of the students.

The program encourages self-sufficiency, strong family structure, social health, physical and mental health, awareness of parenting and child development. It covers parents’ responsibility for pre-conception and ante-natal health, anticipating and meeting children’s post-natal needs along the lines of Maslow’s hierarchy: the need for physical health, safety, belonging, self-esteem. Teenagers become aware of the needs for social network support to strengthen their future families and of the harm to the fetus from smoking and alcohol. It includes all factors representing adverse childhood experiences with their life-long consequences.

ETP is trauma-informed, teaching how maltreatment of infants has long-term consequences. Instructors are expected to interact with students in sensitive ways, recognising that the material can trigger painful memories. ‘When a student appears to be “misbehaving,” we don’t first treat it like a discipline problem. We find out what the student is experiencing, what they might need. Most of the time we find a student has become animated because he can relate to a topic and just wants to discuss it with a classmate. In that case we let them continue their conversation. If things get too disruptive, we explore solutions that can help them de-stress, allowing them to move about the room or leave the room if

needed. We always approach them with compassion. It's important to make students feel safe during these lessons. The program is non-judgmental and compassionate about the challenges of parenting. Most students love their parents deeply. Seeming to criticise parents' behaviour, such as beating or withholding food, could heighten their anxiety.' Instead, using scientific research, they focus on characteristics of strong families, healthy behaviour and relationships, and positive parenting.'

Randi writes: 'If we had treated disruptive behaviours as discipline issues rather than being trauma-sensitive, we would have missed the opportunity to hear the students' stories. And these students would have missed the opportunity to have their experiences validated and honored. Ironically, they would have been side-lined and dismissed, even though these teens need our information about healthy families perhaps more than anyone else in class.'

Randi gives a vivid example, showing the need to treat students' behaviour with curiosity and understanding rather than disciplinary attitudes. 'In one class, a young man was repeatedly talking loudly with his friends next to him. After several requests for him to speak more softly, we respectfully asked if we could move him to another location in the class. He agreed. After class, we talked with him and found he was very excited because he could relate to everything being discussed. His mother was his age (14) when she became pregnant. Because she couldn't care for him, he was raised by his grandparents. He was happy we were talking with his class about situations like his to help other teens make better decisions. He has ADHD, which made it difficult for him to control his behavior when he became excited. I was so glad we had never treated him as if he was misbehaving.'

*Many fragile families have been created impulsively
and without sufficient discussion between partners. Randi*

ETP offers four levels of service, whether you work directly with teenagers, want ETP to conduct a program, want your instructors trained how to deliver the program, or want them certified by ETP. ETP teaches 15,000 teenagers a year, in public schools, private and alternative ones, after-school programs, universities, residential probation programs, fostered youth schemes and young offenders' programs. It would passionately like to train more trainers in any country. Teaching materials are available for purchase on its website: www.eduparents.org which also warmly invites volunteers for various roles including assistant instructors. You can contact ETP if you want to learn how to run the course yourselves and can request a proposal tailored to your organisation's needs, book a guest speaker or get a free sample lesson plan by emailing info@eduparents.org. And in response to the Covid pandemic and schools shifting to online learning, ETP created online lessons with slides and fillable workbook pages, available for purchase through the *TeachersPayTeachers* website. On the website, you can access a free paper for teachers, *7 Tips for Instructing about Reproduction and Family Health*, and watch a video featuring ETP and Randi's adopted daughter Lurae.

The US has the highest rates in developed countries of teen parents, children living in poverty, fatherless families, and foster children. ETP website

Roots of Empathy and Teens and Toddlers, originated in Canada/US, operate in the UK. See their work in Part Two.

Postscript: Why the demise?

The most disappointing part of writing this book was learning of the shrinking or demise of most UK and US programs like Dads Make A Difference (DMAD.) For example, California was a rare part of the world with mandatory parenting education. The department of education provided materials and training for three curricula within its home economics, careers and technology department in Sacramento, including parenthood, to meet the state's statutory parenting education requirements. Their guide was

a three-year comprehensive life skills program, with a large section on Understanding and Caring for Children for 12-to-14-year-olds, plus a high school program. But I discovered in 2019: ‘there is currently no mandatory Parenting Education requirement in the state. We have elective courses, some meeting requirements in a Child Development or Education Pathway.’ I could find no US state which still has compulsory universal parenting education.

The reasons for this decline seem to be three-fold. I asked Jan Haynes, executive director of DMAD for many years. She puts it down to funding. In 2006 its statutory funder cut its grant severely. Jan had to replace its income from charitable sources, but this had become difficult. The recession meant that donors changed priorities: single-year grants replaced multi-year ones. Small organisations like DMAD lost out. Reliable individual donations and sale of merchandise didn’t replace major income. ‘And as our funding resource decreased, it made us less appealing to funders who wondered if we’d continue to operate and for how long.’ Seems you can’t win. They wondered about a merger, but ‘just never found a good fit.’ Jan, ‘persistent and passionate,’ battled on till 2019 to celebrate 25 years of operation before retiring and seeing the end of years of effort and success. At best, anyone anywhere can keep the flag flying by basing lessons on the DMAD model, printing the resources, training peer educators. As Jan understated, ‘Positive father involvement and parenting education remain important in today’s society.’

The recession impacted on school budgets. While DMAD offered a sliding fee or scholarships to cover training registration fees, schools still incurred costs for substitute coverage for teachers attending training, and for transport to and from the training location. These costs sometimes became a barrier to participation.

As well as the recession, Bush’s *No Child Left Behind Act 2001* (repealed in 2015) made it mandatory for every state school, if it

wanted continued federal funding, to concentrate on academic progress, maths, science, technology and English, in an effort to raise standards of deprived children through assessment and measurable goals. (Blair's UK government no doubt followed suit.) Dr Harriet Heath told me, 'With the movement of *No Child Left Behind* pushed into schools, all parenting programs were pushed out. Our work was eliminated.' And Anita Kulick wrote: 'It was and still is a disaster. Every minute of every day in every classroom, teachers are required to use approved curricula which leave little or no time for what they believe to be frivolous areas of study: art, music, social-emotional programs. Schools that had Baby Watch programs for years were told the program no longer justified the minutes taken away from academics.'

And there's the rise in Christian fundamentalism in the US. There could be anxiety: if school students learn about babies, they might go and have one; or perhaps a strong belief that the family, not the school with its politically motivated, liberal teachers, is where youngsters should learn about parenting in ways the Bible dictates and the family follows. The conservative Christian Dr James Dobson's bestseller, *Dare to Discipline* (1970), tells us that 'some strong-willed children absolutely demand to be spanked and their wishes should be granted.' Probably not a supporter of our cause!

Part Five

Work with three-to-eleven-year-olds

Preamble

I have long believed that the development of a child does not begin the day he is born – or at age three - but much earlier, during the formative years of his parents. Dr Edward Zigler, Yale

Children from the age of three or four are charmingly receptive to learning about babies, mums and dads. It's never too early to start. This is not to make children into little parents or deny their childhood. We might hope that every child learns from good personal experiences what it is like to be parented well from its very beginnings, to have happy-enough parents and a happy-enough childhood. But we know that's not the case. Given that parents are rarely captive audiences, we have little influence on how they raise their children, although we later describe projects which help those who choose. Work with children at school from a very early age to impart some understanding and empathy about babies, parents and their relationships can sow the seeds for more profound learning at school, once they become adolescents.

But it's the same old story. At every primary school we have daily access to every child from the age of five (or even four), full-time for 36 weeks a year (excepting only the tiny minority of those educated at home or not at school for reasons of health or behaviour.) What a golden opportunity to show them, by any means possible, what good parenting is like, to demonstrate throughout all seven of their primary school years the qualities needed for good parenting through the models of behaviour by every member of staff, from top to bottom of the hierarchy.

As Sally Scattergood wrote from a previous era, 'With the appropriate classroom teaching, problems such as child abuse, school drop-outs, drug and alcohol use, the single parent families can be decreased significantly. In addition, school human development programs need to be taught at a much earlier age. At present, they usually begin at the secondary level by which time many students already have dropped out, become unwed parents,

or developed debilitating emotional problems. The solution very well may lie in early intervention, before any serious damage takes place.'

There are several interesting, impressive examples of work in the UK with young children relevant to our theme. Let's start with four charities which demonstrate, by regular sessions in the classroom, the relationship of a young baby and its parent. What can be more fascinating and appealing than watching a baby? Observing a parent and baby involves studying their relationship, monitoring the development of the baby from visit to visit, and focusing on the feelings and behaviour of parent and baby. Roots of Empathy is a Canadian import. B.A.S.E®Babywatching has its origins in Germany. Understanding Each Other operated in Essex for a few years; Circles for Learning has been trialled in secondary schools as well as primary. All operate in only a small minority of British schools.

Imagine if children, starting in kindergarten or first grade, had a track on human development. Imagine what it would be like for kids to know about this the same way they know about maths. They would be not only better babysitters but when it came to being parents, they would have an intuitive sense and lots of hands-on experience.

Dr Stanley Greenspan

Chapter Twenty

Roots of Empathy (ROE) and Seeds of Empathy: 'Changing the world child by child'

As important as it is for schools to teach children to read, if they fail to teach children to relate, we can expect failed societies. Mary Gordon C.M., LL.D., D.Litt., UN World Literacy Day 2010.

Every time Roots of Empathy happens in our class, I am happy. I start to feel softer. Happier. Calm. And just joyful. All our anger. All our stress. It just goes away. Grade 7 boy

The story of ROE shows the power of a lecture and a book. What is the history of the Canadian charity Roots of Empathy? It is always instructive to discover how projects begin: who meets whom and when, who is influenced and trained by whom, how programmes travel and are honed over time. I have pieced together various pieces of information about the origins of ROE.

Visits to schools by parents and babies, later called *Baby Watch*, began in Philadelphia under the aegis of *Educating for Parenting*. *Baby Watch* arose from the work of psychoanalyst Dr Henri Parens, the early years teacher Sally Scattergood, and others.

In 1995 the American writer Dr Myriam Miedzian gave a lecture in Toronto, Canada, about the need to teach parenting and empathy to school students, and enthusiastically showed a film about *Baby Watch*. Judy Broadbent, a social worker and psychotherapist attended. She was co-founder (1982) and president of the Canadian Maytree Foundation ('Poverty*Rights*Change'.) She then read Dr Miedzian's *Boys Will Be Boys* with its compelling argument for youngsters to observe and care for infants, and told Dr Miedzian that she wanted to fund a *Baby Watch*-type programme in Canada. Dr Miedzian put Judy in touch with Sally Scattergood and colleagues. The Maytree Foundation then hired a Canadian early

years' teacher and parent educator, Mary Gordon, and sent her to Philadelphia to participate in the *Train the Trainers* course. Returning to Toronto, Mary began a similar initiative (1996) with adaptations, which later developed as the hugely successful, international, multi-award-winning, non-profit Roots of Empathy. Was the name inspired by a chapter title, *The Roots of Empathy*, in Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995)? Mary is now president of ROE.

In 1999 Mary wrote to Dr Miedzian: 'If Judy Broadbent had not heard your lecture and read your book, Roots of Empathy would not be a National Canadian program, a Japanese program or any program. Keep on writing, who knows who else you will touch.'

ROE currently operates in every Canadian province and ten other countries. You can read more in Mary's book, *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child* (2009) and by exploring the ROE website. Sadly, neither acknowledges its origins in *Educating for Parenting*, Mary implying in her book that it was she who came up with the idea, with no mention of Philadelphia or *Baby Watch*.

(Another example, deserving to be recorded for all time, of an organisation's reluctance to acknowledge the origins of its work, concerns the British charity Place2Be. The psychotherapist Camila Batmanghelidjh CBE (1963 - 2024) started a project called The Place To Be under the aegis of the Family Service Unit at a London school in 1991. Place2B's website makes no mention of her seminal role, mentioning only 'a counsellor' and naming only Benita Refson who became CEO of the Place2Be charity that she helped to set up, which developed Camila's work.)

ROE describes its goals in this way.

- To foster empathy and emotional literacy;
- To promote children's pro-social behaviour and reduce levels of bullying and aggression;

- To prepare students for responsive parenting;
- To prepare students for responsive citizenship;
- To promote students' mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

The goal of ROE: children become more competent parents, less likely to abuse their children. Every child should leave school trained in non-violent parenting and attunement with babies, with the ability to nurture babies who will grow up with empathy.

Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens, Graham Allen/Iain Duncan Smith

As of 2024, ROE operates in:

Canada 1996 (in French and English): Parts of all ten provinces (Ontario 1996, British Columbia 2000, Prince Edward Island 2000, Manitoba 2000, Newfoundland and Labrador 2001, Alberta 2002, New Brunswick 2002, Nova Scotia 2003, Quebec 2005, Saskatchewan 2011)

England 2012, supported by Big Lottery **Netherlands:** Rotterdam 2018, Groningen 2019 / **New Zealand** 2006 **Northern Ireland** 2010, supported by Public Health Trust / **Norway:** Notodden 2019 /

Republic of Ireland 2011, supported by Barnardo's / **Scotland** 2010, supported by Action for Children; Scotland also has Seeds of Empathy

Switzerland (Zurich) 2014 / **US:** Parts of several of the 50 states (Washington 2007, Oakland, New York 2011, Washington DC 2013, Hawaii 2016, Oregon 2018) / **Wales** 2012, supported by government and foundations. It has operated in the past in Australia, California, Costa Rica, Germany, Japan, Isle of Man, New Mexico / South Korea.

Mary Gordon points out: that the current focus on scholastic basics leaves little opportunity or method for fostering social and emotional learning, respect and caring or the development of empathy.' By contrast, ROE's long-term focus is 'to build the parenting capacity of the next generation of parents. In the short term, ROE focuses on raising levels of empathy. It strives to break the intergenerational transmission of poor parenting and violence.' The interesting writer Alfie Kohn writes: Empathy can be

understood as the ability to see past the label, see the human being with compassion' (*The Bright Side of Human Nature* 1990.)

The ROE program operates on a three-week cycle for five-to-13-year-olds. There are nine themes. Three visits by parent(s) and baby cover each theme. A mother or father and baby visit a whole class every three weeks for 30-to-40 minutes. There are nine visits over the year. Children sit on the floor or on chairs in a semi-circle. The baby is aged between two and four months at the first visit and lies on the green ROE-logo blanket. It is hoped that the parent will reflect the make-up of the local population and that babies with special needs will be included. Fathers are encouraged to attend (and do so in 30 percent of classes.) They talk about being a father, as well as showing how they interact with the baby.

All sessions are run by ROE volunteer Instructors. These are not class teachers but can include, for example, social workers, police, and those with early years' experience. They receive four days of experiential training with a fifth day mid-year, observe one parent and baby classroom session, are evaluated and certified after a year, and have access to free telephone and email support all year. They initially visit the participating parent at home, also phoning up before every school visit. Instructors receive support from mentors in subsequent years. There is a range of resources: a video of the programme, an audio cassette of songs and action rhymes, song sheets, infant blanket, multi-cultural children's literature, required reading, life-size doll, and infant toys (six are specified.) There are 'four large binders': three curriculum guides (639-pages, available exclusively through *Roots of Empathy*) and the 108-page *Instructor Training Manual*. The guides include suggested approaches and reproducible handouts. The manual includes the ROE philosophy, research on infant and child development and behaviour, and suggestions for integration with the curriculum. Instructors are asked to commit for at least two consecutive years. ROE also trains professionals.

The week before the visit, the Instructor prepares the children using the ROE curriculum with specified lesson plans. The week after the visit, he/she reviews what the children learnt, using the lesson plan: children reflect on the last session and are encouraged to extend their thoughts to their own lives and feelings and those of their peers. For example, if the theme is Sleep, they have already talked about the baby's sleep in the family visit. The curriculum following the family visit is for the class to discuss their own experiences with asleep, allowing students to hear what their classmates' experiences are.

The Instructor pays 27 visits to the class each year, the class teacher participating but not leading. The program links to the school curriculum: maths (weighing the baby; graphs), literacy (writing poems/stories), science, drama, art, music. Children sing the ROE welcome and goodbye songs on each visit and learn to name and recognise their own feelings and those of others. Older students learn about the demands as well as joys of parenthood. The idea is to 'develop positive parenting skills.' And it's heart-warming to read that children in military families, where a parent is often away, find ROE comforting.

The copyrighted curriculum has developmental curricula in seven languages, appropriate for four grades levels including kindergarten, primary, junior and senior classes. 'Research, statistics, stories and theories from well-known, highly respected psychologists, paediatricians, sociologists and writers are included.' Resources are adapted to each age group: 'scenarios, fact sheets, charts, visuals.' The programme suits the various learning styles: visual, kinaesthetic, auditory. 'Skills to last a lifetime' are based on learning about neuroscience ('there is no unimportant moment in a child's life'), temperament, participatory democracy, attachment, male nurturance, inclusion, infant safety, to name a few. 'The teaching around the Shaken Baby Syndrome helps students

understand the stresses of parenting and potential for child abuse.’ ROE’s experience is that school governors, head and class teacher all need to be committed for the program to work effectively. Every child and teacher is invited to evaluate the program and give feedback. Research – randomised longitudinal studies from three continents - shows that benefits can last up to at least three years after the program.

ROE has reason to feel proud. As it celebrated its 25th anniversary, it learnt it was **chosen for an award for the fourth year in a row as ‘one of the world's most impactful and inspiring innovations in education.’** *HundrEDs’* annual Global Collection gave an award due to ROE’s ‘ability to create a sustainable impact in education.’ **ROE has won this award every year since *HundrEDs’* inception, one of the few organizations to do so.** Mary herself has received many awards and gives keynote presentations internationally. ROE has worked with over 1.2 million children across four continents in multiple languages, receiving accolades from some of the world’s most respected expert such as doctors Berry Brazelton, Gabor Maté, Bruce Perry and the Dalai Lama.

ROE in the UK

ROE UK was launched in the House of Lords in 2012 and first delivered on the Isle of Man. In London, it operates (2024) in the boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Bromley, Croydon, Hillingdon, Lambeth, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Westminster.

- Doncaster, Merseyside, Newcastle, Northamptonshire, Nottingham, West Yorkshire;
- ROE in Cardiff, Wales, was launched in 2012-13 under the aegis of the charity Action for Children and operates in Caerphilly.

Due to a change in Welsh government policy, it is expected that ROE will expand in Wales;

- Action for Children partnered with ROE to become the first organisation in the world to be able to offer to deliver the programme in any school in any Scottish local authority that wishes to fund it. To date pupils across 28 of 32 local authorities in Scotland have taken part. The Scottish Government aims for Scotland ‘to be the best place in the world to grow up, and for every child to grow up safe, loved and respected’ and has ‘acknowledged the work of ROE which aims to educate the mind and heart of young people to create a more inclusive, caring environment for them to thrive in. They highlighted the significant reach of the unique programme in Scotland giving thanks to all involved.’
- ROE in Northern Ireland was launched in 2010–11, organised by all five Health and Social Care Trusts;
- ROE is extensive in the Republic of Ireland, managed by Barnardo’s in Dublin;
- Lewisham Pre-School Alliance promoted *Family Pathways* for four years with Lottery funding in partnership with 19 schools and organisations. ROE was one aspect of the programme and still runs. *Croydon Family Power* project included ROE in its three-year programme as the universal element, for all children in a class. Other elements targeted hard-to-reach families.

I met Katie Cohen, manager of ROE in England, from a small office in east London. ‘Demand is massive,’ she said, but funding’s the problem, the main reason preventing a school from having ROE. How much does ROE cost for a year? There’s no neat answer. Ideally Katie will piece together contributions from trusts, although of course they like the school to make some contribution. ROE has received money from education psychologists, police, universities, health visitors and councils.

Seeds of Empathy (SOE) 2005

We seek families who live in the community, so that they reflect the cultural, racial and linguistic tone of the neighbourhood. ROE

ROE headquarters added Seeds of Empathy for three-to-five-year-olds in early years settings. The SOE process in approving a centre to be trained to deliver the program includes a site visit and an in-depth discussion about the requirements for delivering SOE. Like ROE, it is highly organised but there are differences. Led by members of staff, not by outside personnel, it's on a three-week cycle over one school year. On weeks one and two, Literacy Coaches (centre staff trained for three days) read and discuss books on a specific theme with a small group of children to help them name and explore their feelings and the feelings of others. There are curriculum manuals: one for Literacy Coaches, one for Family Guides, both with lesson plans to deliver the curriculum and all the children's literature to go with it. On week three, a trained Family Guide hosts a half-hour family visit by a local mother, father or both, with their baby from the age of 2- 4 months. The Literary Coach, and the SOE administrator who oversees the programme, also attend. Children are encouraged to observe the baby's development, its secure attachment to its parent(s), and the parents' attunement to its needs. They learn to label the baby's feelings and talk about their own. The centre staff attend professional development workshops to build their ability to foster children's emotional literacy. As of 2024, Seeds of Empathy is running in Caerphilly in Wales.

Empathy is inversely related to anti-social, violent behaviour.

Dr Myriam Miedzian

Chapter Twenty-one

B.A.S.E®Babywatching and Watch and Wonder

I think the baby felt happy when the mum went close to her face. My eye almost watered because of that. Child

B.A.S.E.®BabyWatching has a fascinating history. In 1940 a little Jewish boy, Henri Parens, fled with his mother from Belgium to France to escape the Nazis, ending up in southern France at the Rivesaltes internment camp. Aged 12 he emigrated to the US, permanently separated from his mother who was deported in 1942 from France to Auschwitz with the last transport, where she was murdered. As a result of his experience, he decided to become a child psychoanalyst and to work against racism, war and hatred. His autobiography *Renewal of Life: Healing from the Holocaust* tells you more. He developed a deep interest in the causes of hostile aggression, identifying the main one as ‘massive rejection and disregard of basic needs by caregivers’ whose lack of empathy for children’s thoughts, feelings and actions created frustration, later expressing itself in violence when the children grew up.

In Philadelphia in the 1980s, Dr Parens began action-research with pre-school children to see how to reduce aggression. Returning to Germany (1990), he met the child and adolescent psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and writer, Dr Karl-Heinz Brisch, who specialises in research on attachment. Based in Munich, Dr Brisch developed Parens’ work. The idea developed: children watching a mother, baby and their relationship. It took all of ten years for the project to be accepted in the 1990s as a pilot by a private kindergarten. Everyone had told him it was impossible.

Since then, B.A.S.E.®Babywatching has operated in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Germany, Holland, Israel, Italy, New Zealand and Switzerland, with possible plans for Korea, Ukraine, Latvia and Russia. B.A.S.E stands for: **B**abywatching to reduce **A**nxiety and **A**ggression and promote **S**ensitivity and **E**mpathy. (B.A.S.E.®Babywatching is the full title. We use the shorter term Babywatching in this section.) It mostly operates in pre-schools and schools. The word *fear* is often used rather than *anxiety*. The UK branch was set up by therapists Griselda Kellie-Smith and

Andrea Perry (2021.) It operated in Brighton, Buckinghamshire, the Isle of Man, London and Yorkshire.

This deceptively simple project facilitates learning for children and staff through vivid, first-hand experience about secure attachment and attunement within the developing relationship between a parent and their baby. Although it mentions, in passing, children becoming focused and ‘ready to learn’, its emphasis is on emotional understanding, not solely academic achievement. However, there are recognised effects for children who participate: they become more settled in school, more trusting of adults, and more relaxed and cooperative with their peers, thus in a better position to learn.

The practice of inviting a parent and baby into a classroom is also used by Roots of Empathy. There has sometimes been confusion between the two projects. There are some key differences. For clarity, they are worth mentioning. In Babywatching:

- The mother and baby visit every week for at least two school terms for 20-30 minutes, instead of every three or four weeks. It is a very simple scheme: class teachers engage their children with the weekly growth of the parent/baby relationship;
- Babywatching doesn’t allow children to go very near the baby or touch it, as this distracts the baby from his/her relationship with the parent which is the focus of what they are watching;
- Babywatching does not encourage the parent to reply to questions, but lets group leader broker questions from children;
- There’s no written work (unless class teacher decides to set it at other times and/or gives children a book in which to write and draw about their experiences of the group after the session);
- There are no centrally-controlled compulsory greetings, songs, mats with logo etc. Teachers have freedom to address what’s come up between sessions in their own ways, with the help of a Babywatching mentor if needed;

- The programme is not prescriptive and works experimentally in the here and now with what the children present, negating the need for lesson plans or adhering to a course structure. Babywatching UK illustrated clear links to the PSHE curriculum to show Ofsted how the project met many of the learning objectives around communication and relationships;
- Its emphasis is solely on the relationship and interaction between mother and baby, their needs, feelings, motivations, perspectives, responses, with no explicit focus on child development or cognitive aspects. This focus gives a safe, permission-giving environment that nurtures emotional security, so children want to explore – the foundation underpinning our desire to learn;
- Staffing is flexible. Sessions are led by a member of staff or an outside group leader. Pre-Covid, a school was encouraged to send staff to the one-day training to become apprentice group leaders. After two terms of apprenticed practice, and once approved by the apprentice's mentor, trainees became fully qualified. Post-Covid, training was offered in three three-hour online sessions, including home study for apprentice group leaders, then the same pattern of mentored practice for two terms before becoming fully qualified. Post qualification, group leaders are encouraged to be mentored yearly to maintain registration and for professional development;
- Online training could be delivered to a single school setting, or bespoke training can be arranged;
- A video resource has been developed, enabling group leaders to still deliver Babywatching sessions when a parent and baby are unavailable or absent due to other restrictions;
- Group leaders are trained from the school community (teachers, learning support assistants, teaching assistants, learning mentors, family support workers, school therapists) Babywatching becomes an embedded part of the school culture
- Babywatching's approach of empowering staff reduces delivery costs. Group mentoring keeps costs affordable, maintaining

delivery consistency and encouraging professional development.

The membership fee is kept to a minimum.

- The class teacher asks children aged over seven to fill in an SDQ (Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire,) or an Altruistic Drawing Measure under sevens, before and after the year's sessions to help with ongoing evaluation.

Groups have been run in primary schools as well as nurseries and secondary schools; also, with small nurture groups at special schools, or with small groups at any school, not a whole class.

The children had become quite excited and the energy in the room was escalating. One small boy suddenly said loudly, 'I think we need to be quiet now – she looks like it's getting a bit much for her.' I think he saw this even before I did. He was absolutely spot on with his understanding. Such is the power of Babywatching. Mother

Mothers (and it almost always is mothers) can be recruited via the school population. An eye-catching, colourful poster can go up on the parents' notice-board and an appeal included in the school newsletter. There are bound to be several pregnant women with a child at the school, willing to be observed relating to their baby, happy to get out of the house, have so much keen attention paid to their baby and pleased to contribute to the life of the school. Some mothers enjoy it so much that they offer to do a second stint with the next baby. There's anecdotal evidence that the scheme works best if the baby is the second or third.

I found the sessions incredibly valuable to me as a mother.

This regular time gave me the chance to stop and reflect on my baby, his development and our relationship. Mother

Qualities needed are reliability (turning up every week punctually; telling the school at once if there is an emergency and she can't come), and commitment to be there for two or three terms. One

term isn't considered long enough; it's so valuable to see how the parent adjusts her parenting as the baby grows with changing needs. The parent needs to be willing to say nothing or very little (other than to the baby) during a session but just to be with the baby, focused on it, feeding it, changing its nappy, talking to it, responding to it and playing with it. It is the group leader who asks questions of the children, encourages them to ask their own and to voice their observations and thoughts. The leader's questions and comments deepen over the weeks. They use five deepening layers of questions in sequence as the weeks go on:

- What do you see or hear? What is the parent doing? What is the baby doing?
- Why did the parent.....? or Why did the baby.....?
- How does it feel for parent/baby?
- What would you do if you were parent/baby?
- What would it feel like if you were parent/baby?

Children develop insight and interest in the baby's feelings and motivations, not just its actions. Sometimes there's a reflective silence. Shy or disruptive children, those with special needs or limited English have all been seen to benefit. Less able students feel they can contribute on an equal level with more able ones. Students with younger siblings can change. 'He makes me know how to be a big brother,' said one boy. Once the baby becomes more interested in the children than in being with the parent, the sessions cease because the baby's focus has shifted. Some babies remain in the group till they walk; sessions with others finish when they become very active, curious crawlers. The children are carefully prepared for the ending. Some will have become very attached to the baby.

If the mother has to miss a session, the teacher can find an imaginative way to continue the education in relationships, feelings and motivation and help the children think about the baby and

their feelings when mother and baby are not able to come. For example, one teacher used a sand-tray. Each child chose a miniature object, placed it in the tray and said a few words about it. 'They were all quiet throughout, thoughtfully listening to each other. The following weeks, all the children who had previously been silent began to talk.' Another glitch can be parents' objections if the mother breastfeeds during the session; this has on occasions happened with Muslim families who don't let boys watch breastfeeding. Some have removed their child from the lessons. A teacher wrote: 'Clear letters to parents at the beginning of the programme help and this year has been much more positive. After a couple of sessions, the normalisation of breastfeeding seems to happen collectively.'

This work can have powerful effects on school staff. One teacher found it painful and asked a colleague to sit in instead. Another 'wasn't prepared for the impact that seeing a mum and baby would have on me. It reminded me of my own childhood which was very difficult.' Women in particular might be suffering from the many possible painful experiences involved in having and raising, or not having, babies and children, as well as their own memories of being little. Some welcome a chance to look at and work through their feelings; it develops their empathy as teachers. And a teacher at one troubled school reported that Babywatching 'took teachers back to liking working with children.'

Group leaders met their mentor three or four times during the apprentice year, then annually to remain registered. Mentors were available when needed and could be emailed or phoned at other times. There were continuing training events for both group leaders and mentors, a regular newsletter and a small, friendly team of office staff and network of advisers, meaning that advice and support were always at hand. The website had short videos and a wealth of positive, moving quotes from children, teachers, mothers

and group leaders. The participating parents could watch the video on the volunteers' page in advance.

When a school showed interest in having Babywatching, an after-school meeting could be arranged, ideally for the head, senior staff and others with an interest. A Powerpoint presentation and a video with teachers talking and excerpts of sessions with children of different ages showed the project vividly. Together with evaluation results and testimonials showing the benefits, staff were usually won over. The school chose the year group and class. The search began for a suitable mother with a baby of the right age: ideally a few weeks old. A staff member on maternity leave might agree to be observed. It was always good if the husband or partner can turn up once in a while. It can mean a lot to the boys and enhance their involvement.

The relevance of this to future parenting is beautifully imagined by Andrea Perry: 'Since 2012, many many little (and some not so little) lives have been touched and benefited. It would be lovely to have a sense of what that's meant for them. Maybe we won't know for a generation! Maybe when some of those children grow up and perhaps have their own children, something will come back to them, something they haven't thought of for years: "I've just remembered that when I was a child, we used to sit around and look at a baby as tiny as he is. Wow! I'd forgotten all about that till now. I loved those groups. Now I've got one of my own! I wonder why he's reaching out to me like that - oh look, he's smiling!" – and they'll pass on the memories and the wondering to their partners and families. Even tiny tweakings in the direction of attunement and empathy, of once a week for 20-minutes for ten weeks, can be passed on intergenerationally, I truly believe.'

It would take a huge expenditure of time and money to carry out long-term research, following up children and a control group once they become parents. Even then, any positive results might be

challenged. Regardless, this gentle intervention offers positive change in the present, laying foundations of empathy, trust and hope for better future outcomes. By the way, baby observation isn't just for children. It's a requirement of some adult and child psychotherapy courses that trainees do infant observation for one or two years, weekly for one hour in the family's home and report in detail to the course members. We can all learn, at any age, from watching babies developing their very earliest relationships.

When a colleague and I ran short Babywatching courses, we didn't know the children's names. So we made a laminated name badge on a ribbon for each child to wear round their neck. We discovered at firsthand how much the children enjoyed watching a baby and how teachers could relate other things the children know to the sessions. For example, when a baby cried, the whole class sang a lullaby to him which they had learnt previously. And the classroom had a glass cage with eggs which were just hatching: the class were urged to stay quiet and not disturb the new chicks. As teachers are free to invent their own classroom activities between sessions, one took photos for a display with words about feelings. Each child was given a Babywatching book in which to write or draw 'which means that between sessions, they are really holding mother and baby in mind.' This freedom gives teachers a chance for creativity and innovation skills to shine. If the leader is the class teacher, there can be many references to sessions during the week.

B.A.S.E®BabywatchingUK

To all mothers of a young baby!

Would you like to come to school once a week to help children learn about babies and mothering? If so, we would like to hear from you! We are looking for one mother who can come to this school on Tuesdays at 2pm from next September for two or three terms for 20-to-30 minutes a week. A class of children will sit in a circle and watch your baby and you, and ask questions – not to you but to the group leader. (Sorry: Other young children you might have can't be brought along, as they would be

a distraction) If you might be interested or want to learn more, please contact (name, email and phone number.) We look forward to hearing from you.

Example of a poster or newsletter item to recruit mothers

Watch and Wonder

Attachment-focused and trauma-informed practice

Set up in 2021, Watch and Wonder works in similar ways to B.A.S.E@Babywatching; Michele Crooks, one staff member, was trained by Dr Brisch and worked for nine years for B.A.S.E@BabywatchingUK. Watch and Wonder classroom facilitators in primary and secondary schools are always trained members of staff – teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors, family support workers – who’ve undertaken an online training of three three-hour sessions over three weeks. There is a short, delightful video on its website. The organisation can lend you video resources. For adoptive parents and foster carers, it also provides a course of eight experiential sessions over a six-month period as well as three training sessions about key aspects of parenting and caring for children who have suffered early trauma.

Other parent/baby observation schemes

Circles for Learning

Whilst working with a group of Year 6 children, I asked them the question: 'Where could we observe learning happening?' which prompted a straight-forward reply, 'We should watch a baby!' And so our journey began.

Alison Waterhouse

Circles for Learning trains teachers to bring a parent and baby into schools, either with a whole class or with a small group, once a month for three terms for 30-to-60 minutes, depending on how long the learning guide judges is the right length. Younger children's attention lasts about 30-to-40 minutes. Sessions are led by teachers trained in the method to become a learning guide. Alison Waterhouse, its creator, a former head with much therapeutic experience in schools, is now an educational psychotherapist and mental health and wellbeing consultant. The project originated in a personal way. Whilst working in schools, facilitating work discussion groups and supporting staff to observe and reflect on children's behaviour, she also witnessed her daughter's fascination with a friend's baby and its interaction with its mother. It reminded her of her own baby observations whilst training 'and the impact they had on my role as a parent and on my thinking about relationships with the children I was working with.' She didn't know at the time of ROE or B.A.S.E®Babywatching.

Alison's Circles for Learning is a whole school programme. What students learn is likely to lead to better parenting by them one day. Her central interest is developing the skills that underpin positive mental health and wellbeing and giving children and young people the skills to learn and to flourish., and 'what it's like to be a parent. Children see why early relationships are important, why a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy impacts on a baby. They watch and

experience the amazing tasks of being a good parent and therefore extend their own knowledge and experience for their own parenting in the future.’

Like ROE, this scheme uses the weeks between the parent’s visits to do a range of activities which build on the observations and interactions they have witnessed. There are interesting differences between this scheme and the others.

- The baby comes in from the age of nine months. By the end of the year it is walking and talking. Toys are on the blanket where the baby is based;
- The children, parent and baby form one circle. Every few minutes, children move position so they all have a chance to sit or lie next to the baby. They are allowed to touch and play with the baby, having washed their hands with anti-bacterial soap. The learning guide sits in the circle opposite the parent, which enables them to support the children to observe the interactions and behaviour, and to reflect on what they might be about;
- The scheme is for students from five-years upwards, not younger, and up to age 14;
- Teachers (the learning guides) are given a very free hand. They can decide how often the baby visits, how long a session lasts, and how to use the sessions to increase development of the scheme’s five strands.

‘I’m giving professionalism back to teachers,’ Alison told me, ‘they know their class best.’ Using existing staff, rather than visiting guides, means that the whole school can benefit rather than just one class of 30. It starts with an enthusiastic teacher talking in the staff room, challenging prevailing attitudes. A headteacher might decide to fund training for every member of staff. Young, less secure teachers in particular often request lesson plans. Alison likes to nurture their confidence to become child-led., but has also developed five books published with Routledge that provide a

range of lesson plans and resources to use in the classroom, *The Mental Health and Wellbeing Teacher Toolkit*. The programme helps schools be proactive for emotional health, not just reactive. Each of the five books covers the five strands that research has shown underpin mental health and wellbeing:

- Positive relationships including empathy;
- Emotional literacy;
- Skills for learning;
- Self-awareness;
- The brain, leaning and behaviour.

Activities used by Alison when facilitating the programme in schools include work on developing self-esteem and resilience, supporting children to develop the skills to build and maintain positive relationships, understand themselves as a learner, and develop emotional literacy and self-regulation skills. This is taught through activities such as making and watching videos; making posters; role-play; active listening (one group giving feedback to the group which is playing it out); and making labels about each other which students decide to keep on or remove.

Sessions help children use the parent and baby observation to understand themselves as a learner including the emotions linked to learning including the barriers that can create challenges to classroom learning. These barriers are often linked to frustration and difficult feelings, rather than the work itself. Alison is interested in what makes a good learner in the widest sense. Children develop more resilience, become more able to cope with frustration and talk about themselves and their learning in a more open and confident way during the project. Teachers often remark on how the class co-operates better, with children supporting each other and accepting differences. Playground behaviour can improve.

What I find most interesting is the enormous increase in the staff's understanding of the emotional aspects of teaching, class morale and learning. 'Raising awareness of attachment and the importance of a secure base is a core part of the project. It constitutes a third of the training I provide for teachers,' writes Alison. Because of this deeper understanding, teachers can cater far better for children's emotional needs. 'When discussing the type of environment that the children needed for learning, a Year 3 boy explained that he found it harder to cope when his teacher wasn't there'. This prompted her to spend time talking with the children about how they felt when someone else took the class and what she could do to make this more manageable for them.' Staff learn to understand the reasons for bad behaviour, are less likely to punish it. It seems as though school staff (not only teachers) change and benefit as much as the children. Alison describes the impact on them as 'staggering.' Agencies such as *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services* comment on how teachers' accounts of children are now so much more psychologically informed.

Details of the online training to become a Circles for Learning practitioner, and a short video, are on her website. The unquestionable value of this type of scheme is suggested by one secondary headteacher's words: 'The outcome for some of my most disaffected learners was profound.' And a teacher in a special school for children with profound learning differences said, 'They loved having the baby in the classroom and looked forward to each visit.'

Although Circles for Learning does not cite preparation for parenthood as its main goal, the qualities it fosters are essential for good parenting: the ability to put one's own needs on hold and attend to those of another; willingness to let another person do a task at their own pace; being attuned to others; and understanding reciprocity with them. There would be no reason why the project

could not be developed to support new parents – it just needs someone who is interested in doing this.

We quotes the 2019 outcomes of the work in four secondary schools in chapter ‘Research in schools is messy,’ Alison was warned. Staff turnover can change everything. Four schools took part: two mainstreams, one for students with severe learning difficulties, and one for those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The findings will add invaluable to our understanding of the scope of this type of enjoyable, life-enhancing work.

Understanding Each Other

The idea of observing parents with babies was adapted by Catherine Lowenhoff’s project *Understanding Each Other: Inspiring Children to be Thoughtful and Kind*. (2009.) Catherine has a special interest in perinatal mental health. Under the aegis of The Ministry of Parenting, she arranged for a mother and baby to visit classes in Years 2, 5, 8 and 11 three times a term, planning to take it into four schools. It was so popular that more joined:

All in Braintree, Essex:

Alec Hunter humanities college

Beckers Green primary

Bocking Church Street primary

Cressing primary

Great Bradfords junior

John Bunyan junior

Lyons Hall primary

St Francis primary

Stisted primary

Tabor science college.

There was initial money for the scheme's one year pilot from Essex county council and the Essex primary care trust. A bid was then made to the Lottery for £250,000 to continue for five years.

Catherine reported 'multiple benefits.' She explicitly wanted to affect future parenting. 'We hope that children will remember what they have learnt when they become parents so that ultimately we will have a society where sensitive responsive parenting is the norm, where all children have a better chance of being loved and having their needs met and we gradually reduce the burden of mental ill health, violence, abuse and neglect.' And she added: 'I thought the boys might not be as interested but they're the ones who seem to ask a lot of questions.'

All students in elementary, middle and high school should learn about the stages of infant development and the effects on infants of differing kinds of caregiver behaviour. By the time these students become parents, the details may be forgotten, but the central messages of such courses are likely to endure: that prenatal care, attention and responsiveness to infant behaviour are essential. Conveying those messages in schools has the added benefit that future fathers as well as mothers will be exposed to them.

Zero to Three, National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, US

Chapter Twenty-three

Flour Babies

We're loving the book and finding it very funny and interesting.

Student, South Africa

One of the stories I enjoyed most while researching for this book concerns Anne Fine OBE, the children's author. She was living in a top-floor flat in Edinburgh when a Jehovah's Witness knocked on the door to try to sell her an *Awake* magazine. Feeling sorry for the caller's long climb, Anne bought a copy – a moment in 1990 which had considerable repercussions for countless numbers of children and young people in more than one country. A small article caught her eye:

Delete line

FLOUR "BABIES"

In a novel approach to teach his students responsibility and the realities of parenthood, a San Francisco high-school teacher has been giving each of his students a five-pound sack of flour as a baby. "You must treat your baby as if it were real twenty-four hours a day for the next three weeks," he tells them. This includes dressing the sack in baby clothes, including diaper, blanket, and bottle, and carrying it and treating it lovingly and carefully at all times. When students are away from their babies, they must find baby-sitters. If a baby is lost or broken, the student ends up with a heavier baby – a ten-pound sack flour. Students quickly learn how having a baby will affect their lives, and the school has had a lower number of teenage pregnancies. Said one student: 'It was only a sack of flour that didn't cry or scream. It didn't need to be fed or put to sleep and still I couldn't wait to be rid of it.'

Awake! 22 September 1990

Reading this resulted in Anne's novel *Flour Babies* (1992) which won the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year Award. I asked her if she would have written it if she had not chanced upon the article. 'No, without that article I would never, ever have had the idea. I might have got near it when the Tamagotchi pet craze began in 1996. But not otherwise.' And Anne had a personal connection with the story. Having wanted lots of babies and raised two daughters, she was nevertheless relieved once they left home and she could get on with her writing in peace. Her novel's hero Simon Martin realised the limitations and frustrations of parenthood and had to keep a diary. Anne said, 'If I were semi-literate, our diary entries might have matched.' (Tamagotchi is a hand-held digital pet housed in an egg-shaped key ring. Users must feed, clean up after, discipline, and play with their pets regularly to keep them alive.)

Simon Martin is one of a class of disaffected teenage boys given a 6lb bag of flour to cart around for three weeks while they write about it daily. The book came alive in many schools in the 1990s: *Flour Babies* was an explicit parenthood project for children and young people. It has been offered at both primary and secondary schools. Whereas programmes such as Babywatching have preparing young children for parenthood as just one purpose, this project has that - and the delay of parenthood - as its sole aim.

A flour baby student in South Africa asked Anne, 'What made you think of making a whole lot of boys look after Flour Babies? Why not girls?' She did so because otherwise the boys would have unloaded their babies and the girls would have looked after them 'because they wanted to go out with the boys or some such reason. Without girls around, they were able to develop a relationship with this baby substitute.'

We will never know how many schools have used flour babies or whether any still do. I have seen newspaper articles about them in nine schools. I emailed them all in 2019 to ask if they still use flour babies or have any other method of preparing students for parenting and delaying early pregnancy and got a few disappointing replies.

1994

Abbey Independent Junior School, Woodbridge, Suffolk

Teacher: Frances Goulder

‘My name is Nick Smith and I am head of PSHE at Woodbridge School. I have been here since 1997 and cannot say that I have heard of the ‘flour babies.’ Neither do I think that I overlapped with Frances Goulder so I can’t help at all with that issue. We do have an extensive PSHE programme but not one that includes any parenthood preparation. I will be reviewing the provision in June/July and am always open to new topics and approaches so will certainly investigate this. What we certainly do teach is sex education. The practicalities are covered in science but we support this with sessions on contraception to prevent both pregnancies and the spread of STIs.’

Somerset House Private School, South Africa

Teacher: Miss Grant

‘Thank you for your email. Unfortunately we do not still use this, nor do we have anything like it in place. We do a course on sex education for our older pupils but it does not involve the use of anything like Flour Babies. Kind regards, Chris.’ Chris Storey, Headmaster

St John Fisher Primary School, Knowsley Village, Merseyside

No reply

Yew Tree Junior School, Solihull

Teacher: Julie Jarrett with ten-year-olds. No reply

1996

Forest Hill Boys' Comprehensive School, Lewisham

Teacher: Diana Sparkes for Year 9. No reply

1998

North Walsham High School, Norfolk for Year 9 English project

Teacher: Claire Bamlett

‘Thank you for your email. I have been doing some checking, but unfortunately there is nobody still in school who remembers much about the use of flour babies, although I understand this was done for one year only. I believe this was based on the ideas from the book by Anne Fine. Sorry I cannot be of much help. Kind regards, Mrs K. Cooper, PA to the Headteacher, North Walsham High School.’

2006

Two Catholic primary schools. One was **St Elizabeth's RC Tower Hamlets**. *Teacher: Carolyn Lindsay.* No reply

Date unknown

Roxeth Manor Middle School (eight-to-twelve-year-olds, now called Heathland school), South Harrow

Teacher: Suzi Pinkus. No reply

There were fascinating results. The *Guardian* reported that flour babies were part of the sex and relationships curriculum at St. Elizabeth's. It noted that the government's teenage pregnancy strategy of the time emphasised the importance of preparing children while still at primary school about the responsibilities of parenting. The Catholic Church emphasises the importance of family life. One of its documents concludes: ‘One of the challenges facing the church in contemporary society is teaching young people how to love.’ As one teacher explained, ‘We weren't really looking at flour babies as a way to put them off having children in the future – more at the responsibility you have as a parent, because children

say you have to love a child and care for it but don't really develop an understanding of what this means.'

Ten-year-old boys and girls were each given their 'baby' to look after 24-hours a day for a full week - and to find a babysitter when necessary. They were encouraged to rock the baby to sleep at night, to think about feeding it and changing it, and to keep a diary about their experience.

The quotes show how much they learned about reality. 'I got fed up with my baby in the first three days.' 'I got really angry.' 'I didn't know it would be so hard.' 'I thought they were going to be all cute and cuddly but when I started to look after it, it really wasn't.' One boy realised he didn't feel cut out for parenthood. 'After the project I definitely don't want a baby. You get tired carrying it around, but with a real baby, when it cries in the night you have to feed it and change it too.' Despite this, teachers reported how attached many children became to their baby ('I called mine Malcolm'.) Their main problem was finding childcare when they wanted some time off.

Parents were asked for feedback, part of the Catholic Church's advocacy of communication with parents about sex and relationships education. One mother replied: 'This flour baby project has given us time to discuss the things Jesse did as a baby, and some of the comments she has made throughout the project have had us close to tears.' At another school, the babies were on show during parents' evening. Some heads wrote a letter home explaining the project, concluding, 'The babies may lose a small amount of flour and I hope this does not inconvenience anybody too much in having to Hoover up.' It probably didn't, as several schools reported the parents' enthusiasm and amusement.

Anne told me that flour babies have sometimes been used as part of cross-curricula work. They might be made in a design and technology class, painted in art, written about in English and

discussed in PSHE. 'Not many people are stupid enough to use flour,' she said, 'they might use lentils.' There were variations at each school. Children painted a face and eyebrows, gave the baby a name, stuck on hair, weighed it twice a week or even every day, sewed up leakages. If it had lost weight having leaked flour, or become dirty, it was a sign of neglect. It might even be left on the bus or on a park bench. Some students made nappies and took charge of the birth certificate. They kept diaries ('I took him to McDonalds for hamburger, chips and milk shake'.) Some schools made it a two-week project, others three.

Teachers who read the book to their class found that the children insisted on trying flour babies themselves. At one school, parents were asked to buy the flour and make the baby, as well as to tell their children not to neglect schoolwork. A few entrepreneurial students created a crèche in an old cradle for a fee (10p a day.) All the children at one school used the crèche at some point, though one girl, who had a newborn sister at home, didn't feel that confident about it.

Some boys were as keen as girls, bringing their babies to school in prams and feeding them with a bottle. At North Walsham High School, as part of an English project for 13-year-olds, the boys were fed up at first carrying their babies around, while the girls cuddled theirs and made them clothes, but it was a boy who got the Best Carer Award. At Roxeth Middle School, boys tended to hand over their babies to girls at playtime, 'but it's funny to see that many play where they can still see the baby round the corner,' said Suzi Pinkus, their teacher. Four boys at Abbey Independent School refused to participate. 'I'm not going to walk around with a bag of flour in Ipswich!' scoffed Harry, though seven others agreed to join in. Joshua had some very angry moments. His babysitter let him down, so he had to take part in a gymnastics gala – running, rope

climbing and diving – with his baby. ‘But I didn’t mind all that much so I suppose it’s a good sign.’

By only the second day, baby blues had kicked in. ‘My baby is thin!’ said one girl, ‘and it got dirty.’ ‘I realise why it is so hard for parents to keep an eye on their kids,’ said another. Students complained what a problem it was to register and pay for the crèche, get to meals on time and not miss lessons. ‘It’s too complicated.’ By day three, they wanted to live their own lives, but most stuck it out for the full fortnight.

When after two weeks the teacher proposed that everyone put their baby in a plastic bag and into the bin, no one wanted to. Joshua again: ‘If I’m honest with myself, I feel a bit unhappy without Jimmy. It’s like a real baby.’ Their teacher was ‘convinced that the children will become more tolerant parents, more attentive to their children.’

The work illustrates that it is perfectly possible to give even 10-and-11-year-olds a memorable but simply organised, low-cost experience of some aspects of what parenthood really involves. It would be so useful to find out if and how it has influenced their eventual decisions and practices about becoming and being a parent, but as with all these projects, we will never know. See Volume One of this book to see how to make a flour baby.

The biggest deficit that we have in our society and in the world right now is an empathy deficit. We are in great need of people being able to stand in somebody else's shoes and see the world through their eyes. Barack Obama

Chapter Twenty-four
Year Six Help the Nursery

Everyone's in harmony. Parent

I discovered by chance a simple development at a Waltham Forest primary school (2017.) It benefits and delights Year 6 children, nursery children, their parents and the staff, doesn't cost a penny and was started by accident. A child, new to the nursery, was upset. His older sibling in Year 6 came to give some comfort. From this, things grew organically: other 10-and-11-year-olds began to spend time from September and from January helping new little arrivals to settle in. More children volunteer now than the nursery can take. They give up half-an-hour of their lunchtime for about two months to offer activities one-to-one in the nursery: painting, drawing, building, counting, making patterns, telling stories and acting them out, using any materials in the room. This raises the confidence of nursery children, as well as their speaking, listening, communication, language, social and emotional skills: all components of the early years' curriculum.

I asked if staff decide who's paired with whom. No, it's not usually necessary. It just happens by itself. The younger ones who need this companionship seem to find their way to the right older buddy. 'We've found it's good for both the nursery and the Year 6 children as it gives them a sense of ownership. It has not only helped nursery children settle quicker. It's helped some in Year 6 build their confidence. They realise they have something to give, know more than they thought. It helps them mature. Attention-seeking children become less troublesome,' Niray Enver, head of early years, told me. 'The nursery children listen more to the Year 6 children than they do to adults.' She gave multi-cultural examples: a Chinese child who found mixing for the first time outside of his home a culture shock; a South American boy who cried for ages on arrival, spoke no English but after a few weeks with his buddy could not only speak in sentences but became so confident that his constant questions significantly increased the staff's workload!

After his return to his native country, his buddy, who himself had family difficulties, kept in touch.

Children at the school all live in three or four local streets, a village-like area in London. Neighbours of different socio-economic levels seem to know each other. After school, relationships, started at the nursery, continue in the park. Parents are thrilled to know their children are getting the individual attention they need which could not be given by limited staff numbers. If children can't have mum, they have someone else instead. Staff have noticed a change in the nursery's atmosphere. And parents comment, 'Everyone's in harmony, it's so nice to see.' Niray plans an additional nursery project: bringing in elderly people to provide even more support for children who need it.

It was fascinating to find in Urie Bronfenbrenner's *Two Worlds of Childhood* 1970, which compares childrearing in the Soviet Union and the US, these words (he's citing opportunities to nurture the social development of US children): 'One might begin with an Americanized adaptation of the Soviet system of "shevstvo" in which a pre-school or primary class is "adopted" by an older class, with each younger child having an older "brother" or "sister." It becomes the responsibility of the older pupil to get to know his younger "sib" and his family, to escort him to and from school, play with him and his friends, and teach him games.' All 11-year-olds were expected to 'assist in children's nurseries and kindergartens.' No child left school without considerable experience of caring for younger ones.

Part Six

How to teach parenting in schools

Chapter Twenty-five

What qualities do you need?

A good teacher makes everyone feel like a someone. Anon

It's easy enough to teach the practical techniques of parenting: bathing a baby, feeding it (though this can have enormous emotional implications), putting it safely in a car seat and the hundred-and-one day-to-day details which prospective or new parents need to know and often don't. It's not unlike teaching carpentry or how to bake a cake: comfortable areas. But to look at emotional life, the teacher needs specific qualities to do it well and to safely create and nurture an atmosphere where students feel fully alive, stimulated, curious, and where they know that what is being looked at applies to them, both to their own childhoods or adolescence, and to their future lives.

As a teacher I've realised I don't know all the answers and the students know this too. So I've become more open as I go and they know we are both discovering the answers together. Teacher

Tact is very important. Yet we hear shocking stories: a teacher who teased a boy for having ginger hair, another about his name, a head who took a class of 11-year-olds up a mountain: when they reached the top, he told them that just 20 percent of them had passed the 11-plus exam. To teach parenthood, which can touch sensitive areas, teachers need a well-developed tactfulness.

They wanted a greater focus on life skills, personal confidence, basic skills, work skills, career advice and health and wellbeing. They also wanted lessons to be fun, interesting and not something that were there just to pass assessments or get a qualification. Prof Graham Donaldson's Welsh study 2015: What young pupils want at school

These lessons need to differ from the conventional. We don't aim to reach 'targets' or precisely defined 'outcomes' or to impress Ofsted inspectors. There are no exams: there are other ways to assess. We want students (and staff!) to feel disappointed when the bell rings, to experience the flow of forgetting the time as what they are involved in is so interesting, feels so important.

Prof. Whitfield warns us. 'The nature of the work requires that the teachers must have come to terms with their own personal lives. Those who have not resolved their own inner conflicts about relationships could find that studying child development and family life brings these to the surface, leading to a strained classroom atmosphere which can be unsettling for students.'

The A – Z of qualities

The list is long. You might want to add more. It includes those recommended by Dr Housden, WAVE, Sharland and others.

A Ability to challenge racist, sexist and homophobic attitudes in ways that don't create further prejudice

Ability to include/stimulate students of all intellectual abilities in same lesson

Ability to facilitate genuine debate and discussion

Ability to admit mistakes

Appropriate timing of activities

Awareness of evaluation methods

B Boundaries well understood (start on time so the session is lively with no boring waiting around; and end on time)

C Clear valuing of contributions that students make

Curiosity

Creativity and imagination

Counselling skills, to support distressed student during/just after session

Confidence and gentle assertiveness

Creation of a safe and open environment

Compassion

D Diplomacy

Democratic approach e.g. giving students a voice in topics and methods

E Empathic, demonstrable understanding of students: their age, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, school experience, special needs

Encouragement of all students to participate according to their ability, with no preconceived ideas about their limitations

Energy (not burnt-out or exhausted)

Experience with babies, children and parents: preferably with personal experience or with self-knowledge and insights about one's own childhood

Enthusiasm: excited about teaching the subject

F Facilitative style

Friendliness and Flexibility

G Genuineness

Genuine wish to invite challenge

Good timekeeping, punctual

H Health: physical and mental: ability to look after oneself

I Identification & building on the positive elements of a student's contribution

Informal manner

Interest and belief in this subject and its importance – in fact, passion!

Intuition

J Jack/Jill of all trades

K Kindness

Knowledge of pastoral help available for students whose emotional state is affected by the course

L Lack of pettiness

Lateral thinking when necessary

Liking - genuine and obvious, for students

Listener: ability to listen well, keen understanding of active listening skills, building on students' contributions

Lively presentation skills

M Model of good relationships with other adults (e.g. other staff or visiting speakers); able to show what respect and good relationships 'look and feel like'

N Non-judgmental attitude; no blaming of parents and students

No 'lecturing' to students

O On the child's side - and showing it

Openness and inclusiveness

Open-minded, lack of dogmatism

P Passionate

Patient

Positive attitude/language always (without ignoring difficulties of parenting)

Preparation: able to give enough time before a session to prepare mentally and physically: gathering materials, being ready to calmly welcome students

Psychologically self-aware of one's own feelings about all the topics and able to discuss openly in supervision

Q Questioning approach

R Reassuring manner, so students don't begin to fear they will be bad parents

Record-keeper: possibly discussing with others e.g. co-worker, after a session

Reflectiveness: regular reflection on progress of sessions and subject matter

Reliability and consistency: ideally never missing a session

Research ability into what students have learnt already, formally or informally

Resourcefulness

S Sense of humour

Sensitivity

Self-disclosure appropriately: this can enrich and bring the material to life, and builds trust and empathy

Skilful interventions in small and large groups

Skill at helping young people to process strong feelings which are likely to be evoked in at least some of the students during some of the sessions

Stage presence whilst remaining authentic: ability to manage (or co-manage) a class or group in a non-authoritarian way

Stimulation of thinking and ideas through challenge

T Tact

Thoughtfulness

Time: enough of it, desire/ability to use regular debrief, support, supervision

Training: willingness, and enough time, to be thoroughly trained for the work

U Understanding how one's own history, present life, prejudices and feelings can impact on lessons

Unembarrassed, not unsettled, when discussing e.g. sex or breastfeeding

Up-to-date knowledge of the school's safeguarding policy and practice for students who make or imply disclosures during a session

V *Valuation of the subject*

Versatility

W Warm manner, ability to foster safe, welcoming atmosphere for all students

Willingness and desire to do this work, not feeling forced or persuaded into it

Y Young at heart if not in years

Z Zeal for the subject.

In other words, the qualities of a good-enough parent! Others likely to have qualities needed include trainees in psychodrama, dramatherapy and drama teaching who might seek opportunities to practise and develop their skills and could work with school staff on the principle that two heads are better than one.

Teaching this subject has changed me. I'm less critical of my children now and realise what pressure my high expectations have on them. I've become more self-aware as a parent. The activity on child abuse with Year 10 changed my perceptions of what's going on in the lives of some children. Teacher

To wade into the murky pool of emotions brings up the question:

Should teachers be parents?

I look at Mrs R. differently now. I know she gets it wrong sometimes with her own kids. I didn't even know she had any kids. We get on much better in maths. Student taught PSHE by her maths teacher

How important is it for the teacher to be a parent? Better to have lessons taught well by a non-parent than badly by a parent. But

teachers who are parents can give examples from their experience, guaranteed to change the relationship with students who appreciate this type of openness and honesty. It makes the teacher a real human being, perhaps with confessed vulnerabilities, perhaps bringing in photos of their progeny. One teacher spoke of using personal stories to challenge her pupils' fixed ideas of how things should be. They found it 'odd' that she would reason with her daughter when she stayed out till 1 a.m. They said their own parents would 'batter them.'

Other teachers might be more reluctant to share their own experiences. That could change as their confidence and ease with this subject increases. A teacher who's been through, or is still going through, active parenthood is likely to be more motivated to teach the subject than a young colleague who spends free time in other ways, with different preoccupations. The former might see the topic as more important than a child-free teacher does, maybe regarding it as more important than exam success.

Students respond positively and enjoy the opportunity to see and relate to their teacher in a different way – as a person who has experience of parenting first (of when they were a child and/ or as a parent themselves) and as a teacher second. Those teachers can then respond positively to the students' interest and a new rapport can develop. Parenting Education and Support Forum

Teachers suffering from stress at school might find, and disclose, that their own children are badly affected from less attention and enjoyment of family life: an important lesson for teenagers to learn. Teachers who aren't parents but who have, or have had, hands-on contact with young children – neighbours, nieces and nephews, little cousins, or their own younger siblings - can also speak of what looking after children is like first-hand. They might have once been babysitters or nannies or now have stepchildren.

David Holbrook, in *English for the Rejected*, was aware that as a dad, he was able to feel ‘fatherly’ towards his pupils. On the other hand, the parent-teacher might have very fixed views and not show a curiosity to learn with the class about other ways of parenting. A non-parent teacher, especially a young one who plans to have a family, can join the students in exploring and enjoying the subject together. And every teacher has had a childhood. At least one aspect of good or not-so-good experiences can usefully be shared with the class. I can imagine the students’ excitement if they’re lent a photo to pass around of a popular teacher as a toddler.

This is not like teaching historical facts. As Paul Gordon puts it in *The Hope of Therapy*: ‘Therapy is not a scientific or technical process. It is rather an art or craft requiring a particular sensibility or disposition. As such it has much to learn from other forms of art and craft.’

*I found out some sad news about him today. I learned about
his difficulties at home, and why he’s always tired. I hadn’t
heard it before. Teacher*

Cynthia Reynolds: secondary students' expert

Cynthia Reynolds, an advisory teacher for the Inner London Education Authority, was one of the most significant, experienced, perceptive UK figures when it comes to parenthood and child development courses at school. We quote from and summarise her two documents for the insights they give into the why's, what's and how's of this topic. She wrote *Suggestions for a project concerned with some aspects of an "Education for parenthood" course for secondary pupils* in 1973. Her second document, *Teaching Child Development*, draws on the experience of the pilot courses.

By 1975 there was 'an enormous demand from pupils themselves. Where the courses were offered as options, by the second year the number wanting to take them far exceeded the possible provision. As I go round playgroups etc., the adults' eyes light up. They say, "Marvellous: what a good thing!". It's very rewarding to find a team from several disciplines creating a splendid course in a school using one another's skills and those from people from outside in the best possible ways. I've tried to offer practical suggestions based on how we worked things out. But there are different approaches. What I've written will be merely a starter.'

Cynthia worked on this subject before baby and parent observation schemes for young children had begun (BASE®Babywatching, ROE etc.) Her focus is on older teenagers, mostly in their fifth and sixth years. She concurred with Sir Keith Joseph whose 1972 speech called for 'fresh thinking and fresh initiative in this whole area' of preparing parents.

She points out that 'young parents may swing to the other extreme but will tend to repeat the pattern of their own experience. It seems sound common sense that such vital roles as motherhood and

fatherhood should receive more than slight attention in a broad-based secondary school curriculum (particularly in the final year.) They will then know from first-hand observation that it is natural for young children to scramble and climb, poke and prod, scribble and smear, punch and pull, scratch and bite, bang and beat, rattle and pluck, touch and tear, stare and listen, chatter and ask incessant questions. They will need help if they are to understand that in these socially and domestically unacceptable attributes lie the foundations of art and craft, literacy, maths and science, physical education, music, good social relationships and every other subject, and that the development of these natural interests and abilities is the tutorial function of enlightened parents.

“The difficulty lies in putting it across to pupils, many of whom are from homes with well-established patterns of inarticulate communication, haphazard collections of books and toys, and a prohibitive attitude, with a well-rehearsed store of phrases such as “don’t touch”, “shut up”, “get out of my way”, “don’t get dirty”, “don’t make a mess” etc. The problem is enhanced by the fact that at this age, pupils are more concerned with display, courtship and mating than the hypothetical rearing of non-existent young, and some, at least, affect a disregard for young children as a necessary part of their own passage from childhood to adult life.

Why courses in child development are necessary

Child psychiatrist Eva Frommer has written: “To be a mother or father to a small baby is the deepest challenge for a human being. It is a task without visible reward, a giving without any tangible return, an interruption of a well-planned life without rhyme or reason, a merciless, unremitting emotional demand. Parents are usually quite unprepared for this and find it a very threatening experience. Less sentiment and more realism should enter into the teaching so that new parents don’t feel inadequate and guilty about

their way of grappling with an entirely unexpected experience' which can feel like an 'intolerable burden.'

This education at school is the first stage. 'Unless there is some modification of outlook and attitudes before the first child arrives, the young mother is more than likely to adopt child-rearing procedures familiar to her.' The second stage, of course, is when she's pregnant and after the birth, when discussion will be more meaningful, and reinforces what has been learnt at school.

Unlike in the past with extended families close by, couples are more isolated, therefore can benefit from having learnt parenting at school. And very intelligent parents might have limited understanding of emotional needs, subjecting their children to a succession of au pairs. The Newsons (1965) point out how some highly educated parents take an intellectual approach to coping with children. 'This can lead to a rather painful and guilt-provoking confrontation with reality, when the professional class mother, having committed herself to the theory that friendly verbal explanations will produce rational cooperation in a toddler, finds that her careful explanation degenerates into an exasperated and undemocratic screech of GET ON and DO IT!'

Then there are the many socio-economic pressures on families, such as housing, single parenthood, isolation, poverty or coming from another culture. In this education, 'it is essential to look at the way people interact, why they behave as they do in various situations, and what circumstances may have brought about certain reactions.' In other words, the impact of difficult factors on bringing up babies and children and how to watch for, understand and cope with them. So there are many reasons why it's vital to teach child development and parenthood at school.

‘It is obvious that any work of this kind must be securely based in practical activity and first-hand experience and that it should be seen to be interesting and important to all members of staff and not regarded simply as the prerogative of health education teachers or any single department.’

She lists books of interest to teachers published from 1964-1971, many still of great relevance, e.g. the Newsons, Donald Winnicott and Susan Isaacs, as well as the pamphlet *Do babies have worries?* by June Bingham for the National Association for Mental Health (now Mind.)

Aims and objectives of courses

‘These must be considered and well-defined from the start. Getting deeply involved with the content can lead to not being too clear about the goals or aims. Developing good courses is extremely difficult.’ Very few teachers have any special training. What is a ‘good’ course? By what criteria do we judge it? Pupils’ enjoyment and lack of boredom? Classwork output? Exam results? Attitudes of good citizenship and parenting?

Ambitious ***aims*** could be:

- A chance to learn facts about the main stages in a young child’s mental, intellectual, social and physical development;
- To relate this knowledge to a study of family life, cultural patterns and community provision;
- To consider the present role of pupils as family members in relation to young children and their future role as parents;
- To enable them to achieve an improved understanding of self and others and achieve more mature attitudes.

Objectives are easier to define. Should each lesson have a definite target? Do we want to change pupils' thinking and feeling as well as behaviour? Any course needs to help pupils to:

- Have the ability to use knowledge to think out a problem, produce a possible solution and test it;
- Recognise when feelings are affecting rational argument;
- Acquire new skills and use them effectively.

Teachers vary in wanting to use either a very ordered, scientific approach or a more flexible one. But by the end of the course, pupils should know that for optimal development within the first five years, children need:

- Parents with some knowledge of the developmental stages of young children, who provide a stable, loving family so that the child feels emotionally secure;
- Communication with adults and siblings through talking, being listened to, stories, nursery rhymes, finger play etc;
- An enriched environment offering plenty of opportunity for play, the child's means of learning about the world;
- Nutrition and physical care of the highest standard. It's important to teach that good nutrition from an early age (protein, minerals, vitamins) is vital for optimal brain development and IQ. 'There are still many families where money for food is short. Ignorance may lead to wrong choices. The baby may be weaned on too many starchy foods and become large and fat. Good nutrition in pregnancy and the first three years is vital.' Making full use of the NHS for under-fives is also recommended.

Empathy with children

How can we prepare adolescents to become empathic parents? Some have younger siblings and possibly some insight into a child's personality and mind. 'Most will need help if their relationship with

young children is to be mutually rewarding' when on placement. She specifies three ways to develop empathy:

1 Pupils recall their own early childhood experiences

Fascinating for anyone. Especially significant could be: very earliest memories/favourite toys, games, books and activities/ language difficulties/frightening incidents and situations/first separation from mother/first day at nursery or school/ situations producing frustration and temper tantrums/skills mastered easily skills difficult to master/reactions to siblings.

2 Read sections of books - especially autobiographies –concerned with childhood in different times and in different places and circumstances. An English course could offer extracts from, for example, Laurie Lee or Margaret Mead.

3 Observe and make contact with young children

This should be over at least one year in these six ways:

a) Continuous observation of one child: 'probably one of the most valuable aspects of the course,' preferably a child known to the pupil so there's a background of shared experience;

b) Casual observation of unknown children in streets, parks, Sunday school, cinema queues etc;

c) Planned observation of previously unknown children: for instance, on the school grounds in a miniature outdoor play area equipped by pupils, open from April to July for local families, with no more than ten parents, ten under-fives and five pupils at one time. Final year pupils' involvement would 'undoubtedly improve the quality of their provision, at a later stage,

for their own children.’ Cynthia insists that this is not a school playgroup.

d) Occasional or regular visits to centres which give specialist help: hospitals, child health clinics, children’s libraries, speech clinics, family health centres. A group of pupils might go to meet a health visitor. Two might visit the post-natal clinic. In future these clinics will reinforce for young parents the learning at school, ‘after the school courses have been partially forgotten.’ Pupils might help regularly at the local children’s ward; long-stay patients need play as much as any other child. ‘It goes without saying that the young people must want to go and know what it will entail.

e) Visits to local infant or special schools. ‘For many insecure adolescents, a legitimate return to infant school (albeit in a changed role) has a therapeutic effect,’ and gives insight into educational changes. ‘In this way they’ll be prepared for the even greater changes which have taken place by the time their first child is of school age.’ And special schools are glad to have a couple of pupils to help. ‘They have all enjoyed it and deemed it worthwhile. They should have some alternative experience with mainstream children as well.’

f) Visits to independent playgroups. In 1973, few children went to nursery. Parents ‘took the law into their own hands’ and created playgroups. In 2024, we’re more likely to find groups of under-fives in children’s centres, toy libraries, family hubs, messy play sessions etc. In playgroups, pupils observe mothers handling children who are not their own and also children’s reactions to seeing their mother handling other children. ‘Generally speaking, it is better for pupils to visit established, successful playgroups [or similar] than to start their own playgroup on school premises.’

Empathy with parents

‘Greater understanding of children is only half the story. Secondary pupils are at the crossway between childhood and adult life and can switch quickly from alliance or hostility towards children. Their loyalties conflict: they jump from one side of the fence to the other, sometimes identifying themselves with adults and authority, sometimes with children and their need to rebel. ‘The inevitable by-product of the visits will be a wider, deeper understanding of the function of parenthood and how parents react and respond to their children’s needs. It may occur to pupils that these responses differ from responses from their own parents. In this way the known pattern of child-rearing begins to be modified in the light of new experience.’

Schools can reinforce this by creating a panel of local families willing to invite pupils to special occasions or expeditions. ‘It might be a new experience to find that children’s questions can be seriously considered and answered to their satisfaction and that a visit to a zoo may embrace biology as well as buns.’

The importance of preparation and follow-up: Preparation tasks for teachers

- a) It’s essential for the teacher to get daytime release (e.g. during summer exam period) to visit the placement beforehand to explain what pupils already have learned. Provide all staff with the name and contact details of the teacher and school. If you find the placement might not be suitable, it is a chance to ‘retreat with honour;’
- b) Ensure you get parents’ written permission. Make it clear that pupils will be there without their teacher;
- c) Give pupils a record card: name of person in charge, address and phone number of the placement;
- d) Pupils should apologise in advance for any absence, never just not turn up;

- e) The school should reimburse pupils' fare money if any;
- f) Give the placement a simple report form so they can write about each pupil at the placement's end.;
- g) The teacher should try to spend one or two sessions at the placement to experience what pupils will be doing.
- h) Before the course, read about child development and watch TV programmes on parents and children;
- i) Find out about childrearing patterns and how they affect children. (The *National Child Development Study 1970s* said that all teachers should engage in this as part of their training);
- j) In multicultural areas, find out as much as possible about child rearing patterns of the various groups;
- k) Study group dynamics and interpersonal relations. Discussion isn't best done 'with students sprawling behind desks, and not in a face-to-face circle with the adult;'
- l) 'Teachers get so used to talking that sometimes they forget to listen and dominate the discussion, thus preventing youngsters from making their own very necessary contributions;'
- m) Link up with others from school or elsewhere (an interested parent qualified in psychology etc) to discuss worries and problems and to get support. Make use of the skills of others;
- n) Parents can have unrealistic expectations of their children – too high or too low. The courses are 'long overdue' to help avoid this by future parents;
- o) Barriers can be broken down between schools, families and people / organisations in the locality by working together in preparing young people for parenthood.

'All this takes time. These courses cannot be mounted quickly.'

Preparation for placements

Begin placements within half to one term of starting the course, to maintain pupils' motivation. Offer at least ten sessions. It's

essential that pupils have covered the growth and development of young children before they go. The minimum knowledge is:

- Why play is so important;
- Different kinds of play and what they mean to children;
- Solitary, parallel and social play;
- What playgroups and nursery schools do, and the differences
- How to play an adult role;
- Why language development and communication are vital
- How to tell a story and read with interest;
- Nursery rhymes, finger play;
- The importance of books, how to choose suitable ones.
- Pupils need help in observation. No one has trained them in this skill and they find it very hard. They will be expected to closely observe what goes on at the placement.

During the placements

- Important that the teacher visits each pupil. This furthers the relationship between school and placement;
- Pupils should thank the placement at the end;
- Back at school, pupils can discuss play and language. 'Poor readers have read children's books happily and without loss of dignity and have even developed a new enthusiasm for reading.' They can read to each other and receive feedback.
- They need to listen to adults talking to young children. How much respect is there for what the children say? Pupils could record themselves and ask friends to comment on their skill.
- As time goes on, they can make more and more contributions at placements. 'Involvement with young children is of key importance to the success of the course, for here all the theory on development and how to meet needs is actually seen in action - and who can fail to be touched?'

Preparing pupils for visits

‘All children love to watch and listen; this is how they learn about life. If pupils develop entertainment skills, it will establish rapport with under-fives’. Skills include:

- a) ***Telling stories and reciting poems.*** Many children no longer know traditional nursery literature. Secondary school libraries should stock good poetry and story books to be used by pupils.
- b) ***Reading stories.*** Ensure pupils choose good quality books.
- c) ***Make/manipulate puppets and marionettes:*** Popular ones are characters in well-known stories; or archetypes, e.g. mother, grandfather, baby, king, giant etc. There should be a collection of glove and finger puppets at school for pupils to borrow.
- d) ***Singing and music making:*** Pupils should join in pre-school sing-songs and singing games ‘confidently and with enjoyment. It will lead to greater interest if percussion instruments supplement the singing. ‘It would give the children great pleasure if pupils could play a few simple tunes to accompany their stories, nursery rhymes and singing games. If they can also show they are skilful musicians on larger, more sophisticated instruments, their success is assured!’ The secondary school should house a collection of instruments for pupils to use.

The importance of play

Play is as necessary and important to a child as the food he eats. It is the very breath of life to him, the reason for his existence.’ Joan Cass 1971

Give pupils information about play materials and the purpose of play. Include films about, for instance, sand or water play, and how pupils can help enrich children’s play. Types of play include physical/adventure/imitative/transport/well-known institutions e.g. shops, market, farm/indispensable person e.g. doctors,

farmers, lollipop ladies, postmen etc/retreat play (hiding in dark corners)/creative play/intellectual play e.g. jigsaws. 'Pupils who can make unembarrassed conversation with pre-school children, answer their questions and add interest and richness to their play are well on the way of becoming good educators of the next generation.' Babies and children need stimulation: things to see and do, with an adult who plays and talks. In this way they acquire new skills, explore objects, learn about cause and effect, time and space, make and test hypotheses. This is harder for parents to provide in tower blocks or isolated rural areas. Playgroups etc can help compensate and offer company for parents. Nurseries provide a richness of experience and the input of skilled adults.

Preparing pupils to be acceptable guests

Discuss how pupils should behave in private homes, schools and playgroups. Pupils and hosts need to meet in advance of the placement. 'Advice should also be given on how to observe accurately but unobtrusively so that children are not embarrassed by the attentions of over-zealous pupils.'

Preparing hosts

Adults in the settings which pupils visit also need to be prepared, perhaps by a leaflet about the course and how the practical experience with children fits in. Pupils will observe children but also lend a hand with chores. 'It might be worthwhile to point out that apparently self-assured young adolescents may take time to accustom themselves to the new situation. Some may need a great deal of understanding, reassurance and tactful direction.' And it may be possible to put a disturbed or difficult pupil into this therapeutic situation. 'If the purpose of the visiting is mainly to help the pupil, this should be made clear confidentially,' assuming there's a good relationship between school and host.

End of year performance

Pupils might like to prepare a series of performances at their school for the parents and under-fives with whom they have had contact during the year, with refreshments made by the pupils who will be taking the next course.

The importance of the teacher/pupil relationship

This is the time when it is vital to have the right adolescent/adult relationships, even more so in a course where human relationships and child development studies are inextricably linked. One survey showed that pupils want adults who 'listen, try to understand, are tactful and don't impose formality for the sake of preserving distance. The sensitive, sympathetic teacher will be acting in a parental role on these courses. By their attitudes, values and teaching on meeting the needs of children, some change will be effected in the young people who up to this point have been influenced only by their own upbringing. It's not unreasonable to hope that those from homes short on communication and play may try to provide greater opportunities for their own children. Despite a wealth of materials to use, 'in the long run it is the attitudes of the adults which will count the most. If they practice what they preach, they will be heeded and it should not be forgotten that a sense of humour is worth a great deal.'

'Effective education is learning to care. Implicit is a reasonable chance pupils will try to develop a loving, warm, encouraging atmosphere for their children.'

Follow-up activities

These should take place all year from the time of the first visit:

1 Written records

Some pupils may be able to make coherent notes on their observation. Able pupils are capable of keeping significant records, including an attempt at an individual child study.

2 Discussion

All pupils will be able to talk about their first-hand experiences, probably covering:

- a) Use of play materials. Popular and unpopular ones? Comfort toys. What do assertive or timid children prefer?
- b) What have children been talking about? Pupils need to learn how to *listen* well;
- c) Children's reactions to stories, rhymes, singing etc. What appealed most? Why?
- d) When have children behaved in difficult ways? Could this have been avoided? What responses did adults take?
- e) What did children say about things they created? Pupils could bring in a few items:
- f) How have children used adventure equipment and structural materials?

Invite pupils to discuss play enrichment activities, illustrations in children's books, the making of anthologies of rhymes etc., to watch and comment on children's TV, watch films about children at play or in hospital. The learning is enhanced if specialists come to school to discuss their work, e.g. health visitor, speech therapist, psychologist, doctor, children's nurse, infant teacher etc.

'Finally, and perhaps most important of all, will be the participation of members of the school staff who can, in the light of their specialist knowledge, underline the learning situations arising from every kind of play activity.'

Specialisms listed: maths / art and craft / health education / science / English / physical education / music / biology.

'What we know all children will need'

Cynthia quotes Eric Midwinter, director of Liverpool Education Priority Area: 'It is time we educated for what we know all children will need, rather than what we hope some will become. Most will

be, as well as workers in everyday jobs, householders, citizens, tax and/or rent payers, pursuers of leisure, consumers, lovers, spouses and parents. Those are the fields in which the young adult should be fully educated, with practical examination of each field in its natural condition at the core of each study.'

Organisation of courses: how to do it

One keen teacher's efforts are greatly strengthened if at least one other can be recruited. The head's support is all-important: s/he may see such a course as essential for fifth-year pupils; or as an option for fourth, fifth or sixth-formers. If the school is undergoing 'major curriculum change', it's not the right time to start. At least two or three enthusiastic teachers should be involved and meet to consider these four questions.

1 What kind of course and for whom?

It's a good idea to start with a year's pilot with a small number of pupils, maybe for sixth-formers. Having resolved teething problems, the second year will run smoothly. A teacher said, 'I feel I'm better organised this year. It's not so difficult as last year.'

Will the course be for all fifth-formers? Boys as well? (Where secondary boys are involved in activities with young children, the adults concerned speak highly of their competence, interest and sense of responsibility.) Include academic pupils? Exam or not? How will it fit into other departments? At least six months are needed to plan; ideally 9-to-12. An exam can ensure the course is 'well run, with teaching of the best possible standard because of the very nature of the work.'

Fifth and sixth-formers have been found to be especially engaged with these courses, as the subject is relevant to only a few years' hence. 'The fourth year is the earliest desirable stage to start.'

Most boys of all abilities are very interested., ‘straining at the leash to become men’: their important role as fathers appeals. A fourth-year boy who could barely read said the playgroup was better than school; he wished he could be there all week. The playgroup leader spoke in glowing terms of his contribution.’ He realised at last he had something give. This will benefit his future children. A case like this can convince headteachers to promote the courses.

2 How much time?

‘The most successful courses are those where a whole morning or whole afternoon is allocated.’ giving a chance to spend enough time observing young children’s routines, making food, or visiting relevant places. Rushing through in one hour leads to irritation. If the timetable allows for an extra session for discussion or individual studies, so much the better. ‘Starting with short or split sessions is courting disaster as the course will be purely theoretical and not brought to life with a whole variety of learning situations.’

3 Which teachers will be involved?

Experienced teachers. Those who are also parents can have much to discover. One said, ‘I have four children but when I started to teach this course, there was an awful lot I needed to learn about child development.’ And only use teachers who really want to do it, and are not pushed into it. They must be prepared that the course might revive painful childhood memories for them as well as for pupils. Whichever teachers initiate the course, ‘what really matters is that the skills of different people are used to support it. No one teacher is expected to know all that’s needed. This can raise timetable problems, but where there is a will, there is a way. Problems can be overcome if staff relationships are sound.’

4 Contribution to be made by people working outside school

‘Careful planning will lead to an absolute wealth of experience from people who work with young children.’ Cynthia cites health visitor, health education officer, family planning person, marriage guidance counsellor, infant headteacher, social worker, first aid and home nursing adviser, educational psychologist. ‘Parents should not be forgotten. There is a strong case for trying to involve parents of the pupils.’ It would improve home-school relationships and also show parents about the course so they are less likely to offer conflicting advice once their children have babies. If not enough parents can attend due to their work, invite young mothers to the class. ‘The one thing that must be remembered when using anyone who’s not a teacher is they should be asked to speak for a short time and rely on questions and discussion to elicit what pupils want to know.’ If there’s a local advisory teacher, s/he can help provide contacts, in-service training and draw teachers together.

‘It is harder for parents to recognise emotional and egotistical needs than physical ones. When young children choose the most indiscreet time for testing their parents’ strength, parents feel vulnerable. Their children are a walking testimonial for the sort of people they are.’ (Newson 1973.) Elizabeth Newson did not believe in absolute consistency. ‘Human beings are inconsistent anyway. Children must learn to live with this in the family. Within a permanent loving relationship, the child comes to terms with variations in human behaviour such as being abstracted, moody or failing to understand. There is plenty of time for mistakes to be made and forgiven on both sides.’ Michael Rutter (1972) emphasises that warmth between all family members is crucial, not just between mother and child, and that a child needs to become attached to more than one person. John Bowlby, who has been misinterpreted, wrote, ‘It is an excellent plan to accustom babies and small children to be cared for now and then by someone else. Only in this way can mothers have the freedom to have some time released from child care to shop in peace or be with friends.’

Bowlby and Rutter agree that if the mother works, high quality stable care by someone else is not harmful. Routine is also important. Nurture groups for under-fives can provide reassuring experiences to compensate for chaotic home life which can lead to withdrawal or aggression (Marjorie Boxall 1973.) 'Consideration of what being a parent means, before this stage of life has been reached, will not be easy.' It is closely tied up with relationships and the attitudes people have towards one another.'

The importance of communication/language development

Babies and children need one-to-one clear communication from adults in order to develop cognitively fully. Ages three to four is the time of the fastest language development, with incessant chatter and 'why?' questions, making it hard for parents not to flag. Educationalist Eric Hawkins suggested that ante-natal/post-natal clinics teach babies' linguistic needs. Teenage pupils could help by one-to-one talking with disadvantaged small children.

A unit scheme and learning resources available

Cynthia suggests these units:

1 Family and child studies

Marriage / Employment / Conception and birth / Growth and development of a baby / Health and social services / Growth and development of a young child – physical, intellectual, social, emotional, educational / Children in special circumstances / Family and kinship / The community / Adolescence / Leisure.

2 People who contribute to a learning situation

Discussion to promote thinking, learning and development of caring attitudes: Use: teachers (other disciplines, nursery/infant schools) /

Pupils (own experiences, demonstration of skills to others) / Community workers / Young children (being themselves, studying their needs and how to meet the needs) / Parents (own experience).

‘Pupils themselves often have a very considerable contribution to make. Teachers who are prepared to listen to and encourage them find they can offer a first-hand account of an experience or show a skill to the others. Some could crochet, cook, make toys/simple musical instruments/puppets, or perform songs from their own cultures. This will only happen when the group feels settled and sure of the teacher whose role is of supporter and encourager. One boy described his own learning difficulties to a group of sixth formers and had written very movingly about how he and his family coped with a severely handicapped sister.’

3 Resources

Use TV or radio programmes for schools and young parents. Watch films yourself before showing to the class. Use books, magazines and pictures. Make handouts with concise information. Use teaching packs selectively. Use work sheets and questionnaires to see if the pupils are learning. (Some might disagree with this ‘testing.’)

4 Adolescence

Consider current relationships within and outside the family/ examine the way in which behaviour is affected by relationships and emotions. Know that self-control, accepting responsibility, awareness of the needs of others and a caring concern for them are part of a life which is satisfying and contributes to the quality of individual and communal life. Identify factors which make for good physical health and understand effects of neglect and disease on the body and mind. Right food (good nutrition and avoidance of obesity.) / Fresh air, exercise and sleep

/Freedom from social/contagious diseases: alcohol, smoking, drugs, VD
/ Have knowledge of the physiological effects of puberty.

5 Family and kinship

Compare family patterns, including ethnic groups in Britain. Look at family life in other societies, recognise the role of parents and the role of children in the family. Consider how the changing roles of the sexes affect parent roles / Examine the roles of siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents; consider the importance of their contribution to family life. / Identify social and other problems which affect family life: Unemployment, poor housing, long working hours etc./ One-parent families / Unsatisfactory relationships. / Make positive suggestions for the development and maintenance of good, warm relationships in the family.

6 Marriage

Describe the procedure for getting married in register office or religious venues. Explain the legal position of those who are married, have common law marriage or in civil partnership;

Explain economic and financial aspects of marriage – cost of getting married, flat renting, house buying, furnishing etc.;

Consider responsibilities of husbands and wives to each other - legally, morally, emotionally and in terms of relationships;

Identify problems which may lead to a marriage breakdown.

7 Conception and birth

Explain the human reproductive process and how conception takes place. Compare views on family planning. Consider own opinion as an individual and member of cultural group. Know current methods.

Recognise the importance of heredity in determining that every individual is unique;

Have a knowledge of the development of the embryo and how drugs, disease, smoking and the mother's emotional state can affect it;

Identify the importance for the pregnant mother of good nutrition, ante-natal care, good health, mental and physical and explain why;

Describe father's role; suggest ways he can support the mother;
Have a knowledge of the general preparation to be made for the baby: childbirth preparation classes; feeding methods;
How a baby is born, what effects the birth has on mother, father, baby and siblings.

8 Growth and development of a baby

Identify physical and emotional needs of a very young baby; explain how to satisfy them.: food, warmth, sleep, clothing, shelter, bond with mother or substitute, bond with father;

Support services as part of post-natal care: health centre, GP, health visitor, immunisation, welfare foods, developmental checks;

Needs of older baby: how to meet them and why they are important: correct diet for body and brain development / warmth and clothing / protection from disease and accidents / correct treatment of minor ailments / exercise, fresh air, sleep;

Recognise importance of relationship between mother and baby, father and baby, siblings and baby. Know that babies need a regular routine and a loving and secure atmosphere for emotional needs to be satisfied.

How fathers can play a part in caring, and how they can help reduce stress between mother and baby;

Explain possible effects on baby of separations: Series of baby minders/residential or daycare/hospital for baby or mother/visits to relative or friend while mother shops/regular mother substitute/babysitter;

How do parents communicate positively with baby; how this stimulates babbling and beginnings of language. Importance of talking, singing, finger plays and nursing;

How to provide an enriched environment so baby increases coordination skills through playing and interacting with adults. Playthings, visual opportunities. Effects of over-stimulation;

List stages: sitting up, crawling, teething, standing, walking, talking. Know that over-high expectations of parents are as bad for the child as lack of encouragement in progress.

9 Physical growth and development of young child

How to meet child's physical development needs. Plan and prepare family meals suitable for young child: correct nutrition. Help with feeding/choice of foods. Use of money, time and facilities;

How to clothe child: cost, durability; make clothes on minimum budget. Need for exercise and fresh air. How to meet this in heavily built-up areas or when mother works;

How to deal with taking a temperature / nursing a fever / giving drugs and medication / keeping a sick child occupied / identify essential features of diets for sick children / home/ hygiene / preparation for hospital treatment /Examine the principles of good dental care: right foods / cleaning teeth / regular check-ups. /How to make home safe to prevent accidents: protection from suffocation, burns, scalds, poisoning, electrocution, falls etc. / How to cope if there is a fire Identify danger areas outside the home: roads, traffic / strangers / derelict sites and cars/ basic first aid. Make first aid kit to treat: unconsciousness and mouth to mouth resuscitation / shock / cuts and grazes / burns and scalds / choking and poisoning / fainting and fits / foreign bodies and fits.

10 Intellectual, social and emotional development of young child and how to meet needs

Recognise importance of play and new experiences;

Recognise kinds/stages of play; toys suitable for the home;

Play facilities outside the home. Pre-school provision: compare day nurseries, nursery schools, playgroups, mothers' clubs, creches, child minders, grandparents;

Importance of communication: being talked to, listened to, read to, sung with adults for language development;

Aesthetic and creative appreciation: songs, music, nature, living things, tactile experiences e.g. colour, shape, texture / visit places offering expansion of experience e.g. sea, countryside;

How emotions (love, hate jealousy, fear, guilt, shame etc.) affect behaviour; how play provides an outlet;

Compare ways in which children are taught to behave in socially acceptable ways. How child's age affects understanding of right and wrong. Rewards, deterrent, discipline in the family;

Examine over-possessive, authoritarian, over-permissive and democratic parenting; how parents' relationship with children affects the child's behaviour;

Child's needs for encouragement, praise, warm and positive attitudes;

Need to be accepted as an individual;

How child learns to become independent for short periods from parents / encouragement to become more self-sufficient.

11 Children in special circumstances

How people cope with physical or mental handicapped child / the support services to help (local authority or voluntary);

Problems in would-be adoptive parents and adopted child;

Problems of single or teenage parent: finance, housing, employment, coping alone etc.;

Why children are in care (foster or residential); the efforts to provide good homes for them;

Work of local authority social workers, NSPCC, Barnardo's, etc etc in caring for children, preventing cruelty or family break-up.

Learning experiences relevant to the course, particularly with young children

Toy shops, children's equipment departments, museums

Pupils can learn how toys are made; might make some themselves. They'll see the prices of babies' clothes and equipment. Local museums might have a collection of old toys which lead to discussing how children used live. 'Toys belonged to the well-to-do. Children of the past didn't have a childhood as we know it: not realised by many youngsters. This could lead to interesting comparisons with children's lives in poor countries today.' Pupils in rural areas could visit all of these in one day.

Local area and homes

Many youngsters don't know what is provided in their area. It would be worthwhile to do research and draw a map. 'Some teaching on who is responsible for what is essential, but this can easily be a bore if not related to some practical exercise. Mothers at home and childminders might welcome help. The health visitor could suggest likely people. In rural areas this might be the only way that pupils could get experience with under-fives.

Practical creative sessions in schools

Pupils can make simple family meals as they learn about nutrition. Glove puppets are fun: students can make up their own scripts for little plays for children, and can write and illustrate stories. 'A surprising level of talent emerges.' Role-play can examine family relationships (particularly between teenagers and parents.) And 'a session or two with thick paint, junk, clay and playdough in a very unstructured way is not only creative and therapeutic but allows youngsters to work through their own natural wish to play with these things in the nursery or playgroup. If this is worked out of their systems beforehand, there is less likelihood of their taking over from under-fives – which is a common error made by adults who do not realise that by doing this, they are interfering in and destroying the child's own creative activity.' 'The most awkward pupils will gradually mellow and take part with interest and

enthusiasm.’ Teachers say how normally noisy pupils become quiet, relaxed and peaceful. ‘Showing films of under-fives engaged in the same activities at the same time goes down very well.’

Playgroups, nursery class, day nurseries, mothers’ clubs

If pupils aren’t carefully prepared for these visits, taught about child development beforehand, it puts an unreasonable onus on staff, though some might show a great interest and give lots of encouragement. ‘It’s often been noted that under these circumstances, underachieving boys and girls (often nearly school refusers) flourish and develop a new maturity. As there’s something they can do, they become interested and find it rewarding. If staff aren’t very giving, there can be a ‘couple of bored gum-chewing youngsters who come when they feel like it, aren’t much help when they do, and refuse friendly offers made by the adult in charge.’

It's important to place pupils only in well-run venues. ‘Some teachers say that if their youngsters don’t see second-rate provision, they will never know what is good or bad, but exposing them to negative experiences does not seem right.’ Infant schools might offer placements but that excludes experience with under-fives. Playgroups don’t take under-threes. A variety of placements will deal with all stages of development. The school must be careful not to overburden the under-fives provision. Send only two pupils per session. Make sure no more than two schools use the same provision.

Evaluation

Assessment of progress must recognise the needs of the less academic pupils. Continuous assessment is preferable to written work. When someone from the exam board was expected at a school to see a display of what had been learnt, ‘several pupils who

had tended to drift through the course were suddenly motivated to make a tremendous effort to finish work and make and collect things to make a really attractive display: a last-minute surge of effort. Distant goals in education seem such a long way off for many young people that they seem unreal. It's only the goal just within reach that holds any relevance.'

Cynthia insists on active, never passive, involvement. 'Pupils must be tested, they must make a contribution of their own, they must be put into situations where they think for themselves through pupil-centred activities. Only through deep involvement will young people find the course rewarding and something that enables them to be successful. Because of the very nature of the work involved, this kind of course cannot afford to be associated with failure. It is far better to run a simple course with few objectives which can be reached rather than a wide one with so many goals that few, if any, are ever reached.'

She found that interest in the course quickly outstripped supply: 24 girls did the course one year; 70 applied for the next. The Schools Council's *Enquiry on Young Leavers* (1968) revealed that '78% thought things to do with running a home and bringing up children were very important. From 14-to-15 years there is a real chance of effecting change. After the exhausting phase of early puberty, the youngster is questioning his role in life.' As Eva Frommer wrote, 'The epoch of puberty and adolescence can be regarded as a recapitulation and transformation of the first epoch of life. It provides a second chance.' This is where parenthood education can be of such interest.

Cynthia concludes: 'Courses in child development should lead to the intellectual potential of the individual being developed so that intellect and judgment can be directed responsibly towards people

and situations. There must be an acceptance of responsibility, a sense of achievement, an ability to carry authority, and a caring, considerate style of life leading to a steady growth in maturity. Courses of this kind will make a heavy demand on staff, resources, money and time but they must be of the highest quality, for within them can lie the future of the next generation.'

Winifred Hargreaves (*Education for Family Living 1966*), also great a fan of this education, suggests 'Although there might be some worth in older pupils observing children in nurseries or infant schools, wherever it's practicable, it might be more beneficial if three or four children of the lowest age group in the infant school could come to the home economics rooms to live for part of a normal day in home conditions.' She recommends that as many parents don't know where to go for advice or information, all school leavers should be informed about all the opportunities available.

Chapter Twenty-seven

What makes for memorable parenthood education?

*Knowledge **about** things, as distinguished from living or sympathetic acquaintance **with** them, touches only the outer surface of reality.*

William James

It's one thing to learn a skill; another to reach understanding. This chapter argues for teaching in experiential ways to enable deep and memorable learning, developing a vivid appreciation of the complex emotional life of everyone in a family. It recommends a belt-and-braces approach: a great variety of methods and topics to ensure appeal to students of all types. They need to be chosen to suit the students but without assumptions about what the class are interested in. Students should be consulted: tell them your choices, but make room for their own ideas too.

Is parenthood an art, science, skill or all three? Let us do some word associations to these terms. These are mine. Parenting and parenthood education, at their best, include them all.

Art Imagination / Creativity / Feelings / Uncertainty / Empathy / Sensitivity / Intuition / Aha! feeling / Enlightenment / Knowing from the inside / Not in the head / Insights / Delight / Beauty / Humour.

Science Information / Evidence / Certainty / Hypotheses / Questioning / Curiosity / Observation / Experiment / Objectivity / Investigation / Accuracy / Reports.

Skill Competence / Knowledge / Technique / Advice / Training / Education / Reinforcement / Experience / Remembering / Second nature/ Expertise / Tried and tested.

What does it mean to really understand?

A colleague once asked: 'When you phone me at home, please ring my mobile phone, not my landline.' I didn't know why. Later she explained. When the landline rang, it might wake her toddler but the noise of the mobile didn't. I was given a reason. Ah! Now it made sense. I then could respect her wishes from a position of empathy and insight. Children in the Venezuelan jungle brought up by the 'continuum concept,' reports anthropologist Jean Liedloff, are allowed to feel, and therefore understand the pain of heat, and are not told in the abstract to avoid fire.

We have probably never pondered in detail what it means to 'understand.' It's not about superficial quick thoughts. It's to do with *wanting* to understand, with an open mind, willing to correct your misconceptions, feeling curious, seeing something new, giving it enough time and continuing over time, putting yourself in another's shoes, seeing through their eyes, remembering what you learn, checking you got it right, using intuition and insight, developing emotional intelligence, not just cognitive, having 'aha' moments. 'Ah, *now* I understand!

Understanding means asking questions: to get under, to stand under, to see clearly, to dig under the surface, to stay still and stand still until you get it, to get inside, as well as under. It takes patience, time, goodwill, generosity, support. What is understood might challenge a deep belief or personality trait. Thorough parenthood education enables students to reach memorable understanding of what it can really be like to be a parent, a baby, a child and of what they all need - and why.

To feel understood: what does that mean?

As adults we expect others to understand us. Babies and children have the same right. How many of us feel really understood by at

least one person? Feeling understood brings a sense of relief, that one is not alone and not blamed. We say something is ‘understandable.’ But there are many blocks to understanding.

A: I don’t understand why you did that (or said that)

B: I can tell you if you want to know

A: I don’t want to know.

A letter in the paper from a woman who was pushed in front of a (stationary) bus by a teenage boy, asks, ‘What would make him do that?’ I suspect the poor woman’s question was rhetorical. Many of the terrible problems in society are due to people at all levels ignoring the need for full, deep answers to that very question.

How many children and teenagers are understood (or feel understood) by parents, school staff, friends, classmates, boyfriend or girlfriend or themselves? A common complaint by youngsters is, ‘You don’t understand’ They might be right. How far do adults deeply understand the emotional needs of babies, children and adolescents? When child development is taught, it must therefore emphasise the emotional needs of each stage of childhood and how these needs are best met.

The question ‘Why?’

Small children always ask, ‘Why?’, then might give up. Do we want to encourage children to ask why? A child is told to do something. ‘Why?’ ‘Because I say so.’ Or the adult asks, ‘Why did you do that?’ The child doesn’t know, remains silent or says, ‘I don’t know.’ Does the adult really want to know? It’s up to adults to research and understand why children do what they do. It is important to understand other cultures. Travel ‘broadens the mind.’ The baby, child or teenager is another culture, another country. Their psychology is a form of travel in foreign lands.

Emotional understanding, cognitive information and practical skills

Having the skill of empathy is not enough. Educators believe children must be encouraged and motivated to care. Dr Dana McDermott

There's been a debate amongst experts: teach either child development or parenting. Both are needed. They overlap. Teaching child development, without considering how parents can best respond to the various milestones, is incomplete. Teaching parenting without considering the 'ages and stages' of childhood isn't the whole story. Students can find both fascinating if taught well, with relevant practical experiences.

The case of the crying baby

Thorough parenthood education includes both emotional understanding and cognitive information, reinforcing each other. For example, the crying baby. Some teenagers object that it would 'spoil' a baby if it is picked up whenever it cries. This needs to be understood or questioned in a curious, friendly way. Was this their own experience as a child? Are they repeating what they have heard from other people? Do they fear being taken over and controlled by a baby determined to ruin their night's sleep? Do they think that the baby is doing it on purpose? How would they feel if they, as young people, were distressed and in tears and no one came? Through role-play and other drama techniques they experience what it is like to be a crying baby who is ignored. Neuroscience enables us to present, in imaginative ways, scientific facts to teenagers about what it does to a young baby's brain to be left to cry for substantial periods. A sound recording and a film clip of a crying baby provide additional experience. Just telling teenagers that it is important to pick up a baby when it cries would have little impact and be unlikely to be remembered.

So the understanding deepens. What about the parents? Students now understand what it is like to be a crying baby, why it might be crying and what crying does to its brain. We move on to the parents. How do parents feel when their baby won't stop crying? How does it affect their bodies? What practical steps are needed to deal with their crying baby? See the website of *First Music* to discuss lullabies and music to soothe crying babies (and parents!)

Understanding, without knowing what to do, is incomplete. Knowing what to do, without understanding why, is incomplete. Approach a topic from all angles in belt and braces style, using all the senses and the intellect too. This is thorough education.

Fear of feelings

Being a parent is the most wonderful thing and the most terrible thing to happen to a woman. Jehanne Markham

Delving into family matters carries the risk of stirring up strong, painful feelings. Some adults are afraid of difficult emotions in themselves and others. They prefer to keep them under the surface, fearing what might happen if they were expressed or acted out. But parenthood is a messy business. Lots of difficult or unpleasant feelings by babies, children, teenagers and adults get expressed, challenged, denied, acted out, sometimes in overwhelming ways. Parenthood education looks at all these feelings. They are real, common, likely to come up in any family of any social class. That is why we teach the course: to prepare students for them; help them rehearse and become familiar with a repertoire of healthy ways to manage and respond to them.

A useful but possibly scary concept is that of the 'raw spot:' something which touches the most painful emotions inside us and which, when evoked, can lead to irrational behaviour. An effective

course is, by its nature, intensive, not superficial. Teachers need enough support when the going has been tough. Teachers of drama are on average more likely to feel comfortable exploring difficult feelings. Said one, 'We concentrate a lot on basic emotions, on what they make us feel, how they make us act and how they can make other people feel towards us.'

The style and tone of parenthood teaching

Students' interest in this subject is intrinsic and instinctual, related to romance, sex and reproduction. So there is no need for an authoritarian, punitive style of teaching it. In fact, the relationship of the parenthood teacher with students needs to be rather special. To quote Gordon again about therapy: 'What is shown time and time again is that it is the quality of the therapeutic relationship that makes a difference.' I am put in mind of a certain history teacher, one of those 'authentic professionals,' to use the American Paul Goodman's term, to whom teaching was far more than a job. He knew every student in his large east London comprehensive, spoke to them with great respect and got involved with them in out-of-school projects. I met some teenage girls whom he had taught. One said, 'I used to hate history at primary school. Now I love it since we had Mr S.' You meet adults who recall with fondness and gratitude a teacher who meant a lot to them, perhaps changed their life, made them feel taller, imparted wisdom which went deep, was remembered. If teachers of parenthood can achieve these types of relationships, the material will become embedded and far likelier to have good effects once students have their babies. The nurturing care from teachers will be transferred to the new children.

Advice from Rice

We met Bill Rice in Volume One. In *Health Education in Schools*, he argues that we should prepare students for later life experience - and that the *tone* of the setting is vital. He recommends a 'social diagnosis' to assess students' needs. That needs tact and sensitivity.

‘There has to be a shared feeling that “he or she [the teacher] knows and understands my problems”.’ If so, a relaxed, trusting exchange of views and ideas is possible. Don’t let desks or chairs create barriers. The room must not be too crowded or too big. Spread sessions over time, not too close together: research has shown the benefits. Don’t let sessions last too long and make sure no one interrupts anyone else. The teacher might need to discretely help shy students, curb the over-talkative and fill in any awkward gaps in the conversation. He or she needs to know the background of every student, in order to understand why a sensitive topic – which cannot be avoided – might be upsetting, and to know how to respond.

‘If it is difficult at first to foster conversation, use case studies, role-plays, questionnaires and other written work.’ Small groups are by far the best: Rice says ideally five or six young people. Others advocate eight to ten – best for a discussion. 15-to-18 is manageable, but everyone should be able to see everyone else.

If you have to have 30, use two adults; divide students into small groups. If you invite outside speakers, know them well. Make sure the teacher briefs them in advance. A group of six holding a discussion with others observing, then taking their turn, is another method, honing the students’ powers of observation.

Sensitive subjects/support for students who get upset

It is understandable that teachers might fear the emotional impact of topics such as domestic violence, neglect, abuse of all kinds, alcohol and drug misuse by parents, divorce and separation, imprisonment, sibling problems, step-families, fostering and adoption, pregnancy, abortion, miscarriage, stillbirth, caring roles due to family disability or illness, and bereavement. They are so

common in every social class that there are bound to be several students in every lesson affected by at least one topic and maybe more (e.g. there are over 300,000 children with a parent in prison in England and Wales.) It is unwise, even dangerous, if students leave a session upset, maybe traumatised, with no one to talk to. The teacher must know about students who have been fostered or adopted (a number increasing year by year); they are likely to find the subject compelling but possibly upsetting; a pastoral eye must be kept on them. Students need reassurance that they have the right to remain silent about their personal and family lives and that this will be respected. They can change their minds later.

As well as parenthood education, every school needs a plethora of services for pupils needing extra therapeutic help: for example, play therapy, counselling, nurture groups, Drawing and Talking, buddying, arts therapies, or mentoring: a belt-and-braces approach so that the needs of not a single child or adolescent are unmet. And this help must last as long it is needed.

There should be support built into a parenthood programme. For instance, it is estimated that one in five children have witnessed or been exposed to domestic violence. Almost 80 percent of domestic violence is witnessed by children (National Centre for Domestic Violence.) How will they feel when the subject is discussed? Support can take several forms:

- The teacher is trained, skilled and supported in supervision to notice signs of distress and is able to say things to the whole class to address this. For example, ‘it is very common for children to hear their parents fighting and this can have very bad effects on them. They need to talk about it. Luckily there is help and next week I’ll bring in some leaflets about where people can get help and we can discuss domestic violence;’

- And the teacher needs to approach distressed students as soon after the session as possible to talk and, if needed, arrange one-to-one counselling, therapy or family therapy;
- Students must know the teacher can't promise confidentiality if there is cause for worry about what's disclosed;
- The teacher should stress that many, if not most, families and children experience at least one significant problem and that this can lead to anger and depression in children and young people. That is normal, understandable and shouldn't be denied. It is also worth pointing out that parents who do not do the best job are usually victims themselves of a poor childhood or current factors such as poverty which affect their mood and behaviour;
- If you don't know the students (you're a tutor from outside, or this is a class you've never met), you need to find out in good time before the lesson about students with poor mental health, limited English, low literacy levels, or who have especially difficult home circumstances, or are fostered or adopted, in order to meet needs and remain as diplomatic as possible;
- We can hypothesise that it is less likely that students with deep emotional disturbance will become better parents as a result of these lessons. They might need help now, as well as during future parenthood. The sorts of parenthood education possible in schools are unlikely to be sufficient for their more extreme needs now and in future;
- When alternative methods of upbringing are discussed - for example, forfeits for unacceptable behaviour instead of hitting - students can understand their parents did not have a repertoire of methods and simply copied the way they themselves had been brought up. They had no formal preparation at school or anywhere else for the difficult job of parenting;
- A comprehensive set of leaflets should be easily available at every session dealing with sensitive topics and how to get help, e.g. groups for children of alcoholics. Many students who need help won't take it up, but the opportunity should be there;

- Students should be forewarned at the start of the course, and reminded and reassured at the start of each session, that there might be topics which upset them and that they are free to leave the room, not something to feel embarrassed or ashamed about. There must be a member of staff, at any level, available to whom a distressed student can go, and who is trained and supported by supervision to respond;
- The teacher must have the skill to know if and when to call a halt to a sensitive discussion for the time being and to lift the mood by a neutral or light-hearted activity;
- During a session, disclosures might be made concerning family or other circumstances, or there might be some hint that a disclosure could be necessary. The safeguarding policy of the school must be well known by the teacher who can liaise as soon as possible with the person in charge of safeguarding. The student is to be told that this is happening. The teacher should have access to support and supervision as needed;
- It is positive if distress is discovered so that students get help at this age and not wait till the problems accumulate during adult life and parenthood. This depends on enough resources at the school and the community, with therapeutic help from voluntary and statutory organisations. If the school itself resembles a therapeutic community, every student (and staff member) is likely to enjoy better mental health. But that would not address the problems of dramatic and often long-standing harm and deprivation that some students have experienced and which need substantial, sustained, one-to-one help;
- A tactful way to enable vulnerable students to get support is to provide a 'worry box' in a discreet corner of the room at every session into which they can post a note with their name. The relevant staff will then follow up as soon as possible. Of course, this could be of limited use for students who are not good at writing or who know little English, though translators within the school could be found;

- That is why the teacher needs to emphasise time after time how welcome all students are to approach him or her after the session or during the day or week, or to approach a staff member of their choice. Adults need to know how to listen actively, and without showing condemnation or judgement. This is especially important for students who are very withdrawn, or who ‘present well,’ the sort who no one would dream of as having an emotional problem needing help. But there are many. Their experience at home and school might have conditioned them to believe that it is shameful to admit or show distress. Their emotional development might be way behind their intellectual and social development;
- The school needs to have comprehensive, up-to-date knowledge of every resource in the locality offering help of all kinds with all problems. This research should be in the job description of at least one interested member of staff. A full range of leaflets and posters should be on show for students and their families. (The internet is of value but information on paper has extra value.) Students could help staff to do this research. Good speakers could be invited to assemblies to describe in lively terms the work of their agencies. Parents could be invited in for social events where this information is publicised. It would save effort if one school collected all this information to share with other local schools;
- If no specialist help is available locally, the school needs to gather materials about information, advice and help from regional or national bodies.;
- Last but by no means least, every staff member delivering this education needs good quality support and supervision, whether weekly or as required. They should never feel alone.

Subtleties: obvious / subtle problems in the family

As teenagers mature and have received a good grounding in the basics of good parenting, a time comes when we can address the more subtle aspects of family life. They can be taught about the findings of Dr Brazelton: the innate personality of each unique newborn baby and the job of its parents to study this from day one and respond as needed. The vehement emotion between some siblings is another area likely to resonate with young people and be of great interest. (See Judy Dunn's books.) How do parents best deal with two or more children to minimise the agony? Is it possible not to have favourites? Comparison between siblings is a danger. If one child is seen to be favoured, however subtly, this can store up enormous resentment and lead to low self-esteem. If students trust the teacher and their classmates, they might risk giving examples from their own home life. These can be acted out by others in the manner of playback theatre.

Families which appear stable and successful – parents still together, everyone provided for, no obvious problems - can nevertheless have members who suffer emotionally and even commit suicide. Everyone is incredulous. The reasons might be hard to fathom. It is important to discuss with teenagers the dangers to mental health which can develop unawares in the seemingly best of families. Another danger is the family of high achievers: the child who isn't one might feel hopelessly inferior. Further, if sensitive children are teased and feel humiliated, put down or criticised over long periods, the scars can last a lifetime unless therapy or a therapeutic relationship with a partner, for example, comes to the rescue.

Teaching about controversial issues

Often the result of teaching a topic is not clearer ideas but greater confusion. This has to be tolerated as a stage in moving towards an independent opinion.
Marjorie Klaus, Close Up Foundation, US

Robert Stradling et al 1984 have interesting things to say in their evaluation of parenthood classes. 'There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to dealing in the classroom with tricky issues – and some parenting topics certainly are controversial. A neutral, objective or even balanced stance is not realistic. 'The approach teachers adopt must take into account the circumstances or climate encountered in each classroom' (consensus? polarised views), 'the specific constraints operating in each school (what methods predominate in other lessons?) 'and the knowledge, values and experiences which pupils already have.' A teacher might attempt a neutral stance, and might be therefore exposed to views he or she hasn't thought of, but it can become artificial, and not suiting the teacher's personality. Pupils know you are not neutral and will try to guess what you think. So state your views, make them above board, but only after discussion. Treat dissent with respect, make sure your views don't inhibit what children want to say, or tempt them to oppose you on principle. Of course, adapt what you do to the ages and abilities; be responsive to the reactions to the lesson's content and methods.

Men teaching parenthood raises its status. After all, parenting is mostly done by women who are already undervalued. Women and parenthood both have low status. If men at the top levels in a school teach do the teaching, even better.

Is there such a thing as a balanced range of opinions? 'Truth' is a grey area, issues rarely black and white. Your class might take polarised opinions: in that case, the teacher could suggest the middle ground. And if all the class have the same view, it can be great fun, even essential, to take a devil's advocate approach. It stimulates discussion, livens things up, can include parody and exaggeration. Use it if you have 25 minutes left and the discussion has dried up. Unexpected, surprising topics increase the number of perspectives, expand the range. Students can make sense of what

they learn in the light of their own family experiences. Of course, there's always the danger, say the authors, that parents will worry if they hear of your alleged views. And be conscious of a huge range of religious and cultural values and practices represented in your school: it helps community understanding when students learn about each others' systems.

You might experience dilemmas: high emotion, unquestioning consensus, apathy, low motivation, hostility, prejudice. Four methods are suggested to help you cope:

- *Distancing*: if the topic is very sensitive, talk about it in past times or in other countries or even with reference to animals
- *Compensatory procedures*: use these when views are based on ignorance. The teacher becomes more directive, highlighting the contradictions in what's expressed, playing devil's advocate, getting students to reverse roles by arguing the opposite. The onus is put on students to consider other views
- *Empathy*: use role-play, simulation, vicarious experiences of all kinds via films, plays, novels and comics
- *Exploratory*: students can explore a topic which is not clear to them by field work in the local community. This can bring home the topic's wider implications.

The overall aims are to get students to:

- Appreciate the complexity of the issue;
- Know how to get information about it;
- Recognise gaps and limitations in information;
- Evaluate the bias of the information givers
- Recognise emotional rhetoric, an appeal to prejudice;
- Handle conflicting evidence and accounts.

Asking such questions is probably more important than

always being able to find the answers. Robert Stradling

Is teaching relationships the same as teaching parenting?

No. Certainly there are qualities needed for good relationships which are applicable to parenthood as well:

Empathy	Sense of humour
Self-control	Assertiveness
Good listening	Confidence
Respect	Being proactive
Tolerance	Patience.

But there are many others specific to parenthood:

- Knowledge and understanding of child development, remembered once one becomes a parent;
- Ability to notice and adapt to how the baby, child and teenager changes over the years;
- Appreciation and acceptance of how parenthood changes your life for many years;
- Realisation of how parenthood can change your self-image, raise or lower your self-esteem; and the need to maintain self-esteem despite a drop in status;
- Understanding how the low value/status given to parenthood by our culture can affect parents' sense of worth and identity;
- Understanding how parenthood can evoke a parent's early childhood experiences and how this affects parenting;
- Knowing how parenthood affects relationship with partner;
- Ability to cope with unprecedented exhaustion;
- Realising the need for social supportive networks to prevent isolation or depression;

- Realising that there might be a need to seek specialist help, information, support and advice;
- Interest in babies, children and teenagers;
- Liking and empathy for babies, children and teenagers;
- Ability to accept, understand and nurture whoever is born to you for many years e.g. special needs child, or one of very different and possibly incompatible temperament (the child might remind the parent of a bitterly estranged partner);
- Authoritative style, not out-of-control or authoritarian;
- Consistency and reliability;
- Understanding of non-verbal communication and ability to share it with a baby and child;
- Awareness of the important need of babies and children of appropriate touch, and ability to feel comfortable giving and receiving it;
- Understanding about the need for healthy attachment between human beings;
- Understanding and tolerance of ambivalence in all human relationships, including parent/baby/child relationships;
- Extreme patience when your child learns by doing but takes ages to do something which you could do in seconds;
- Toleration of mess; children create it and your home will never be as clean and tidy again (or shouldn't be for 18 years);
- Understanding what it is like to move from a two-person set-up to a three-person one, the changes in dynamics, the possibilities of living full-time with jealousy and envy;
- How to understand and treat the first child when the next is born. For the child, it can be like telling your partner that you have a new lover but you still love them just the same;
- Being realistic about financial costs of a baby, child, teenager;
- Accepting the need to make sacrifices;
- Tactfulness about use of humour, given children's sensitivities;
- Ability to be 'in tune' with your baby and child ('attunement').

You might think of even more.

What is ‘good’?

It’s worth considering the meaning of the word ‘good.’ What do we mean by a good job? A good school? A good teacher? A good time? A good parent? A good baby - one that causes no trouble? Psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott’s famous term, a ‘good-enough mother,’ is important. It doesn’t have the sense of a casual, ‘Oh, that’s good enough.’ It has much more gravity. It relieves parents from anxiously thinking they have to do it 100 percent right all the time. In fact, it doesn’t do children a favour to have perfect parents who never make a mistake – a hard act to follow. And it doesn’t give children the experience of coping with disappointment or being failed. When a parent messes up, the words of play therapy guru Garry Landreth are apposite. ‘It’s not what you do, but what you do after what you’ve done.’ It teaches a child a precious lesson if parents can apologise – sincerely.

A word about fun, humour and debriefing

Laughter is the closest distance between two people. Victor Borge (?)

If parenthood is taught properly, it will deal with some pretty grim subjects, as well as the joys. A well-taught session about domestic violence, for instance, will affect all students but in particular those who have seen or heard it at home. It is so widespread and so bad for children that it can’t be avoided. Teachers need to have a repertoire of activities which lighten the mood and to develop an intuition for when they’re needed. Games where everyone can laugh, such as ‘swap chairs if you like chocolate,’ or reciting a tongue twister together. You can also use debriefing, when each student in the circle in turn is invited, if they want, to say how they feel about the content of the lesson. Enough time given to this means they will not have to leave with heavy feelings kept inside.

It also gives the teacher the chance to assess whether any student might need extra emotional support, as well as keeping an ear out for disclosures about home life.

Effects on young people of the sessions: ideally:

- Students who know teen parents can understand them better;
- They begin to understand that teenagers take risks because their brain is not fully developed and become more aware of their risky behaviour;
- They can use their own memories of childhood to identify with babies and children in drama or with visitors who come into the classroom to talk, leading to more self-understanding;
- They can use their understanding and knowledge when relating to siblings and other children in their lives;
- Good parenting qualities become second nature, as automatic as the skills of driving a car. They are evident in a student's relationships with peers and adults, and their dealings with babies and children - possible when parenthood education is part of the core curriculum during the entire school years. It can make the most significant difference to students who have not consistently learnt these qualities at home;
- They understand more, and maybe appreciate, their own parents and carers;
- They are likely to value, understand, remember sessions if their individual needs and interests are addressed by the teacher.

Which students are most likely to be interested?

The subject could be of most interest to students who had very young mothers; those wanting to study health and social care or childcare; those who are troubled or have troubled homes that they want to understand; those who've had positive experiences with young relatives or neighbours and know they want to be parents or

perhaps want to work therapeutically with children; those who've not enjoyed childhood and want a chance to parent differently from their parents. Some might appear uninterested and remain silent about their views or own families - a right which must be respected - but could be listening and taking it in, perhaps embarrassed to appear to care. We assume that girls are more interested than boys, but many projects have found that boys showed as much interest or even more. A lone boy bravely choosing to study childcare for GCSE is likely to feel on his own, much preferring to have other boys in the class. But ways must be found to expose every male student to parenting education and supervised experience with children. They might like to learn that fathers who look after their own baby for up to 18-months, it has been shown, are less likely to abuse their children later on.

The time needed

It is only when subject matter is repeatedly encountered in a wide variety of materials that it becomes part of the very structure of the mind. Harry Broudy, philosophy of education professor, university of Illinois

Good parenthood is so important that it deserves a central place in the curriculum throughout every school year. Failing that, shorter spells of teaching are better than nothing (which is what most students have: little or nothing.) But it would be naïve to believe that a short course, even weekly during one school year, is enough to make a significant impact in five-to-ten-years' time, when many students will have a baby. This is all the more true for students who've not learnt much about good parenting at home. They're in even greater need of thorough-going parenthood education, reinforced year after year in appealing ways suited to their growing maturity. We can speculate that children from troubled or emotionally deprived homes (from any social class) are likely to become better parents if, throughout primary school, they observe

and discuss several parents and babies, and during teenage years, participate in the range of activities in this book.

Researchers Luster and Young (1989) agree. 'The results of this study suggests that pre-parenthood education is one service that shows considerable promise as a way of helping adolescents prepare for their parenting role. However, given what we know about intervention programs generally, we would hope that pre-parenthood education would be viewed as part of a series of services for parents and parents-to-be rather than as a one-time inoculation against poor parenting practices. Some experts believe that one high school intervention is helpful but not adequate to prepare for such a difficult role. It seems highly unlikely that a one-semester course in high school can provide all the information and support that young people need in order to provide optimal care for the next generation of children but it seems to provide a push in the right direction.' It takes four years to train as a plumber. This book proposes a thorough apprenticeship in parenthood at school - but without the exams.

Schools vary, teachers vary

Different schools offer different possibilities. Some have a flexible, progressive head and high staff morale; others allow little variation. A keen head or subject teacher leaves, and parenthood work collapses. As a teacher you'll need to gauge what is possible at the time and what your personality could make possible. And the size of the school can influence the viability of teaching this subject well. An intimate, small school is more likely to foster the necessary conditions. Any school with a pastoral atmosphere where students trust that the staff are sympathetically interested in them as all-round human beings can get off to a good start.

Types of teachers: recognise yourself?

pragmatist	conformist	condoning
idealist	resigned	creative
ideologue	accepting	adapting
realistic	pastoral	controlling
visionary	uncompromising	initiating
practical	ambitious	giving
compromising	obedient	utopian

Who decides what to teach?

The flavour of the month is to consult youngsters about what they want. David Holbrook, in his insightful *English for the Rejected*, relates how, wanting to 'limber up' a sluggish class by imaginative stories, he recorded the students' interests on tape. 'These were very much in sex, romance, love, marriage and parenthood, amongst other things.' There is an argument for having two syllabuses in your mind: what young people ask for, and what extra you think is important. For example, teenagers are unlikely to say that they want to study the baby's brain development, the meaning of attachment or the effects on children of 'mobile phone mothers.' We do have vital knowledge: this shouldn't go by the wayside just because students don't ask for it.

By listing beforehand the areas you believe are essential, you can make sure they, as well as suggestions from the class, are covered. In this way students will have goodwill towards the lessons, with their contributions acknowledged; you'll be confident that you can weave your own preoccupations into the agenda. Parents and school governors can be consulted to consider what's taught and how. They'll feel more sense of joint ownership of this education and might be good at giving practical help: e.g. by organising visits. Every school has parents with substantial, relevant life and professional experience. Use this invaluable, free resource!

What are the best ages to teach parenthood?

Every age is suitable. It's never too early or too late. There is evidence that even tiny children can show empathy for their peers. Children as young as three or four enjoy baby watching and Seeds of Empathy. This can be built upon during primary school and into adolescence when the burgeoning interest in sex and romance lends itself to a regular provision of interesting materials and experiences until students leave school. Once pregnant or embarked upon the long haul of parenthood, some will not only remember some of what you taught, but will use of help/support agencies which you told them about or which they researched. The good grounding they had at school will be reinforced and expanded, making more sense when presented with the real thing.

Tips for teacher training

Richard Whitfield's comments could be useful for teacher training in this topic. 'The rules of what might be termed the normal classroom situation were different [in the five schools he studied], even suspended in the social and educational lessons. There was a need for the rest of the staff to understand and accept the "licence" of these methods,' e.g. when a teacher is called by her first name by the pupils. There are glorious opportunities for in-service training for staff at all levels to learn how to present this topic of fascination, either as a separate subject or integrated with the usual ones. This training, led by a skilled facilitator, gives staff a rare, possibly welcome chance to get difficult feelings off their chest about their own childhood or parenting their own children.

A whole-school approach

'Whole' means everyone: governors, senior management, teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors, bursar, office staff, caretaker, lunch staff, mid-day assistants, parents and carers. There are interesting meetings where parenthood education is explained in lively ways; discussion of the need for every adult to reinforce the education by modelling kind, respectful relationships with students,

albeit with clear, consistent boundaries: no more shouting at kids. Any adult is welcome to take part in lessons. Outside speakers are invaluable, but school staff must develop their own skills in teaching the subject and delivering most of it.

What and how to teach parenthood education

I kept my opinions detached completely. We wanted to get from them what they thought about things, not what I thought they ought to think. Teacher

This rather long quiz by Whitfield might suit some students at the start of preparation for parenthood. His 25 questions can give you an audit of where your students are at and where they might want to go. You can shorten or adapt the quiz to suit them.

- 1 What does the idea of 'family' mean to you?
- 2 What is your opinion is the best kind of family?
- 3 What does the term 'parenthood' mean to you?
- 4 Do you associate parenthood with marriage?
- 5 What are the qualities of a good parent, in your opinion?
- 6 How would you describe those of a bad parent?
- 7 Do you think people can be educated to be good parents?
- 8 Do you think there is a need for this type of education?
- 9 Is there any particular age or stage in someone's life when information concerned with parenthood needs to be available?
- 10 Where should it be based?
- 11 Assuming education for parenthood is part of the school curriculum, do you think it should be a compulsory subject for all pupils?
- 12 Do you think any other school subjects should be compulsory?
- 13 What topics relevant to parenthood would it be useful for pupils to learn something about?
- 14 Do you think that girls and boys need to learn the same or different things a) in general, b) in relation to parenthood topics?
- 15 Do you think that children who are more academically able need to learn the same or different things as those who are less academically able a) in general, b) in relation to parenthood topics?

- 16 Are the same things relevant equally to country and city children a) in general, b) in relation to parenthood topics?
- 17 Do you think that children from different ethnic groups need to learn the same or different things a) in general, b) in relation to parenthood topics?
- 18 Would you teach children from different social classes the same a) in general b) in relation to parenthood topics?
- 19 What do you think of exams a) in general, b) in relation to parenthood topics?
- 20 Do you think parents should be consulted about what schools teach a) in general, b) in relation to parenthood topics?
- 21 What comes to mind when you think of difficulties that can be experienced by parents of babies and young children?
- 22 Do you think education for parenthood in schools is likely to be of use in later life if pupils find themselves in these difficult situations?
- 23 Are there ways, other than education, by which parents in difficulty might be helped?
- 24 Do you see any benefit to society as a whole if people are taught about parenthood in some way?
- 25 Can you imagine education for parenthood having any bad effects?

‘Just Imagine....’

Whitfield suggests this exercise to stimulate students’ imagination.

A

You are a good fifth-year class teacher. You teach what you think will be useful and important to people when they have left school.

‘I teach my class about.....’

‘I encourage boys to learn about each of these because.....’

‘I encourage girls to learn about each of these because:.....’

B

Now you are a parent with a young child. ‘Some things likely to be a problem for me as a parent are:.....’

‘I think I am a good parent because.....’

‘Having a child has changed my life in these ways:.....’
‘As a parent I go out to work because.....’
‘As a parent I don’t go out to work because.....’

Students may already have formed some views on parenthood from their own experience and there is a risk that they will repeat what they know simply because they are not presented with any alternatives.

Parenting Education and Support Forum

Things to teach about

We never have a totally free choice. The subject is so value-laden that, however much we explore the nature and role of the family, we are unlikely to arrive at a position which does not reflect in large part our cultural inheritance. Michael Smith

This is a huge syllabus: far too much and too important to be squashed into one term or one year. But don’t underestimate the power of teachers in various departments to contribute. For example, English lessons can be invaluable, a largely untapped source of relevant materials. Any teacher, in fact, can include the topic in some guise: see the Stonewalling section.

Emotional life

When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.

Billy, aged four, defining love, reported on the internet

Some of the things you might discuss with the class:

- What does every human being need?
- What is love? How does a baby or child know it is loved? How do parents know if they are loved by their partner?
- A baby and child who experiences an empathic mother or father unconsciously internalises empathy and models it so that it becomes second nature;

- Ambivalence: there are love and hate in all relationships;
- The need to provide warm, consistent, sensitive parenting: what does that look like? Barriers to it. Babies need physical contact, skin, hugs, cuddles. On the bus, baby sits in buggy for ages, mother talking on phone, baby whimpers, adult might try this and that but eventually baby whimpers again. What does it want? To be picked up! Carrying baby in sling;
- What is loving physical contact? e.g. holding the child's hand, not wrist;
- Attachment: what does it mean? It can be secure, insecure, disorganised or resistant;
- Why is play important for emotional growth? What toys are cheap, fun or creative?
- A baby's transitional objects: what are they and why are they important? Security blankets, teddies, dolls as comforters when mother is not there. Do teenagers have an equivalent?
- Being a consistent parent, good as your word: keep promises;
- How to *really* listen - and show it!
- The need for parents at times to delay their own gratification;
- The importance of parents not seeking gratification from their children but allowing the child to be him or herself. Is taking photos of your children for the children's sake or the parents'?
- Photos and videos of babies and children: as they develop, keep photos in an album. Are teenagers pleased they were taken? Disappointed if they were not?

Other times, other cultures

- Minority ethnic families in Britain (or your country);
- Differences in parenting in socio-economic classes;
- How do parents in other countries and cultures bring up their children? The film *Babies* is useful. Make the most of the ethnic backgrounds of students and their parents;
- Study *Play Labs* in refugee camps;
- How did parents in the past of different social classes bring up their children? What do you think of it?

Disappointment and loss

- When the very different personalities of a parent and a child mean they find it hard to get on. Franz Kafka's relationship with his father is a good example. Dad valued strength, health, appetite, a powerful voice, eloquence, self-confidence, superiority over the world, presence of mind, knowledge of human beings. Franz was none of these;
- When the personality of the child painfully reminds the parent of the other parent, perhaps after an acrimonious separation;
- How does it feel when your baby is not what you expected or hoped for? Gender? Ability? Personality? (See Welcome to Holland, Chapter 32);
- Loss of a baby or child: termination, miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal death, death of a child;
- Men and women who want a child but can't have any for all the possible reasons;
- How children cope with the death or desertion of a parent – stress, intense pain, fear, empty, shocked, bleak; maybe eating disorder, rage, withdrawal; the breaking of an attachment;
- Parents who want more children but can't have them;
- How does it feel when your child is taken into care, or adopted;
- Mourning when your child starts school, or leaves home.

Difficulties

- The meaning of difficult behaviour by baby, child, teenager, partner, in-laws;
- Fear: what do children fear? Why? When do they fear their parents? What effects does fear have on their body and mind? What is the opposite of fear? What do parents fear?
- Hitting children: what it does to children's brains;
- The difficulties of parenthood (e.g. exhaustion, sacrifice, boredom, resentment, anger) as well as the joys;
- Obvious problems (e.g. the shock of new parenthood) vs. more subtle, unexpected problems;

- How to sort out conflicts: between parents, between parent and child, between siblings;
- The need to slow down, let go, be calm, and relax, and how to do it: do deep breathing, total body relaxation exercises in class;
- Parents' fear of spoiling: what does it mean?

Family relationships: 'what is a family'?

- Choosing a good partner for your parenting (it might not be the biological mother or father.) How about you and your boy/girlfriend spending time with babies and children before you conceive to see if you like the way he or she relates to kids?
- How becoming parents can affect even the strongest relationship between a couple;
- The roles of other family members: grandparents, step-parents, aunts and uncles, siblings, half-siblings, cousins;
- The Nigerian saying: 'It takes a whole village to raise a child.' What does that mean? Do you agree?
- Who does what? Mother's roles, father's roles, children's roles? Teenagers' own experiences;
- Family 'togetherness' and teamwork. Students can reflect on their own siblings: do they work as a team? What gets in the way? Only children and step-siblings: benefits or drawbacks?

Parents

- The need for local social life, help, support, advice and information after the birth;
- How to parent cheaply: Freecycle, car boot sales, charity shops, a drawer for a cot, clothes swaps, libraries, parks;
- Stages of parenthood - from preconception to adult child;
- Living as parents without technology: can you imagine what it would be like? The pros and cons;
- How families are portrayed in the media. What effect does this have on parents?

The benefits of grandparents or other relatives

- Do students have stories to write about / share about their experiences with their grandparents or aunts/uncles etc?
- How do these relationships differ from relating with a parent?
- Search the internet for accounts by grandparents or godparents;
- Invite a few grandmothers and grandfathers to talk to the class;
- Read Grace Nicholl's poem in chapter 32.

Step parents *(NB A potentially very sensitive subject)*

- What are the possible benefits of having a step-parent?
- What are the possible difficulties?
- If anyone wants to share their own experience, invite them to;
- Invite a male and female step parent to talk to the class.

Go out to work or stay at home?

- Staying at home with babies and young children: what's it like?
- What it's like to be a working parent (mother or father);
- Finding the right childcare.

Preparation for Parenthood in the Secondary School lists the following topics. They can act as a checklist when thinking about lesson content and can be shown to students for them to choose those of most interest at a particular time. They might find other topics of interest later on. I've added a few. You might want to, as well.

Health

Hygiene: basic home, food,	Alcohol, drugs, smoking
personal hygiene	Addiction
Personal health of parents	Immunisation and vaccinations
Care of hair, skin, teeth, eyes, ears,	Mental health
feet of all family	Baby hygiene
Exercise and fitness	Dental hygiene
Eating and nutrition	Food-linked diseases
Eating disorders	Weight
Environment	Sleep

Childhood illnesses
Sexually transmitted diseases
Physical disabilities

Infections
Stress/breakdown

Pregnancy and birth

Fertility and conception
Signs of pregnancy/pregnancy tests
Fetus development
Help, care and advice during pregnancy

Antenatal care, classes
Miscarriage and tests, stillbirth
Multiple births
Placenta and amniotic fluid
Mammary glands and lactation
Breast/bottle-feeding

Human physiology

Heredity and genetics
DNA
Reproduction
Menstruation
Ovulation
Hormones and sex

Temperature
Energy
Digestion
Blood groups
Immune system
Parental care as animal instinct

Family planning

Contraception
Fertility drugs

Sterilisation
Abortion

Sex

Sexual feelings and attraction
Sexuality
Masturbation

Sexual relationships
Promiscuity
Homosexuality/transgender

Childcare

Styles of child rearing with their different atmospheres
Equipment for new baby
Diet
Care of newborn up to six-weeks

Midwife visits
Care and feeding of baby
Breast and bottle-feeding/weaning
Bathing
Crying

Protection from illnesses
Potty and toilet training
Discipline
Character training
Rest and exercise
Nursing a sick child

Child minding
Role of the health visitor
Playgroups, parent and toddler groups, toy libraries, nurseries and their value
Needs of a child

Child development

Preconception care
Influences in the womb
Alcohol in pregnancy
Ultrasound and tests
Home birth
Active birth
Hospital birth
Development from 0 to 18 months and up to five: emotional and physical needs
Development till age of five
Psychological development in adolescence
Male and female development
Sexual maturation
Independence
Emotional development
Behaviour
Social development
Social skills development
Language development
Body language
Effects of types of deprivation on development

Acquisition of skills
Creative play
Play and its relation to learning
Importance of toys to development and to stable relationships
Love and affection in child development
Effect of the environment on children
Rates of maturation
Critical and sensitive stages of development
Development of nature and character
The highly sensitive child
Genetics and environment (nature or nurture)
Intelligence
Identity
Positive self-concept
Uniqueness of individuals

Emotions and problems

Feelings, emotions and reactions

Emotional problems in infancy, childhood and adolescence

Moods
Loneliness and isolation
Behavioural problems
Trust
Honesty and lying
Loyalty
Freedom
Concern for others and empathy
Unwanted pregnancy
Problems in relationships,
friendship, society, growing up
Need for emotional security
Anger, aggression and violence
Family problems
Self-assessment
Decision making
Risk taking
Suicide
Eating disorders
Self harm
Step-parents and step-siblings

Personal relationships

Types of relationships: friendship,
romantic, family
Generation gap
Partnerships
Communication
Resolving conflict

The family

What is a family? Family 'unit'? Its
functions
Past and present family patterns
Nuclear and extended families

Siblings and half-siblings
Grandparents and other relatives
Jealousy
Envy
Spite and greed
Adoption and fostering
Children's homes/residential care
Probation
Coping with advertising
Parents with mental health
problems, learning difficulties or in
prison
Battered babies, shaken baby
syndrome
Domestic violence: parents
fighting and arguing
Violence to babies and children:
smacking, hitting, beating etc
Violence by children and
adolescents to parents and
between siblings

Co-operation
Community contacts
Peer groups
Adolescent relationships
Patterns of relationships as we
develop

Mixed race families
Weddings in different societies,
cultures, religions

Marriage, roles and reasons in various cultures
Immigration and refugee families
Different family structures in UK and elsewhere
Single-parent families
Shared parenting by both parents
Serial monogamy
Infidelity
Stability of a family
Future of the family
Mobility: social and geographical
Religions and the family
Marriage and its responsibilities
Cohabitation
Divorce and separation

Gay parents
Parents with disabilities
Pressures on parents and their effects on babies, children and adolescents
Roles and points of view of father
Male and female roles in and out of marriage
Discipline in the family
Help for families with difficulties
Legal aspects of parenthood
Maintenance payments
Child's contact with both parents
Working parents, changing role of women, equal pay
Relationship of parents to schools

The home

Buying or renting a flat or house
Room planning
Accident prevention in kitchen and home
Cooking equipment and types of cooking
Types of meals
Invalid cookery
Shopping for food, costs, convenience food
Economic use of food
Food banks
Markets
Food storage, preservation, presentation
Table manners

Fuel economy
Heating and lighting
Pollution
Labour saving devices
First aid and resuscitation
Fabrics and stains
Home decorating
Furniture
Clothes when pregnant
Care of clothes
Coping in emergencies
Safety on the road
Managing time
Home life
Car boot sales, charity shops, jumble sales, Freecycle etc

Services for the family

Samaritans / helplines

Counselling and psychotherapy

Marriage guidance / couple

therapy e.g. Relate

Voluntary organisations and
charities for parents, children

GPs / Baby clinics

Community groups e.g. National

Childbirth Trust

Leisure centres / libraries

Credit unions and loans

Consumer protection

How to do it: Experiential, memorable methods

Tell me and I forget.

I hear and I forget.

I see and I may remember.

Involve me and I learn.

I do and I understand. Benjamin Franklin

From my experience and that of others, I offer this advice:

- Bear in mind that we remember only ten percent of what we're told. That is why lessons must be experiential. Use as many experiential methods as possible. Use active practical learning methods, never passive: far more likely to be remembered;
- Try to begin by linking what you talk about with students' own life experiences, thoughts and feelings, so that it is a relevant, personal and never an impersonal, irrelevant lesson;
- Check regularly that students can make sense of what is being talked about. For example, do they all know what all the words mean e.g. 'sibling'? In academic lessons, some students don't understand the vocabulary but don't say so. Use teaching methods that allow students their own expressions so that you always know and engage with their thinking and with gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Make sure that parenthood education is understood by them all. Avoid jargon or academic language. Explain it if it comes up;
- Avoid rigid 'learning objectives', inflexible lesson plans or targets which have no emotional impact or significance. Be ready to improvise; be able to be spontaneous and creative;
- Don't over-simplify or gloss over the issues of parenthood. Many are inherently complex;

- Don't give just facts, but lead discussion about moral decisions: e.g. given the proven effects on children of physical punishment, can you justify hitting children? What are the alternatives? Their pros and cons?
- Explore what the students know and believe at the beginning of their parenthood education. Don't assume what they know or believe. It might be much more or much less, and more varied, than you think;
- Don't expect major changes through one short course. This work can take years to make memorable, lasting impact;
- Nurture an atmosphere of openness, trust and seriousness, with active participation at all times;
- Let students set their own agenda to add to yours;
- Don't rush. Relax. There needs to be a lot of time over the years for students to digest what they learn, revisit topics and have the chance to change and modify their views and understanding;
- Include laughter to make lessons enjoyable and to offset the heavy subjects which must be covered;
- Use a belt and braces approach. Reinforce the same themes through various learning methods. Find new ways to deal with the same topics. This grounds the knowledge and also shows you how much they have understood and remembered - how far it has been internalised into their unconscious;
- There can be a very wide variation in the knowledge of students in the same class, so give them 'fun' opportunities to share with each other;
- Remember that some children take things literally. My mother recalled a teacher leaving the classroom saying, 'I have eyes at the back of my head so I will know if anyone has been talking.' My mother believed her;
- Try to make sure that students are not confused, puzzled or vague. Encourage them to freely voice their questions and concerns

without embarrassment, using anonymous methods if that helps some of them;

- Ensure that sensitive students are never humiliated or laughed at in lessons. Experiences which seem trivial to adults can be of lifelong, painful significance to sensitive young people;
- Admit that you are not the only one with knowledge and experience and don't know everything (though you know where to look.). You are a facilitator and only human;
- Don't get downhearted if a lesson goes badly. Talk about it with students and colleagues, and learn from it.

How do empathy and understanding develop?

Over the years, include as many experimental, participatory, practical methods as possible. Some ideas:

- **Virtual baby**/flour baby/hard-boiled egg to look after 24/7;
- **Pets and gardens:** growing and looking after living things carefully and consistently;
- **Art** can be used in many ways, e.g. making a collage of advertising images which try to sell expensive items or portray the unrealistic 'ideal family'; songs, poems, drawing, painting, sculptures, dancing, mime, photography, newsletters, posters: i.e. methods that draw on emotional, not cognitive, life;
- **Sex and contraception**, even if students say they have 'done it.' Find out from them and other staff what they've learnt; reinforce/add to it; it's of most interest to most teenagers;
- **Film clips and films** with powerful messages (possibly in registration time, lunchtime or after school) including films of childbirth; male and female young; and older people of different ethnic and social groups talking about any aspect of parenthood. Always watch the films yourself first. Discard what is probably not of interest to that class. Make sure films are used sparingly and

critically, after a class has defined what it wants to know, in an atmosphere of enquiry and debate. Encourage students to set up a film club and make a film, helped by film-buff volunteers from the local area;

- Use ideas from **Video Interaction Guidance**, showing students' interactions with a child in role-play. Very powerful;
- **'My Ideal Child.'** This can be a poem, rap or song by an imaginary parent-to-be;
- Discuss and use students' reactions to **TV** programmes or **YouTube** items: valuable educational resources;
- **Case studies** from newspapers and magazines. Invite students to relate stories about their own families (e.g. siblings, nephews and nieces, grandparents, babysitting experience), as long as the class has genuinely agreed to maintain confidentiality;
- **Reading and acting out** excerpts about children/parenting from novels, short stories, poems, plays and autobiographies;
- **Make a poster** *Job for Parent* with job description and person specification;
- **True and False** statements;
- Hold **debates** and mock debates between parents and children;
- Always allow students enough time to ask **their own questions**, spoken or written;
- Arrange **residential trips** if possible, free of charge so no student misses out. R F Mackenzie and Francis Gilbert have written of the enormous benefits to teacher-student relationships, creating the informality/intimacy required for good parenthood education;
- **Babysitting.** Do any class members babysit for siblings or other children? If so, role-play difficulties and discuss 'The Ideal Babysitter' with a job description and person specification;
- **Role-play** and other drama techniques such as Forum Theatre or Playback Theatre, using fictional stories;

- Act out the **consequences of actions**, rather than calling behaviour purely 'right' or 'wrong';
- Students and teacher bring and show **personal or family documents**, such as photos, from their own childhood;
- Students write or draw **their own autobiography**; maybe share their own stories;
- Students can choose to keep a **journal or logbook** to record their thoughts, feelings, ideas and questions;
- Activities created by **older students for younger**, or vice versa;
- If trust has built up: '**Things you did and didn't like** about your childhood.' These can be acted out. Students talk to their parents, carers, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles about parenthood and can choose to report back to the class;
- Get them to **interview each other**, other members of staff or other people they know about experiences of childhood and parenthood, and views about parenting. Report back;
- **Set challenges** such as out-of-school activities: observing or interviewing families in the street, shops, parks, on public transport. Prepare, with students and art teachers, an eye-catching display for the school foyer for other students, parents, governors and visitors to raise the status of the subject;
- **Community action.** Students could volunteer locally or run a campaign to improve family conditions, e.g. better playgrounds;
- **Presentation** to other classes, parents, governors at the end of each term, using the arts;
- A **colourful, laminated, signed certificate** for each student at the end of each year, even those who didn't always attend or didn't seem to engage. The lessons might have meant more to them than we realise; there is no way of knowing. Give them the benefit of the doubt;
- The **accepting atmosphere and welcoming** manner of school staff can reinforce nurturing at home - and fill in gaps.

Outside speakers: invite every few weeks

It takes a village to teach parenthood education.

How many students can call on interesting, sympathetic characters, not only as confidantes but as sources of new thoughts and opinions? There might be little conversation or discussion at home, and little time at school for staff to provide this. Some students have no one in their lives to introduce them to unusual ideas they have never met before. This is where stimulating outside speakers can have a vital, unique role. Macdonald (2008) is encouraging: 'Children and young people commonly say that they appreciate what external contributors to the curriculum can do to enhance their learning. There is a view that information on certain issues carries more weight and credibility from outside agencies than teachers. Visitors can familiarise young people with local services which can increase their ability and confidence to seek specialist advice.' Some students told him of relevant, interesting visitors to their PSHE lessons. 'They felt that these helped them to engage with and understand the topic. They remembered their learning far more because they could relate it to the experience of the visitor.'

You need to meet speakers before booking them. They should be not only reliable but able to engage students through their confidence, enthusiasm and friendly personality. Invite some of the following to talk with the class: they should represent the ethnic and socio-economic mix of the area:

- Young parents (m/f) to discuss the realities of young parenthood;
- Adoptive and foster parents to discuss their roles;
- Single parent, including a single father;
- Childminder: include a male or couple if possible;
- Nanny;

- Parent (male and/or female) who is no longer a perpetrator of domestic violence;
- Parent (male, and/or female) who's suffered domestic violence;
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-sexual parents;
- Parent of a special needs child;
- Disabled parent;
- Health and welfare professionals: e.g. health visitor, midwife, nursery nurse, paediatrician, play therapist, couples counsellor. They can let students know where and how to get information, support and advice;
- Adult who chooses not to have children;
- Adult unable to have a wanted child or as many as wanted;
- Parent of twins or triplets;
- Continuum Concept speaker to say how other, very different, cultures foster attachment;
- Baby massage expert to give a demonstration, followed by students massaging a soft doll.
- Visits by theatre-in-education companies.

Last but not least, observation of babies with parents, one parent/baby for a year; later, two or three pairs together, including fathers.

Visits by students

- Early years venues to observe children and see what happens when parents/carers leave and later collect them;
- Supervised placements at early years venues, including buddying with a small child;
- Ante-natal and post-natal wards and special care baby unit at the maternity hospital;
- Local university if relevant projects e.g. research into babies' brains
- Local charities concerned with family life.

Resources

Practical items in class enhance the experience. Keep these items in containers for use in different lessons over the years:

play dough	feeding bottle and beaker
treasure box for babies who can sit up	recordings of lullabies
nappies	black and white dolls
buggy and baby carriers	baby bath
baby clothes	contraceptives of all kinds for teenagers to handle
toys such as saucepan lid and wooden spoon	a good supply of condoms for them to take away
recording of a baby crying	a leaflet on how to find free supplies.
photos of parents and babies in various emotional states	

Let students enjoy playing with toys: bubbles, balloons, slime and play dough while listening to, or even singing, nursery rhymes and lullabies. This can take them back to their early years, maybe to missed experiences. Display healthy food and drink in colourful, appealing ways; encourage tasting and cooking.

The *Huffington Post* sends out excellent, regular articles on parenting topics along with colour photos, which you can receive free by email. Aimed at parents, they are also teenager-friendly, worth signing up to. Just a few recent topics: ‘How to comfort children during thunderstorms’; ‘I won’t be forcing my kids to kiss their relatives at Christmas’; ‘Rachel Riley gives birth to first child in her bathroom’; ‘I had a boy’s brain but a girl’s body’; ‘Why you can’t be best friends with your kid’; ‘Let’s talk about the screaming baby next door.’ Not only can these stimulate interesting debate; they also give students insight in their own family history and relationships without having

to reveal anything if they don't want to. They need to know there is one-to-one support at school if they want it.

Parenting styles

Courses should not arouse fear and anxiety in young people about their possible future roles. Implied criticism of their own home circumstances should also be avoided, since most parents try to do their best. Richard Whitfield

Judith Suissa, a lecturer in the philosophy of education, offers an important critique of modern parenting education for all ages. It lacks, she says, a vital moral dimension. The matter of the four 'parenting styles' is something she opposes. But we include it here as it gives food for thought and can contribute to a discussion with teenagers. This is how experts have described them

1 Authoritarian / disciplinarian

This is a legacy of the strict religious idea of saving a child's soul, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' (Samuel Butler, *Hudibras* 1684.) Every child is innately wicked. It should be instantly obedient or be punished. Rules are inflexible. It is 'because I say so.' It uses coldness, physical punishment, threats and fears. Possessions and privileges might be withdrawn. There are dire consequences of disobedience. The one good thing is the consistency of the approach. It has very clear boundaries. 'You know where you are.' But a child who's often hit becomes angry and might go on to an early pregnancy, crime or escape from the family. The approach is very damaging to the psyche. In future the child might either repeat the behaviour or feel uneasy about exerting any authority over their children. The outcomes: children behave through fear; don't own values; their curiosity is stunted; they become aggressive, lack social skills. Others point out that this approach is against the family, believing the state should be the influence, as with Nazis and Stalin.

2 Permissive /indulgent

Permissive parents might be uninvolved or indulgent, warm or cold, either neglectful or take emotional needs 'too seriously.' They shrink from being an authority. Outcomes? Children might have a veneer of maturity, poor self-control, or exhibit extreme behaviour and take risks in order to get a response. As adolescents, there is little to push against. As adults, they can become depressed, over-anxious to please, feeling they're not important to anyone because they failed to make an impact on their parents. They might become indulgent parents to overcompensate for what they lacked. They find it hard to challenge their kids, fear their rejection. Indulged children might see themselves as the centre of the universe, becoming arrogant, demanding, wanting their own way, with little self-control and respect for others, aggressive, disobedient. As adults they are insecure with a lack of boundaries, frustrated by society's expectations.

3 Uninvolved/neglectful

These parents don't respond to their children's needs and make few or no demands or expectations of them. They are often indifferent, distant or dismissive and have little emotional involvement. While they provide for basic needs like food and shelter, they are, for the most part, uninvolved in their children's lives, skipping school events and meetings. The exact degree of involvement varies considerably. Some may be relatively hands-off with their kids, but still have basic limits such as curfews. Others are downright neglectful, even rejecting their children who are given the bare minimum they need for survival, yet little or nothing in the way of guidance, warmth or affection. Parents like this might be too overwhelmed by their own problems.

4 Authoritative / democratic / liberal

People confuse the words ‘authoritarian’ and ‘authoritative.’ They have little in common. The authoritative parent balances the needs of child and adult. Their children are likely to have high self-esteem, know right from wrong, be able to handle blame and criticism, be capable of self-sacrifice, self-reliant, self-controlled, popular with adults and peers, and unlikely to retaliate. These co-operative, well-behaved kids but might also be too docile and over-conforming, over-conscientious, self-blaming, guilt-ridden and unable to say no? Parenting style advocates admit all this. As adults, they will be able to think for themselves, learn from mistakes, take responsibility for their actions, stick to tasks and see the views of others: ‘concerned and critical citizens.’ There will be satisfying emotional relationships in their democratic families, with individual needs and potential respected. Mothers will be able to work outside the home.

5 Conservative

This produces law-abiding, property-owning or respectable working-class citizens, a Victorian approach based on mother love and firm discipline. The woman comes first in the family.

6 Libertarian / individualist

The family is oppressive, especially to women and girls, and serves the needs of capitalism and its ethos of competitive relationships. Of course, things are not clear-cut. The same parents might act differently with different children. Most parents use all the styles at various times. Students might enjoy taking part in role-plays to experience the styles from the inside. It is likely to remind them of their own parents, heighten their awareness and help them decide which style make the most sense to them.

Attachment

Only about 60 percent of British children are thought to be ‘securely’ attached to a parent figure. (Sutton Trust 2014.) About a quarter avoid their parents when they are upset because parents ignore their needs (‘avoidant’ attachment.) A further 15 percent resist their parents because they often amplify their distress or respond unpredictably (‘disorganised’ or ‘resistant’ attachment.) ‘The strongest predictor for children being insecurely attached is having a parent who is not securely attached themselves.’

As part of a look at parenting in the past, students might learn about the Australian doctor Truby King (1858-1938) whose popular books focused on routine and discipline, with recommendations such as: ‘The formative months are for eating, sleeping and growing – not for bonding.’ Ignore the child’s wants. Stick solely to the routine with specific times for feeding, sleeping, bathing and bowel movements. Begin toilet training at the age of six weeks. Don’t cuddle your baby for more than ten minutes a day. Let it cry. Without such discipline, children will be spoilt and become ‘unproductive and self-indulgent adults.’ Many parents obeyed this, believing it was good science. Get students to reflect and role-play on how the babies must have felt.

Stonewalling

We can learn from the gay, lesbian, bi and trans charity Stonewall. How can we increase the exposure of students to parenthood education by encouraging teachers of all subjects to integrate our messages in their lessons? Stonewall’s excellent document for teachers of nearly every subject apart from PSHE, *Stonewall Inclusive Curriculum Guide*, lists *Key Ways to Go About It* and *Lesson Ideas* for teachers of English, maths, science, art, geography, drama, history, media studies, modern foreign languages, music, PE/sports, and

religious education. Borrowing their model, here are ideas about parenthood education. You will have more.

English Language

Write a poem, account or story about your own childhood or that of someone you know: sibling, other relative, friend, parent. What did you feel when writing it? If you've read it to others, how did they react?

English Literature

Novels, short stories, biographies, autobiographies, poems: full of material: *Jane Eyre*, Dickens' novels, Laurie Lee's *Cider with Rosie*. You're spoilt for choice.

Maths

Weigh a baby and child over time and keep records. Research the statistics for family size over decades, infant mortality, percent of mothers going out to work and so on by using websites of the Office of National Statistics and specialist organisations. Make graphs.

Science

Study neuroscience: how the brain is affected from conception onwards by what parents do to babies and children.

Art

Study paintings of parents, babies and children through the centuries. What can they tell us? What has changed?

Geography

How do other countries and cultures bring up their children? Family size? Roles of parents? Law about hitting children? Draw on the background of students; encourage them to interview their parents and grandparents (or invite them to visit) and report back to the class.

Drama

Put on a play such as *Forever* by the M6 Theatre Company. Invite students to write and perform their own short and longer plays about parenthood.

History

How were babies and children treated at home over the centuries in various social classes? What were schools like? Who went?

Media studies

Study the portrayal of pregnancy, birth, babies, children, parents in newspapers, magazines, TV, films. Watch and discuss films from various decades which include these subjects.

Music

Make up a rap about being a parent, baby or child. Listen to the music Dvorak wrote after the death of his child. Watch films: *Nowhere Boy*: John Lennon's childhood, make links to the words of his songs; *La Vie en Rose* about Edith Piaf's. Sing lullabies from different countries. Why do parents sing lullabies? What do the words imply? The organisation *First Music* deals with all this: see its website.

PE and sports

Which famous sportsmen/women have spoken about becoming parents? What effects did parenting have on mind, body and career?

Religious education

What do the religions say about how to be a mother, father, wife, husband, child, teenager? If religions differ, why might that be? Should you follow what your religion says, whether you agree with it or not? What examples do you know of people doing things differently from their religion? When people don't have a religion (agnostics and atheists), how do they decide how to bring up their children?

Top tips for teachers, inspired by Stonewall

- ***Keep it simple.*** Just ensure that parenting is included in what you are teaching, whether in short examples or as the focus for a lesson or piece of work.
- ***Remember why it's important.*** Parenting touches the lives of virtually every student.
- ***Spot opportunities.*** Save time and resources by looking for opportunities to adjust what you already have, rather than developing lots of new content.
- ***Highlight.*** You don't have to include everything, just highlight relevant things as and when they come up.
- ***Support staff.*** This is a probably a new subject for teachers, so provide training, support and supervision.
- ***Share ideas.*** Bring staff together to discuss ideas and identify cross-curricular links. Pool your resources and ensure high standards and consistency.
- ***Involve students.*** Invite them to suggest topics about parenthood; ask what they would like to learn.
- ***Allow expression.*** Students should feel free to express all parenting ideas, even if you need to challenge some of them.
- ***Know where to signpost.*** If you see/suspect a student needs help with home difficulties, have information about services.
- ***Share success!*** Link with local schools to share ideas/methods/experiences. Celebrate your achievements with governors/parents/carers. Ensure teachers experienced in parenthood education have a chance to tell others about it.

Some definitions:

* <u>Newborn</u>	0 – 4 weeks old (some say eight weeks)
* Infant	4 weeks (some say eight) to one year
* Toddler	1 – 2 years
* Pre-school child	3 – 5 years

It's about being non-judgmental but you are inevitably going to be challenging them about how they are being brought up now. Teacher

Make sure to include minorities:

1 Disabilities

Any course must face the fact that some parents have a physical and/or mental disability, as do some children. Schools which are inclusive will contain children with significant special needs. They should find the lessons address, with great tact and sensitivity, their own situation as possible future parents. In any class, a few students are likely to have one, even both, parents with, for example, learning difficulties, psychiatric problems or a chronic physical disability. A teacher who knows the students well is aware of this and brings in parents with a relevant disability to tell the class how they manage to parent. This would make a memorable and helpful session.

2 LGBT students and parents

About ten percent of the population is estimated to be homosexual; transgender status is increasing. Parenthood education needs to address this. Given the level of homophobia still prevalent amongst many young people and the homophobic attitudes of most religions, confident gay and trans parents – male and female - can be invited to meet the class and discuss their parenting experiences.

3 Fostered/adopted students; foster/adoptive parents

Some students might be adopted or fostered; teachers must know in advance. The subject can't be ignored: very sensitive territory, but less so once a safe, trusting atmosphere has developed over time, making support and supervision for the teacher especially important. Inviting tactful adoptive/foster parents to talk with the class could be

interesting for all students, giving ideas to some who might want to have these roles in future.

Facts

Facts can be taught in a way that feelings cannot. Teacher

Looking at facts might make some impact. For example:

a) Finland banned all physical punishment of children in 1983. A survey (2011) of 4,609 people aged 15-to-18 found a significant drop in reports of being slapped or beaten as a child by respondents born after 1983. The number of murdered children also fell. Those who had been exposed to high amounts of physical punishment scored significantly higher on alcohol abuse, depression and mental health problems, as well as divorce and suicide attempts. A list of the countries which have banned corporal punishment can give food for thought (see *Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children* website.)

b) *The rates of neonatal deaths worldwide.* In some poor countries, the rate is 50 times higher than in the west. In Pakistan, one in 20 babies dies within a month. UNICEF says that 80 percent of deaths could be prevented with better health care and education. This would be of interest to students whose forebears lived in poor countries. In some parts of the UK, there is a high proportion, sometimes a majority, of students with parents from poor countries. This enables a discussion about what is needed for a baby to survive, and the emotional impact of losing a baby. Some students might have families where a baby or child has died. For students in affluent areas, it would be a salutary reminder of the enormous divide between rich and poor worldwide.

c) *A woman who gave birth to six babies at once.* An example of a press cutting with photo. This would cause amused astonishment, leading to a role-play between mother, father and babies. It brings home the demands of looking after even one baby. Invite a parent of twins or triplets to tell the class what

that's like; there are Twins and Triplets Clubs who could provide a keen candidate, with or without the nippers.

Parenting in other countries and cultures

You can use drama techniques to explore the various ways that parenting is done across the world. Some fascinating books:

- *French Children Don't Throw Food* by Pamela Druckerman
- *The Danish Way of Parenting* by Alexander and Sandahl;
- *How Eskimos Keep Their Babies Warm: Parenting Wisdom from Around the World* (Buenos Aires, France, Kenya, China, Aka Pygmies, Lebanon, Tibet, Japan, Polynesia, Mexico, and people from Asian countries) by Mei-Ling Hopgood;
- *The Continuum Concept* by Jean Liedloff;
- *Two Worlds of Childhood: US and USSR* by Urie Bronfenbrenner;
- *The Happiest Kids in the World: Bringing Up Children the Dutch Way* by Acosta and Hitchison.

Invite students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to interview their parents, grandparents and other older relatives and report back for discussion. Parents with varied practices can be invited to hold a conversation or debate in front of the class.

I think it is just trying to make them more aware and think about what they're doing rather than just copying mum. Teacher

How does change come about?

A baby or child with an empathic mother or father learns unconsciously. Sensitive handling gets internalised; children model themselves on the carers; empathy becomes second nature. Parenthood education is nourishing for students of all social classes who've had little or none of this at home or anywhere else and turn

to alcohol, drugs, sex, gangs, babies, unsuitable relationships (e.g. with exploitative older men) to try to compensate. If given a substantial chance at school to relate to babies and small children through observation and practical tasks, they can identify with the emotional needs of early years. Some healing can take place.

Change can come in many other ways:

- A personal relationship;
- A therapeutic relationship;
- An inspirational teacher or other adult;
- A book or impactful film;
- A trauma;
- Accumulated transformational experiences over time;
- Discovery for oneself: a more profound emotional experience than knowledge being handed down.

Siblings: underestimated problems;

The emotional effects of siblings on one another are underestimated. The subject can be looked at to help students work through their own sibling pain (most have siblings of one form or another) and to think about how their future children might feel about each other. I once researched family relationships at Lennox Lewis's college for disaffected teenagers. I asked a large group how they got on with their parents. There was little interest, a lot of eyes glazing over. I then asked about their siblings. The room came alive. There were vitriolic claims about how dreadful they were. Some resented having to look after them. I was reminded of friends whose little boy blamed the mere existence of his perfectly pleasant sister for ruining his life. Having more than one child poses many challenges for parents. Avoiding comparing them or showing signs of favouritism or resenting a late child who was a 'mistake': these are just a few.

Students can be asked to think of others. Parents of two or more can be invited to the class to give their experiences.

The case against written and reading tasks, lesson plans, and assessment

Death by the lecture has been superseded by death by work card. Grafton

A man ought to read as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good. Boswell' Life of Johnson

Parenthood education should be enjoyable, despite its serious intent. It will be spoilt for some students, including those with limited English, special educational needs or resistance to school, if there is any reading or written work that they haven't chosen themselves. They get enough in other subjects; it can lead to boredom, anxiety and humiliation. There's the danger that if they can't do it, or only with difficulty and resentment, they will get the notion that they won't be able to be good parents. But the teacher's job is to reassure every student that they can be if they make the informed decision to have children and take enough time to reflect on the important issues involved. The teacher's job is to make these lessons of irresistible interest to them all.

Teachers in general tended to find that preparing pupils for examinations and preparing them for 'life' were sometimes irreconcilable aims because of the limited amount of time and energy available. Whitfield

Of course, students who do love reading and writing can have many opportunities: keeping a journal, writing poems, plays, songs, case studies, accounts, book reviews – any number of projects. If there is something to be read out in the lesson, be sensitive about who you ask to read it. Make sure it is not read too quickly or quietly, and that

all the words are understandable. Don't assume, for instance, that they all clearly know what psychological 'attachment' means.

Teachers are accustomed to lesson plans, but there's a case against strict planning. One said, 'I think with kids these days, if you don't take "where they are" and build on that, you won't get far. You can't get in by saying "Today we're going to deal with this" if they're not "there."' '

If you must do assessment or accreditation, the Parenting Education Support Forum suggested:

- Student logbooks: used to record teach student's own thinking and can be assessed for involvement and engagement, as well as the ability to follow through on projects;
- Certificates of achievement: can be given on completion of a course at the minimum required; can also reflect ability and commitment;

Irreducible needs of children or No one right way?

American distinguished paediatricians, Drs Brazelton and Greenspan, wrote their influential book *The Irreducible Needs of Children: What Every Child Must Have to Grow, Learn and Flourish* (2000) in response to the abysmal state of US children's behaviour. The title raises important questions about teaching parenthood. What are the needs of every baby and child, whatever culture or class it is born into? It's often said there are many styles of parenting, with an implication that they are all as good as each other, that there's no one way which is right. There is sometimes a politically correct reluctance to be, or appear to be, critical of certain practices. However, there's plentiful evidence that many common practices are bad for any baby and any child: for example, physical punishment, insecure

attachment, excessive pressure on a child to succeed, excessive exposure to screens of all kinds, witnessing or hearing parents not only fighting physically, but often arguing.

As we have seen, psychologists have established that of the four general styles (permissive/indulgent, authoritarian/disciplinarian, uninvolved/neglectful, and authoritative), the last is by far the most preferable. Authoritative (as opposed to authoritarian) parents might have high expectations but are warm, responsive, supportive, clear rule-setters, and able to value independence. Their children are more likely to achieve well academically, have good self-esteem, social skills, less mental illness, a lower rate of delinquency. When we teach parenthood, we must be aware many students haven't experienced this type of upbringing. But that's no reason to bypass discussing it, in as tactful, supportive a way as possible. Every aspect of parenting has to be evaluated in terms of what every baby, every child needs. For example, does one method produce fear? Does another lower self-esteem? Or reduce a child's confidence in helping itself? Certainly, babies and children differ from each other in innate temperament and need to be responded to accordingly, but there are givens which apply to everyone. I once researched family relationships at Lennox Lewis's college for disaffected teenagers. I asked a large group how they got on with their parents. There was little interest, a lot of eyes glazing over. I then asked about their siblings. The room came alive. There were vitriolic claims about how dreadful they were. Some resented having to look after them. I was reminded of friends whose little boy blamed the mere existence of his perfectly pleasant sister for ruining his life. Having more than one child poses many challenges for parents. Avoiding comparing them or showing signs of favouritism or resenting a late child who was a 'mistake': these are just a few. Students can be asked to think of others. Parents of two or more can be invited to the class to give their experiences.

Parents and carers

Students thinking about their own families

Pupils are extremely sensitive to the underlying intentions of parenthood courses, especially if they suspect something is being hidden. Prendergast and Prout

If trust has developed over time between teacher and class, and between classmates, students can be invited to consider:

- Does your parent smile at you/with you/laugh with you? If not, why?
- Does your parent seem happy to have you? Show an interest in you? Regret having you?
- Is your parent fascinated by you?
- Does your parent accept you as you are, your innate personality and uniqueness?
- Does your parent seem to adore you? Find joy in you? Cherish you? Put you first?
- Does your parent care about you, care for you? How is it shown?
- Does your parent respect you and show it?
- Does your parent talk with you? Play? Spend time with you?
- Does your parent enjoy life and show you the best in life? Or sees you as a chore, duty, burden? Can't wait for you to leave?
- If you have brothers and sisters, what is that like?
- If you have a step-family, what's that like?
- If you have two parents, how are they different with you? Do they do parenthood very differently?

The irreducible needs of parents and carers

Not only babies and children have irreducible needs. Adults must have their own needs met in order to be good enough parents. Their own mental health, self-knowledge, self-control, self-esteem have to

be sufficiently robust to nurture them in their children. Many were not well attached to their own parents. Anything that can be offered at school, or afterwards, to fill this attachment gap will have good knock-on effects for future babies and children.

As well as the need for basics, such as decent housing and enough money, we can add:

- A supportive partner committed to baby/child;
- Good communication and conflict resolution with partner;
- Supportive friends and/or relatives, especially if no partner: at least one confidante;
- Enough good quality sleep;
- Time for other activities socially, culturally, politically;
- Access to enough good information, professional support, help and advice pre- and post-natal and all through parenthood. If good parenting has become second nature due to long-term education at school, pre- and post-birth education would be more effective;
- Affordable trusted childcare;
- Acknowledgement by others of the status and important role of parent or carer - not just called 'mum' with no name.
- Pugh and De'Ath cover all this in *The Needs of Parents* 1984.

Students' parents and carers

Permission from parents is not needed to teach parenthood. (If there were to be a consent form, some parents might not bother to sign: their children might be among those who could most benefit. It is unlikely that many would refuse permission.) But parents have the right to withdraw a child from sex education; this could interfere with teaching about parenthood. And of course they have to agree for

their child to bring home one of those virtual baby dolls, programmed to cry several times a night!

Parents are, on the whole, overlooked when it comes to the details of their child's education. At secondary level in particular, when most students arrive on their own, there is usually minimal contact between home and school, apart from parents' evenings each term when academic grades are the main concern, or there are meetings about a possible exclusion. A few parents are active in the Parent Teacher Association if there is one. Parent governors still elected to the governing body of local authority schools, but don't have a place in the governance of the increasing number of academies.

How much do parents know about parenthood education in the rare cases where it's given a prominent place in the curriculum? How often do teenagers and parents talk at any length, depth, or at all, about anything learnt at school? Probably not often, what with home-based screens, long hours of work, the dwindling of shared family meals and conversation. (Sales of dining tables have plummeted in recent years.) Yet what a golden opportunity to involve parents in creative ways. Some will no doubt feel threatened at the thought of their stropky teenagers learning about what makes a good parent and comparing this to their own home life. They might assume they are being blamed, criticised and misunderstood; possibly that their deficiencies are elaborated out loud in a classroom. That could be grist for the mill for parents who feel hostile to school because of their own bad experiences or their educational philosophy. It could worsen any difficult relationships between parents and teachers. However, that doesn't have to be. There are several ways I can think of to try to heal the divide. You might think of more:

- Students are given 'homework:' ask their mother, father, preferably both, what it was like bringing them up as a baby, child and now as a teenager. They can prepare for this well by role-play, likely to be great fun and can assure them other students have comparable difficulties talking to parents. It will teach students how to conduct interviews, a life skill.
- For students from families other than the standard mum, dad, 2.4 kids (an ever-increasing number), they can interview step-parents, absent parents, foster and adoptive parents, grandparents, other family members or their former childminders and babysitters.
- They can make portfolios about their parents' lives going back as far as possible to fill in gaps in knowledge, enabling them to understand how their parents became to be as they are.
- Parents can be invited to the school for a series of evening meetings, initially to tell them about the parenthood education. There should be a friendly, welcoming atmosphere with drinks and snacks, facilitated by staff who are not too 'teacherly,' who have a common touch, a demonstrable sense of humour and excellent interpersonal skills, including a deep understanding of parents' problems and an absence of any judgemental manner. It is hard to rid oneself of all judgement; the key is to be aware of it and take an empathic interest in each parent's story.
- Work with both parents and students should honour everybody's gender, sexuality, marital or non-marital status, age, ethnic background, special needs of all kinds. There should be no assumptions made, for example, about single parents: they might be happier, better parents than couples in a miserable marriage.
- Future meetings for parents will invite them to offload and discuss their own experiences, past and present, of parenting. This will inevitably evoke strong feelings: regret, anger, disappointment, confusion, hatred, guilt, shame. Skilful facilitators will think on their feet and suggest the most helpful future directions: perhaps

small mutual aid support groups, fathers' groups or any number of specialist groups. Arts activities can be fostered; many adults missed out on the more enjoyable school subjects. Some might love to start a theatre group, to write and perform their own presentation about parenthood for the school assembly and elsewhere. The possibilities are endless. Trainees on placement can be wheeled in: for example, those studying therapies in art, drama, or dance/movement, to lead groups: it would cost nothing. Movement can trigger the flow of ideas.

- The thorny issue of the 'best' ways to parent will be faced: parents who defend hitting their children, for example, ('It didn't do me any harm'), or who are harshly authoritarian. With the development of increasing insights from neuroscience, facts can be presented in a neutral way to show the effects on immature brains of various approaches. There will be no consensus, but no doubt heated discussion.
- Specialist help for parents with specific problems can be suggested; the school needs complete up-to-date information about what's out there: often people don't know or need someone they trust to encourage them to take up offers.
- All these ideas can improve relationships between teenagers and parents; between parents and school; between family members overall. (One in four children avoid their parents if they are upset.) Better communication, understanding and emotional literacy will all have some impact on the ability of the teenagers to one day become good enough parents.

Part Seven

**Evidence, evaluation and feedback of
UK and US programmes**

Chapter Twenty-eight
Secondary schools UK:
evidence, evaluation, feedback

Power2 (previously Teens and Toddlers)

The scheme aims to reduce the chances of students becoming NEETS (Not in Education Employment or Training) or pregnant age 18, and to increase self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem. Evaluations show impressive results. In one, teachers and students were both given questionnaires to gauge changes:

Before participation in the project, students had these characteristics:

Low self-confidence: 68 percent
Little academic progress: 60 percent
Poor communication: 48 percent
Shy, or withdrawn behaviour: 44 percent
Truancy: 26 percent
At risk of school exclusion: 18 percent

After the 16-week programme, their teachers' assessments were:

Better self-confidence: 86 percent
Better communication skills: 85 percent
Less shy or withdrawn: 82 percent
Less risk of school exclusion: 73 percent
More academic potential: 68 percent
Better school behaviour: 59 percent
92 percent of teachers said the students had benefited
83 percent of students said it helped them decide their goals and plans
73 percent said they felt like a person of worth, or equal to others
A significant rise in self-esteem was found: 15 percent
The most disengaged students with the lowest self-esteem showed a
31 percent rise in self-esteem
The self-efficacy rating improved by 19 percent

The ability to make decisions rose by 24 percent.

Other evaluation reports (2022-23) show that of the children and young people supported by Power2 (22 percent were in care or had a social worker), by the end of the course:

- 87 percent improved their wellbeing
- 84 percent improved their self-confidence
- 81 percent improved their self-esteem
- 80 percent became less shy or withdrawn
- 80 per cent improved their communication skills
- 73 percent improved engagement with school and learning.
- 73 percent ‘felt like a person of worth’

Teachers were asked to predict if the students who took part in Teens and Toddlers would become NEETs. They predicted that 45 percent would; in fact, only five percent did. Teachers predicted that 45 percent would become teenage parents; in fact, only 1.6 percent did. School engagement rose by 23 percent.

The research study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies gave a note of warning. As there was no control group (perhaps due to lack of funding), the improvements might be due not to the programme but to other factors.

We heard that teenagers not offered Teens and Toddlers complained. Our charity Before Becoming Parent found the same at a school where we delivered our course to just one class.

Growing2gether: ‘Quite an eye-opener’

The very high retention rate is commendable, especially with such a hard-to-reach and transient group. Impact Report (2019)

Diana Whitmore’s project, which by 2023 reached 1,748 teenagers and 4-to-5-year-olds, was evaluated (2017-2023) by Kirsty

Humphrey, a research health psychologist. Of the young people, 90 percent had low self-esteem, 64 percent were isolated or withdrawn, 70 percent lacked friends, 53 percent had psychological intervention, and 55 percent had parents who had separated, divorced or died. Sixty percent had had Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs.) After the 16-or-18-week programme where teenagers are matched weekly with a pre-school child, results were statistically significant and striking.

- Anxiety and depression reduced by 23 percent by the end of the programme;
- For teenagers with particularly high anxiety and depression scores, these reduced by 31 percent;
- Teenagers with high ACE rates benefited even more in terms of their mental health than those without ACEs (31 percent compared to 13 percent);
- Self-esteem improved by 12 percent;
- Positive ‘can do’ mindset improved by 24 percent;
- High retention rate (82 percent);
- Feedback by young people and teachers showed improvements in self-reflection, empathy, understanding others, self-confidence, self-efficacy, academic motivation, effort and engagement, connectedness and sense of community;
- The Highland Council’s research showed that 92 percent of Growing2gether graduates ‘reached a positive destination.’
- Of those who completed the programme, 100 percent got an accredited qualification.

Participants were asked for feedback:

- 92 percent felt happier;
- 94 percent said the programme helped them emotionally;
- 87 percent said the programme helped them reflect what they are good at and why is important in their lives;
- 90 per cent valued the support they received the sessions;

- 91 percent agreed the programme made them more aware of themselves and the consequences of their actions;
- 81 percent said they felt more connected with others;
- 81 percent said it helped them understand others better;
- 81 percent agreed they were more confident in their abilities;
- 87 percent agreed the programme helped to see their potential to reach their goals;
- 68 percent agreed the programme encouraged them to want to become more involved in their community and help others.;
- 95 percent agreed that education provides them with more opportunities in the future.

And the young people made comments such as, 'I learnt how to empathise with people and to connect with the little ones.'

Teachers were asked for their ratings:

- There was a 27 percent improvement in engagement and interest in learning;
- 26 percent rise in students achieving what they are capable of;
- 35 percent rise in students' efforts to reach their potential;
- 58 percent improvement in effort to do as well as they can;
- 25 percent in perception of the students achieving the grades they need to further their education;
- 32 percent rise in self-efficacy.

Teachers wrote comments such as, 'X has absolutely grown in confidence. She has shown a real commitment in attending the programme and seeing it through to the end. She is able to articulate her needs.'

Previously X had episodes of panic attacks.

Since participating in Growing2gether, this has stopped. Teacher

Previous research showed that parents were impressed by the project's outcomes. A full 97 percent said they'd recommend other parents to encourage their children to take part. Students were asked how they'd improve it. The replies quoted support two recommendations of this book: the need for the work to be long-term; and the need for it to be based on experience rather than reading and writing. They said: make the programme longer, and have more time in the nursery with less writing.

By four headteachers and a nursery manager

- Growing2gether is unique in the way it develops skills, encourages participation and grows self-respect and responsibility. The opportunity to develop a close relationship with a younger child is quite an eye-opener. They learn what it is to be respected and, from that, follow the importance of resilience and reliability. Benefits are huge, not just in terms of the importance placed on work in the classroom, but in the development of essential skills, including attendance and punctuality, that they will need for their future life and work.
- Growing2gether provides opportunities for young people, particularly those who've struggled with self-confidence that has led to underachievement and low attendance, to develop key skills for learning, life and work. It's impressive how their sense of responsibility and duty have been enhanced. Recognising that they've achieved a qualification spurs them on to achieving more.
- We have been very pleased with the results of the programme in school. Pupils who may otherwise not engage have really connected with it, and talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about their involvement. I have no doubt that the programme is having a positive impact on other areas of their lives.'
- The programme is very successful at our school. We see positive changes in those who participate, especially with the school non-

attenders, and we notice a warm positive dynamic, with the young people looking out for one another.

- We see the children benefit from this one-on-one time. The young people are really staying focused and support the children well. They show initiative; also, really importantly, understand the children need to do things for themselves.

She has learnt more about responsibility, especially when it comes to saying or doing things in front of younger children. Parent

Young people said:

- 'I finally feel like I am OK as a person. I always thought everyone else was better than me, but being in this group has helped me to try different things.'
- 'Growing2gether was an inspirational experience. It gave me a lot of confidence and I can now speak to people better. It was nice to see my child grow – she really brought me on. For example, when I was reading a story, I thought that everyone was judging me, but actually they were just interested in what I had to say. Feedback about what I was doing and the thought of empathy really helped me. I realised it was not about myself, but about other people as well.'

The best thing about the programme was the bond you get with your child at the end. It feels like having a little best friend. Participant

Straight Talking Peer Educators

All the evaluations were positive in the extreme and a real accolade to its founder and workers. We begin with a telling quote from a staff member at Anstee Bridge (2012,) an alternative learning

centre in Kingston upon Thames for students aged 16 plus with emotional difficulties: 'In the first year of Anstee Bridge we had three pregnancies within the cohort. This was prior to us having Straight Talking deliver their sessions and, in fact, one of the key drivers for us in looking for an alternative way to convey the message. The fact we have not had any pregnancies in the period since then and we have not had anyone contemplating this as an option, is much more than just coincidence.'

Detailed studies by the Tavistock Institute (2009) and Deloitte (2012 and 2016) looked at work in schools in Barking and Dagenham, Ealing, Hounslow, Kingston and Solihull. They leave no doubt that the charity's way of working had an impact both on the students and on the peer educators. One of the latter gave her story – mentally ill mother, gang membership, violent boyfriend, death of her little brother – which says it all:

'My depression peaked. I asked for a home help, just someone to talk to and help me to look at options to better my life. I was told about Straight Talking and applied for a job as a peer educator. When I started, I was really nervous and had no confidence but Straight Talking as a whole supported and encouraged me to develop confidence that I so desperately needed. I really enjoy working for them and have developed many skills not only for work but for life as well. I was very grateful for the opportunity they gave me. I have now been promoted to the office as a Local Scheme Co-ordinator. My life has improved massively and I am a much better and stronger person. And I now know my worth and that in life I can achieve almost anything I want to. I enjoy being me. Me and my son have an amazing life.'

Another important finding were the benefits of including male peer educators. Students and teachers alike reported surprise, a change in dynamics, the opening up of discussion and the interest

of hearing another view. This would be invaluable if the work were to be repeated in a Young Offenders Institution. The charity worked at Oakhill YOI in 2016 to some acclaim. It was tragically not continued due to security worries by the authorities.

Deloitte summarised the charity's effectiveness:

- Significant impact on teenage conception rate;
- Supporting young parents; understanding their on-going needs;
- Improving their quality of life and providing further opportunities for work, education and skills.

And public money is saved. There's a Social Return on Investment (SROI): 'The primary benefits identified were benefits and costs saved by addressing disengagement and low aspirations amongst teenage mothers and fathers. Of those who were not in education, employment or training prior to engaging with Straight Talking, 100 percent were proven to gain valuable employability skills through the programme. And 95 percent have gone on to access further employment, education or training; feeling empowered and determined to fulfil their potential. The recent evaluation found that for every £1 spent on supporting teenage parents through Straight Talking, the Government and the taxpayer were saved from spending £8.93 over a five-year period. Moreover, Deloitte feel that due to certain complexities of measurement, this value is only scratching the surface of the broader societal value of Straight Talking and, in reality, the social return on any such investment is likely to be much higher.'

Teachers agreed it's better to get peer educators in: 'When someone comes from outside, young people are a lot more open and listen more than they do when a teacher talks about this sort of stuff.' Students agreed the work was most suitable for 14-to-16-year-olds); they now looked on teenage parents with less stigma. Their interesting suggestions for extra features for the project::

- Provide a leaflet or other form of takeaway containing main facts and figures from the session;
- Include the views of a child who grew up with a teenage parent to provide an alternative point of view;
- Introduce a mother who had her first child at an older age;
- Involve a university student or a young person in full-time employment to compare practicalities;
- Bring in a parent of a young parent (the grandparent) to give a view on how their child having a baby affects the whole family;
- Do a follow-on or a refresher course in Year 12 which could be helpful to reinforce the main messages;
- Merge the offering with other Straight Talking programmes such as discussion regarding career aspirations;
- Provide a younger group of peer educators, such as a pregnant female or a parent with a young toddler, to provide insight into life during the early years.

Deloitte's overall conclusion: 'Putting the quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation data together indicates that the model applied by Straight Talking is effective and has an immediate and sustained impact on young people's views and understanding of teenage pregnancy. The qualitative data from pupils, teachers and peer educators is extremely positive. It reinforces the stand-out design and delivery of the Straight Talking Peer Education model. The characteristics that are central to creating this stand-out are:

- The preparation of the peer educators in terms of their training and the confidence that they can deliver an impactful session on a potentially difficult subject;
- Delivery by peer educators with first-hand experience;
- Including both males and females in delivery team;
- The quality of the interactive, memorable content which can stimulate and engage the pupils.

They continued: ‘There are some issues which need continued focus (e.g. recruitment and retention of male peer educators) and some potential constraints (schools wanting one single session rather than a programme of five.) However, the model is fundamentally sound. Straight Talking’s years of experience, programme development and delivery, and the development of standardised programmes and processes which have been codified in the standard operations manual, combined with the need for such an intervention (based on rates of teenage conception, the poor quality of sex education in a significant majority of 30 schools, and the need for tailored support for the interlinked challenges of teenage pregnancy and NEET status) do suggest positive potential for geographic growth.’

Two final comments. Deloitte went back a year later and found the impact had been sustained. But no one has done a longer-term follow-up to see if the rate of teenage pregnancy was significantly lower several years later. We can assume it was, but we don’t know. And given the enormous financial and social savings, by using peer educators, how is it Straight Talking did not attract far more funding and was welcomed into more schools than it did, despite all its efforts? (The founder, Hilary Pannack, told me one in 100 funding applications succeeded.)

The WAVE Trust: Parenthood and Relationships Education Project (PREP) 2016

The WAVE Trust doesn’t know which schools in Scotland or anywhere else have yet used this excellent *Toolkit*. There don’t seem to be ways to find out. WAVE emphasises the crucial need for adequate evaluation so we can understand ‘what impact it has on behaviour and knowledge.’ I would add: ‘on understanding.’

For this, it recommends that:

- Students give feedback after every session;

- Pre- and post-course knowledge is measured;
- Teachers have materials to encourage their own reflection and self-development.

Presumably because of funding, WAVE states: ‘Project limitations mean we are unable at this stage to put into place any long-term evaluation, but this would be important for any future development.’ It is not clear what is meant by ‘long-term.’ In the *Toolkit*, WAVE includes appendices to help with evaluation. These would be helpful for anyone doing this work:

For students after each session (rate 1 – 5)

I enjoyed today’s session / I thought today’s session was interesting / I learned something new in today’s session / I think I know more about being a parent / My opinion about parenthood has changed / Why? / Something I enjoyed / Something I learned / Something I will take away / Something I disliked.

For students at end of course

Exit ticket: Something I learnt / Something I want to find out more about / Something I would change.

For practitioners/teachers

What went well in today’s session? / What would you like to improve? / Identify any questions that arose which you were unable to answer, or any further support you require / Identify any areas for further development of this session (e.g. timings, assessing learning, amendments to content/resources, anything missed, external inputs required, further training.)

Explore

After just one session, 92 percent of students rated Explore’s work excellent, very good or good; 97 percent understood more about healthy relationships; 65 percent felt more hopeful about having a happy, healthy long-term relationship themselves, and an

interesting 99 percent believed it's important for young people to learn about this. An impressive 98 percent of teachers would recommend Explore to other teachers and schools.

'The best lesson in the school'

The teacher Alison Orton, (rf. Volume One) seems to have taught parenthood in the 1970s. She found that 'pupils become skilled in coping with young children, and become tolerant of their peers. If success can be measured in enjoyment, this is a successful course. Surely, there is also the kind of success which we can't measure, but will have to wait 20 years or more in order to assess results.' She quotes a 'less able' student:

I think parent craft is a good lesson Because it helps us to look after our Children I Enjoyed it ever since I come into it. We like the teacher What teaches us and we like to listen to her Because she can tell us and think we have to no. I think parent Craft is the Best lesson in the School because you learn more from that and what to do than another lesson. that's the lesson I like parent Craft. I like When they tell us How we got to look after Baby and How to take care when we have a Baby. She have told us what We Should do When we have them and we Should do ever thing we Should do.

If that doesn't convince the policy makers, what will?

Before Becoming a Parent: evidence, evaluation, feedback

We report on our work at six schools in north-east London.

School A (2006)

Our first courses took place at a mixed school with the borough's lowest academic results. We ran weekly sessions for two terms for girls aged 14-to-15 on a childcare course. An MA student studied their views after term two. There were also weekly sessions for a term with a mixed class during drama lessons.

Half-way evaluation

I love the project. It's fun and a better way of learning about being a parent!
Student

After term one, we carried out our own survey, collecting written replies from 10 of the 19 students.

1 What was the best thing that you enjoyed about the project and why?

They all mentioned meeting Coco, seeing her when pregnant, learning about being the parent of two, what happens when both kids are crying at the same time, seeing the toddler running around and playing, learning about Coco's relationship with her husband, and how stressful it can be to have another baby.

2 What else would you like to see included in the project and why?

Four liked the course as it was. Others suggestions: bring in another mother and child to compare different upbringings; meet the father, 'see it from a man's point of view so we know how they feel'; know more about pregnancy, and what you need to eat.

3 How long would you like the project to go on for?

Most wanted to continue till the end of Year 11 when they finished their childcare course. One said: 'for as long as possible.'

4 Do you think that any other groups of students in the school would benefit from this project: who and why?

Nine out of ten said yes. One recommended it for ten-to-eleven-year-olds at primary school; one for 11-to-12-year-olds; others for 14-to-16-year-olds so they understand what parenthood is like, as they have more sex than other ages and need to know about having babies. Two said it would work well in PSHE lessons.

5 What have you learnt from this project and do you think it may help you if you become a parent?

All said they'd learnt a lot: it's not easy to handle a baby; many ways of communication; how to help my baby if it needs anything and to love him/her no matter what; be patient: how to look after kids if they cry and to think who needs you most; things you have to go through; how you feel when you've got a baby in your tummy. They thought it would help them when they became parents. And 'it helped me, being a big sister and an eldest child.'

6 So far this term, what has been the thing that you remember the most?

Most said meeting Coco and her toddler for the first time, and when Coco was pregnant again. 'How it feels to have a baby and how your family reacts to the change.'

7 Any other comments you want to say about the project.

Most had no comments. One wanted advice about 'how women change their lives when they get married.'

The educational psychology student who evaluated the project was interested in these questions:

- Have the students been influenced as a result of the course?
- Have they developed empathy with babies and children?

- How good now is their understanding of what it is like to be a baby or young child?
- What do they see as the needs of parents?
- What do they think children need from parents?
- What is their understanding of relationships?

Summary of the findings

Data were collected via two focus groups and two semi-structured interviews. 12 students volunteered to take part, with written consent from their parents. 'This limited study suggests the students acquired a good knowledge of the skills, resources and personal qualities required for good parenting. Students' views were extremely positive; they believed the course had an impact on how they might tackle life in future. They had a good idea of babies' needs, what it might feel like to be a baby, and of resources parents need in order to fulfil what students regarded as a difficult role. They recognised that parents had needs too, that parental relationships were not perfect but that there were qualities, and things which could be done, to help sustain them. Empathetic skills also appear to have been developed along with a realistic expectation of what family life can hold and the sacrifices and rewards that go along with raising a family. There is also an awareness of the consequences of "not getting it right." '

From Conclusions and Implications

'If, as government directives suggest, there should be a focus on early intervention and prevention, this approach would seem to be valid. Currently there is a huge government focus on children doing well in academic subjects, measuring success in terms of statistics. However, such a narrow focus ignores the skills which children need to develop in order to have a successful life, to be "successful people." Perhaps a course such as this offers a way forward, one possible solution to a self-perpetuating problem.'

Quotes from students at the end of the course:

- If you try and enjoy it and have a good time with your kids, then maybe you can relate to them more
- This makes you see that you can change it and basically it is like not letting history repeat itself in a way
- You realise you can change some of the stuff that other people are doing wrong
- It made me realise to live a bit, go to university or something, then get a job, then decide if I want a child at that stage
- If the mother is happy, then the baby is bound to be happy. So the mother just needs to be focused and enjoy herself so that the child can enjoy life
- Your social life gets reduced
- You see the baby developing in front of you so that is obviously a good thing, so you are happy as well as a bit stressed and tired
- Parents need to know they are loved in order to love the baby
- Babies' needs can be very complicated
- Children need not just the mother but father as well to be there
- We know we are learning. We are enjoying ourselves at the same time. If we were just sitting reading a book, that wouldn't really make it so interesting. All our questions got answered.

About Coco, baby and toddler visiting:

- It was a real parent; you got a practical view rather than theory
- You really understood how she would feel
- Coco has to please both the children and then she also has to think of her husband and his thoughts and feelings
- You learnt about the views of your parents.

The course during drama lessons

Feedback from the mixed group was not gathered methodically, but informal chats with the students suggested that they all, males and females, felt positive about the lessons, no doubt helped by

the presence of their inspirational drama teacher and the experienced facilitator whom we brought in.

School B: SuperLearning Days (2012 and 2014)

It's increasingly common for secondary schools to run several Drop Down Days, Super Learning Days or Non-Uniform Days for the whole school, when the curriculum is suspended and outside speakers are brought in to cover a variety of subjects not necessarily covered by the usual timetable.

During this Super Learning Day, in which we were invited to focus on the subject of 'Baby Love', my colleague brought in her teenage daughter with baby. The male and female students' questions are evidence of their keen interest. We ran five one-hour sessions for 25 students each. Their written questions included pregnancy, the pain of childbirth, death in childbirth, sleep, poo, vomit, feeding, crying, the cost of a nursery, the age of the young mother, the age of the baby. There were some interesting angles, good bases for class discussion on a longer course: 'Why do people look so stressed and not look attractive when they have a baby?', 'What is raising a baby like in terms of emotions?', 'Why do boys have sex but when the girl is pregnant, they deny the baby?', 'How does the baby help the relationship?' and 'What happens if a boy wants a baby and the girl doesn't?'

After-school course for one term (2014)

We gave out identical 'Before' and 'After' questionnaires to the nine students who attended (including one boy.) Five girls attended regularly; others for a few sessions only. The questionnaires revealed that, by the end of the course, students:

- Gave later ages as 'the best time to start having babies'

- Added 'love, kindness, caring and respect' to the most important qualities for a parent to have
- Added 'attention' to the needs of a baby
- Added 'care and happiness' to what a young child needs most
- And concluded: It is hard having a child.'

It was gratifying to hear from the helpful head of performing arts that he thought the course was a success. Certainly, the girls' lively, impressive dramatic presentation at the end suggested their high level of interest and how much they had learnt.

School C: Drop Down Day (2015)

Results of this one-day course for twenty-five specially selected, 'vulnerable' 13-to-14-year-olds were encouraging. There were 14 girls and seven boys. Teachers listed their problems as: vulnerable family relationships; could be used and led astray; underachieving; low self-esteem; promiscuity; poor school attendance; erratic, impulsive behaviour; attention seeking; and inappropriate behaviour and choices towards females. This school had the lowest GCSE passes in the borough (2017.)

The *Before* questionnaire produced 10-to-16 replies. Some students probably copied their neighbour. We learnt that it is important to administer questionnaires only while adults ensure that students give their own answers.

1 What are you looking forward to learning about today?

Babies: 31 percent

How to be a parent: 42 percent

2 What do you know about what it's like to be a parent?

Responsibility: 36 percent

Stress: 28 percent

Hard: 28 percent

Some stuff: 7 percent

3 Can you write down what you think it feels like to be a baby?

Sorry not / no / not sure: 30 percent

Dependent: 20 percent

Good, innocent: 20 percent

No care in the world, stress-free: 15 percent.

Confused, worried: 5 percent

4 Any other comments about today?

No thanks: 75 percent.

I'm looking forward, we'll learn useful stuff: 25 percent

After evaluation sheets were completed by 13 students at the end of the one-day course.

*You don't get no sleep. I have to not argue
with my partner or something will happen.* Student

- 20 percent realised how hard it is to be a parent, teenage or single mother;
- 20 percent said they learned what it feels like to be a parent;
- 20 percent said they learned how to be a mother or parent: 'pay attention to them and love them';
- 30 percent mentioned the need for patience, commitment, time, or care;
- 10 percent said 'you have to be responsible to be a parent';
- 10 percent: 'how much you have to sacrifice if you have a kid.'

We asked if they would have liked the course to have been any different. Forty percent said no. A few wanted videos, e.g. of teenage mothers. They also mentioned 'toy' babies, what it's like having a baby, sexually transmitted diseases, and peer pressure. The most striking result was the high number (85 percent) who not only said they had learnt something but who wanted the school to hold

more training like this. At least half liked the idea of visiting a nursery every week. Two-thirds showed some enthusiasm for weekly visits by a parent and baby. We attempted to ask the school if we could do a follow-up, some months later, to see what students remembered, but received no reply.

School D: Drop Down Day (2016)

We delivered five one-hour lessons. A good and lively time was had by all. But our several requests to have a chance to collect the students' feedback and see what they remembered a few weeks later got nowhere, with letters to the headteacher and chair of governors never answered.

School E: Girls' School (Spring term 2019)

What are the most important things to remember when bring up a baby or child? Girl N:

- **Before the course:** Feeding them, size for clothes are right for them to wear;
- **After the course:** Spend a lot of time with your child. Teach them good things. Be patient and kind.

We asked the PSHE teacher to distribute our *Before* questionnaire in January during the week before the six-lesson course for a Year 10 PSHE class. From a class of 24 there were 21 replies. *After* questionnaires were filled in quickly at the end of the last lesson.

1 What do you think the difficulties are in being a parent?

Before: Care, best upbringing,

putting kids first: 6

Work-related: 6

Money: 5

Responsibility: 5

Worries: 2

Control of child and decisions:

3

Time management, time: 2

Waking early every day: 1

Pain of pregnancy: 1
Feeding, nappies: 2
Care for multiple children: 1

When they leave home, their future: 2

After: Raising them well
/giving attention /putting kid
first/ teaching them: 7
Work: 0
Money: 11
Responsibility: 6
Worries: 0
Control, decision: 0
Pain of pregnancy: 0
Time, no time for yourself, need
to give up things, less freedom:
6

Change of routine, adapting to
new life, life not the same: 6
Mental health concerns/
emotional difficulties: 2
How to control anger, stay
calm, not hit child: 5
Single parent: 1
Bond with partner: 1
Care of self: 1
Feeding child: 1
Child crying in the night: 1
Physically demanding: 1
If not prepared: 1

Relationships with others:

2 What do you think are the most important things to remember when bringing up a baby or child?

There was a greater variety of replies after the course – less on practicalities, more on qualities.

Before: *Soft things:* Love, patience, happiness, put child first, keep child's feelings in mind, safe, well, proper care/caring, protection, don't take out anger on child. 15 comments

Practicalities: Feed, bathe, always clean, good household, clothes, necessities such as stroller. 8 comments

Morals: Teach discipline and manners, teach them right/to respect others, educate them, help them make important decisions, be a role model. 7 comments

Other: Responsible, be prepared, have both parents. 3 comments

After: *Soft things:* Love, patience, happiness, spend time with child, focus, trust, safe and homely atmosphere. Be positive, praise, reward. Don't make their life suffocating or uncomfortable. Remember your actions affect the child. 21 comments

Practicalities: 2 comments

Morals: right and wrong. One comment

Anger management/punishment: Control anger, don't hit, stay calm.

9 comments

Money: be financially stable. 6 comments

Other: Responsible, be prepared, be a strong couple with partner, mentally stable, no time for yourself, change in your life, ask for help when needed. 7 comments

3 What do you think are the most important qualities of a parent?

Before: Soft qualities: caring, kindness, honesty, understanding/empathy, loving, generous, helpful, patience, unselfish, merciful, helpful, loveable, supportive, motherly, communicative, praise. Qualities mentioned 35 times

Practicalities: provide, be a role model, know your priorities, worry about childcare. 4 comments

Morals: be a role model, bring it up the best way, teach new things, teach it right. 4 comments

Other: responsible, limited freedom of parent / worry about childcare. 3 comments

After: Soft qualities: caring, loving: 6 comments

patient: 4 comments

spend time/as a family: 3 comments

understanding: 3 comments

One comment each: friendly / nice / reasonable / calm / supportive / helpful / trustworthy / reliable / talk as parent and friend / fair / fun / assertive / child not to feel neglected / mentally and physically stable

Qualities mentioned 42 times

Practicalities: role model: 3 comments

responsible: 4 comments
discipline: 1 comment
don't discipline: 1 comment
teach life lessons: 1 comment
time for self: 1 comment
raise it right, know priorities
Other: no time for self: 1 comment

4 What is the best age to start thinking of having a first baby – and why?

Before: Average age: 24

After: Average age recommended: 24. You have lived your life, full prepared, mature, experienced, finished education, having a young adult life. You have a job or career, are married, caring, responsible, stable, ready. You have accomplished your childhood dreams. You have enough knowledge. Don't be too old or too young.

Two were keen on 20 or so: 'It is better to see them grow'

'The parent should preferably be young.'

5 Please write anything else you think about being a parent, or anything you would like to know more about

There were a few especially interesting questions, possibly reflecting the students' own families:

Before: 14 replied: How your life and your kids are affected;

How to support our parents and understand their problems;

What age to have a child;

Why do parents have children that they don't want Why do parents think that staying together is a good option when you have kids, even though they hate each other;

What does a good parent need to do in order for their child to have the best upbringing?;

It is important to raise them right;

Don't have a child too early. It's expensive and a huge responsibility, not something to take lightly.

After: 9 replied: Be a friend;
It's not easy;
Support is important;
It changes your life;
The type of thoughts needed;
Talk calmly and politely to teach right and wrong and build a good trusting bond;
Being a single parent; how not to get frustrated;
It changes your life, all attention is on the child;
If you have a new sibling coming, how do you tell your parent you also want the attention, not just your sibling?
How to multi-task everything;
How to be the best and caring supporter to help guide my child;
Love your child;
How to cook and what recipes to follow;
It's hard to earn money while taking care of your child;
Accomplish your dreams in life first;
Types of parents that exist.

We asked the teacher to give the same questionnaire to another class in the same year as a control group.

To have patience: eventually you learn, but as a new mother/father, patience is key as the child develops. Student

School F: Sixth form at Girls' RC School (plus some boys)

Feedback from the students

Some volunteers reported positive feedback from their students:

- 1 They thought the topic was valuable and interesting and would be of practical use to them in their lives;
- 2 They wanted more on this subject;
- 3 One pupil said more sessions about parenting were important;

4 The school invited them to reply online to the statement: 'I was able to work collectively to share my opinions and discuss relationships and parenting in modern society.' Of the 39 who replied (out of about 100), 38.5 percent strongly agreed and 61.5 percent agreed. We had provided a longer list of questions, as we wanted to know whether students would like more sessions or would like to have visits by parents and babies, but these were not used by the school.

At the beginning of the course, most of us could only see our own point of view, but we have learnt to listen to others'. Most people think that having children and raising them is common sense, but they don't know how far from the truth that is! During the past two years, I've learnt things I wouldn't even have thought of.

Student on course run by Alison Orton 1970s

Chapter Thirty
**Projects in the US:
evidence, evaluation, feedback**

‘In general, evaluation results show that students in these programs develop more empathy; cultivate skills for non-violent communication; develop their cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, observing and listening; build stronger family relationships; and are more inclined to postpone parenthood until they become adults,’ claimed *The Parenting Project*.

The Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

It’s been shown that enhancing students’ social and emotional learning (SEL) for all age groups leads to an 11 percent improvement, with significantly better social and emotional skills, attitudes and behaviour. Durlak et al (2011) analysed US programs involving 270,034 students. Even if lessons don’t focus on parenthood as such, it’s likely that in some cases they will have a good impact on future parenting. The SEAL programme (UK) has had similar results. What about outcomes of programs specifically teaching child development and good parenting?

The RealCare Baby Programme by RealityWorks (previously ‘Baby Think It Over’)

The White Paper by Realityworks, The RealCare Baby Programme: Evidence of Efficacy, by Dr Min Qi Wang (no date given) brought together evidence from 15 studies. Some used control groups. The overall findings were that ‘students who had participated in this programme were more likely to:

- Postpone sexual relations and parenthood;
- Use birth control and other means to prevent pregnancy;
- Appreciate the demands, time, commitment and costs associated with having a child;

- Understand that raising a child affects quality of life and makes it difficult to continue an education;
- Communicate with their parents about parenting and sexuality.

Other studies tell us that:

- Students came to realise that looking after a baby was much harder than they had thought and best delayed;
- They understood the need for patience and tolerance and the changes parenthood would make to their lives;
- Anecdotes have it that the project sometimes led to male students choosing childcare and parenting courses.

One study followed students for two to three years. Others said their research was 'longitudinal' but not stating what this meant. They couldn't show long-term outcomes of the program: delay of pregnancy/quality of parenting, once students became parents. An additional study of the RealCare method, this time from Greenland, gives fascinating perspectives. The vast country has had high teenage pregnancy and abortion rates, with two distinct populations: mainly Inuit in settlements and along the coast, and Danish in the capital.

- There was criticism of some of the healthcare assistants, midwives and health visitors who ran the courses. Where educators have a patronising, moralistic approach, the effects of the dolls can be negative, squashing self-esteem. E.g. If students' score is low, as shown by the computer rating of the quality of their care for the doll, they might doubt their ability to become a good parent and feel defeated, unless educators point out that a low score doesn't necessarily mean that at all.;
- The work needs to move from traditional blackboard teaching to interactive methods. 'When students feel seen and heard by seriously and sincerely interested teachers' with group work and discussion, the programme has more effect, especially if based

around students' 'current attitudes, interests and values together with the challenges they face in everyday life.';

- After the programme, boys are more likely than girls to say they want a baby. Some said the experience had kindled their paternal instinct. 'The boys are generally more absorbed in caring for the dolls than the girl.;
- It is best to offer this programme to 13-to-14-year-olds. They are most likely to think differently about what it means to have a child. 'The 17-to-19-year-olds are less affected.'
- There are significantly greater effects when students keep the doll for two to three days than for one or none;
- Students claim they will make greater use of contraception after the course. 29 percent had sex without any before it. Almost none said they would now continue to;
- The writer is explicit: that research is not longitudinal. One assumes it was done straight after the course ended. He admits, 'Just how this increased awareness of the importance of using contraception leads to altered behaviour hasn't been studied.'
- Last but not least, be aware of strong cultural factors. In Inuit communities, any new child is welcomed, no matter how young the parents. The desire of parents and grandparents can set the agenda. 'All children are welcome at any time.' About half the Inuit students believe it would be extremely positive for their family to have a child 'here and now.' It is therefore interesting to read elsewhere about the way that Inuit parents treat their children. Journalist Michaela Douclev went to see for herself. 'Shouting at a child is seen as demeaning for the adult. They use storytelling and role-play instead to encourage young people to learn for themselves. There's an amazing amount of calmness there.' Clearly educators need to understand the cultural backgrounds of all their students. For example, teenage pregnancy and methods of upbringing can be seen very differently by different populations.

The study concluded that ‘as a result of the program, the vast majority of students have started to think differently and reflect more carefully on the subject of parenthood.’ It restates the short-term nature of the research: ‘The evaluation does not have a sufficiently long time-frame to be able to suggest anything about the longer-term effects. The statistics do indicate, however, that in the areas where teaching offers involvement and embraces dialogue, the number of teenage pregnancies seems to be falling.’

Several studies have questioned the effectiveness of RealCare Babies in reducing teenage pregnancy, short-term attitudes and perception, citing mixed results. One said the program taught the realities and responsibilities of teen pregnancy but not how to prevent it. Some experts claim the drop in teen pregnancy in the US is due to the message and ‘magic formula of less sex and more contraception.’ The first randomised controlled trial of the ‘babies’ was reported in *The Lancet* (25.8 16.) It was conducted by Dr Sally Brinkman of the university of Adelaide’s School of Population Health and six other doctors and professors, and followed 2,834 girls aged 13-to-15 in 57 Perth schools: 1,267 in 28 schools in the intervention group, and 1,567 girls in 29 schools in the control group. Between February 2003 and May 2006, the ‘intervention’ group of girls had looked after a RealCare Baby for a weekend as part of a pregnancy prevention course. The control group followed only a standard health education program with no dolls. The researchers looked at records in hospitals and abortion clinics, once the girls had turned 20. Girls who had used the dolls were twice as likely to have given birth, and one-and-a-half times as likely to have had a termination, as the control group.

RealityWorks staff vehemently challenged the findings:

- ‘The study has enormous flaws. The survey had nothing to do with us, our curriculum, or our RealCare Baby simulators, nor are its conclusions about us credible;’
- The survey was flawed from the start because it measured the wrong thing. ‘We’re not about teen pregnancy prevention. We’re about educating young people on the choices they make and what the outcomes are going to be like after going through that experience. Teachers look at it as a parenting tool;’
- RealCare Babies come with a curriculum of fourteen-hours teaching time: the babies and the curriculum are an integrated programme. ‘The RealCare Program involves multiple learning activities, discussion and prolonged take-home simulator experience.’ Yet the girls studied by Brinkman had a curriculum lasting a mere two-hours 20 minutes. Brinkman did not consult Realityworks. ‘You can’t gut the curriculum the way these authors did and expect good performance, or draw any inferences whatsoever about our program. Science is supposed to be about comparing apples with apples’
- A Maternity Payment Programme, ‘Baby Bonus’, was launched by the Australian government (2004) to boost the birth rate, early in Brinkman’s research. A lump sum of \$3,000 (rising later to \$5,000) was given after the birth of a child to families earning below \$75,000. This would have given the intervention group a financial incentive to get pregnant. ‘The group receiving the simulator curriculum came from a significantly poorer socio-economic group than the control group.’ After the launch of Baby Bonus, the birth rate for 15-to-19-year-olds increased by 7.7 percent in 2005 and 13.5 percent in 2006. Baby Bonus was not even mentioned in Brinkman’s report;
- ‘What distresses us most about this study, apart from obvious flaws, is that it confuses a public health issue. Our RealCare Program, used in two-thirds of US school districts, has been adopted since 1995. In that time, teen pregnancy has declined. There are doubtless many reasons for this. We believe one is the

marked change in attitude towards teen pregnancy and parenting found in RealCare Program participants.’

The row continued. RealCare Program was not in the government’s list of evidence-based interventions to reduce teen pregnancy. Without good evidence, it was said, RealityWorks was irresponsible to sell the dolls to poor countries with their high rate of rape, poor access to contraception and safe abortion, if the dolls in fact increased teenage pregnancy. And there were arguments about the main aim of Realcare Babies. Was it to delay pregnancy or to teach about good parenting? RealityWorks seemed to give mixed messages. They were criticised for not teaching contraception or recommending later sex.

Interestingly, while this storm raged, high school teachers were taking little notice, it seems. They weren’t asking for evidence and said things like, ‘I don’t have a lot of time to go and spend researching. It’s working for me.’ ‘I’m still going to use them. Lots of parents say they have value.’ Even if the dolls do *reduce teen* pregnancy, there is no guarantee of course that they will do so for every girl. Wendy Conrad, a child development teacher who displayed the RealityWorks poster listing the drawbacks of teen pregnancy, said that while most students couldn’t wait to hand back their baby, some returned pregnant the following term. ‘I just can’t believe it after all the things I’ve talked to them about in class, including contraception.’ Certainly, humans don’t always act rationally. They smoke when they know it causes lung cancer. Schoolgirls get pregnant when they’ve experienced the hard work of caring for a baby and know about safe sex. Other potent forces are at work, far stronger than any teacher’s intervention.

Parents Under Construction

PUC was independently evaluated by no less than 16 research studies (1991–2009.) It has proved very effective in teaching about child development and parenting skills, as well as making a positive impact on children's attitudes about discipline methods, regardless of age, race, gender or socio-economic status. Other results about teachers, students and parents included:

- Teachers participating in PUC training showed significant gains in child development knowledge, nurturing attitudes and positive skills in managing behaviour
- Students became more empathetic after participating in PUC
- They knew more about child development and had more positive, caring attitudes towards children
- Teachers noticed that their students were behaving better
- Parents who took part in the parent/child activities overwhelmingly approved of the programme.

It is exciting to hear of a five-year follow up of high school students (15-to-17-year-olds), missing in most research. This showed that 'many' students still remembered what they had learnt, such as child development (though it is not mentioned how many students and how much they remembered); and they still had the positive attitudes and beliefs about parenting practices that they had developed on the course, such as non-punitive ways to discipline. Interviewers found they used what they had learnt in their dealings with the children in their lives.

Sadly, there are no plans for even longer-term research to cover the year by which most students would have become parents, though that was strongly urged by others in this field. PUC explained several reasons why they thought this unfeasible: the gaps between courses, the problem of getting permission from students and schools, locating the students, and lack of uniformity by schools and teachers in how the courses were delivered, not to mention the old chestnut of getting funding.

It is interesting, given the high Texas teenage pregnancy rate, that after five years, no student, who were now well into adolescence, said they had a child. (Terminations were not mentioned.) ‘These findings suggest that the program may have a significant impact on reducing teen pregnancy and increasing the likelihood of future generations of mentally healthy children and parents.’

Last but by no means least, another significant finding was the benefit to teachers themselves in managing the classroom, and the children in their own homes, in more caring ways.

p.a.p.a. (Parenting and Paternity Awareness)

The responsibility of controlling yourself is hard enough, but then having a kid to go along with it is kind of impossible. Student

Evaluation by the university of Texas (2008–10) concluded: ‘p.a.p.a. addresses an unmet need for students. It significantly improves the knowledge and attitudes in areas unique to its curriculum.’ Data was collected from 5,730 students in 47 high schools using pre- and post- assessment online questionnaires. Focus groups contained 75 students. There were the key findings:

- More students now planned to delay childbearing until after marriage;
- Their knowledge about the cost of parenting increased. 62 percent more could identify the average cost; 46 percent more identified the amount of child support money;
- They had more knowledge of the legal issues faced by unmarried parents. More than twice as many knew that unmarried fathers had fewer rights than the mother;

- They were more likely to value the importance of fathers' legal /social involvement and more likely to establish legal paternity; more agreed on the importance of two active parents;
- Their overall level of knowledge increased by 12 percent;
- Students more at risk of teenage parenthood demonstrated the greatest need for the curriculum.
- White students and those in more advantaged areas scored higher. Black and Hispanic boys in particular seemed to need more knowledge.

Interestingly, the researchers reported: 'The level of student knowledge remained low, however, in several key areas, indicating the need for continued education.' 14 hours was clearly inadequate. The recommendation mirrors that of the Manchester teacher: the need for an 'ongoing' course into Years 9, 10 and 11.

Teachers were consulted too. They overwhelmingly agreed that p.a.p.a. was relevant and should be taught, though seven in ten of them modified the curriculum and nearly a quarter didn't teach some aspects of it at all, e.g. how to establish paternity, which they found too complex for both their students and themselves.

p.a.p.a. clearly made some impact but, as with all other evaluations, there is nothing at all about long-term outcomes. Did the teenagers in fact behave differently up to the age of twenty, even if, just after the course, they said that they would?

Family and Consumer Sciences

As we've seen, FACS teachers have delivered high school lessons about parenting that have been evaluated by several universities. They taught child development, how to support children, resources available to parents, and the commitment needed. Luster and Youatt's study (1989) in eight diverse Michigan high schools,

The Effects of Pre-Parenthood Education on High School Students, showed encouraging outcomes. They used three well-established methods of gauging parenting knowledge and beliefs: *Knowledge of Child Development Inventory*, *Parental Beliefs Survey*, and *Perception of Parental Efficacy*. They tested 130 students aged 14-to-19 who had chosen to do the course, and 28 who had not, by pre-and post-course questionnaires. The control group was so small because the research took up substantial school time; it was not seen as ethical to use so much time for controls.

Students who had done the course (87 percent of whom were female) showed modest but significant differences from the small control group (66 percent female). They were 'more knowledgeable about child development; less likely to believe that infants were "spoiled" by responsive and affectionate care; more likely to emphasise the importance of talking and reading to children; more likely to believe that infants should be given considerable leeway in exploring the home environment; less likely to be authoritarian in their views on discipline; and more likely to believe that parents exert considerable influence on the developing child.' Good news but, as with much other evaluation, it researched students just at the end of the semester's course. We therefore know nothing about lasting effects into their parenthood years. Luster and Youatt address this. 'We cannot be sure that knowing more about child development will lead to better parenting.' They note that parent education for parents has been shown to have a positive effect. And there's some small comfort in their claim that 'no parent education program that we are aware of has resulted in poorer performance by program participants.' Would their results have been less modest if all the teachers had taught exactly the same materials instead of having flexibility? The questionnaires could then have pinpointed more accurately what every student had learnt.

We can see from this survey that there can be several limitations to measuring impact: small control group, predominance of female students, elective rather than mandatory course, varied teaching materials, and a lack of evaluation in future once the students have become parents. Finally, in answer to the researchers' question whether knowledge of child development leads to better parenting, we might reply that the experiences of observing and relating to infants, rather than just knowledge about them, is probably far more likely to have lasting effects.

Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education

Glad I took the course to help prepare me for parenting. Student

Over three years, this project collected feedback from 53 students from three classes in the small town of Killingly, and from 24 students at Woodstock Academy. They were asked ten questions before and after the course to see what they learnt and what they retained. Results for each class indicated that every student's parenting knowledge had significantly increased. 'We stopped gathering the information after this,' Bob Margolies told me, 'as it was kind of self-evident this will continue. They are learning.' And there was a very rare longitudinal study. The university of Bridgeport (2018) designed a research project to see how students valued what they had learnt, once they had become parents. 22 surveys were completed. Respondents were aged on average 25: 19 mothers, two fathers. All lived in rural areas, all were white Caucasian. The average time since taking the course was five-years nine-months. They were asked to reply on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree':

1 'My child development class taught me about healthy relationships'
Agree and strongly agree: 81 percent.

Neutral: 41 percent.

Disagree or strongly disagree: 5 percent

2 'I remembered things from the class that helped me when I had my first child'

Agree and strongly agree: 80 percent.

Neutral: 19 percent.

Disagree or strongly disagree: 0 percent

3 'Because of the class, I knew what to expect in my baby's first year'

Agree and strongly agree: 80 percent

Neutral: 14 percent.

Disagree or strongly disagree: 0 percent

4 'Because of to the class, I knew how to tell if my baby was developing normally'

Agree or strongly agree: 81 percent.

Neutral: 19 percent.

Disagree or strongly disagree: 0 percent

5 'Because of the class, I was better able to share parenting tasks with my child's other parent'

Agree or strongly agree: 62 percent.

Neutral: 33 percent.

Disagree or strongly disagree: 5 percent

6 'Child development should be part of the curriculum for all students'

Agree or strongly agree: 90 percent.

Neutral: 10 percent.

Disagree or strongly disagree: 0 percent

7 Please tell in your own words whether or not you are glad you took the child development class and how you benefited from it.

Comments were all positive. Notable comments included:

- ‘The class didn’t only help me to become the best mother I can be, but the best person all round. I work with children daily and the class helped with my relationships. There are far more benefits from the class than I can even name’;
- ‘I could see how my baby was growing and what to expect during the first year and many more years to come. This class taught me a lot about relationships and that I was in an abusive one at the time. It helped mould my current relationships’;
- ‘It made me aware of things I could not have otherwise known and helped confidently prepare for my first child. I think it is a great course and should not be optional.’

It is plain that the course is of significant value in preparing students for parenting, as well as for their relationships before and once they are parents. As Bob admits, there are limitations to the results: replies were from students who had chosen the class and who chose to reply, and there was no ethnic diversity amongst them. But it is invaluable to have a research study that followed up students after several years and into parenthood. It has helped enable Bob to work with the *Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health* to spread information about the returns from investing in this type of preventative education.

Bob reports on Macmillan et al’s literature reviews. They suggest: if young people have direct experiences with babies and toddlers (an important component of parenting education), there will be long-term positive results. And these are stronger if combined with programs for parents just before and after they have babies. In other words, a belt and braces approach: teach this subject when students are at school; also, once they enter parenthood.

Educate Tomorrow’s Parents (formerly Education for Successful Parenting)

Teenagers give impressive feedback. ETP gets students to complete an evaluation right after each workshop and asked to reply: 'Disagree,' 'No Effect' or 'Agree' to six statements. Across widely diverse populations, positive replies are nearly 100 percent.

'As a result of the course, I think I will be better able to....'

- Wait to conceive until I'm ready: 95 percent agree
- Consider a partner's ability to be a good parent before we conceive a child (or more children): 97 percent agree
- Provide for, protect and nurture my child: 99 percent agree
- Avoid or address major threats to healthy parenting (poverty, mental health, substance abuse): 98 percent agree
- Enable my child to fulfil his potential and his dreams: 99 percent agree
- Form a healthy family: 97 percent agree

These are stunning results. The students' words in the 'open-ended response' section of the evaluation are heart-warming too.

- I liked how we talk about the future. It made me excited at all the opportunities I have in store for me. *Female aged 14*
- I liked the interactions as well as the visual aid and the fun workbook. *Male aged 16*

Students are asked what they like about the course, what they learned, what they want to learn more about, and if they have suggestions: information which help ETP fine-tune its program. Male and female students said:

- 'It helps your life not to be messed up'
- 'I will parent differently because of this course'
- 'Every kid needs to be prepared to raise the next generation'
- 95 percent said they were more motivated to wait until they are adults before starting a family

- 98 percent said they will be better able to provide for, protect and nurture a child
- 80-to-85 percent would recommend the course to others.

Feedback from teachers includes remarks such as:

- ‘In a world inundated with technology, social media and pressures beyond what they were two decades ago, students need this guidance. I wholeheartedly recommend ETP’
- ‘We teach students so many things in school academically to prepare them for college. ETP’s curriculum goes several times deeper by preparing them for life!’
- ‘The My Life Plan for Parenting workbook is something they can write in and keep for future use.’

Parents are also enthusiastic:

- ‘No one teaches parenting until you are one’
- ‘I am thankful ETP is at my son’s school! It fills a void that few have acknowledged. Somehow, we expect to break cycles of poverty/child abuse with academic/character education alone.’

Professionals in this business have said:

- ‘I wholeheartedly endorse this excellent program’
- ‘Working with single mothers, absent fathers and fatherless children, I am keenly aware of the value of ETP. Faith groups, social services, community groups and schools nationwide should grab hold of the flexibility of this curriculum to work it into the unique needs of their missions’
- ‘The process of creating a healthy family begins in the decision-making of adolescence.’

Of course, like most evaluations in this field, it is difficult to assess how far the learning leads to different behaviour: how far students actually do delay pregnancy, and how well they parent in a few years' time. For all projects, longitudinal research is needed.

ETP runs sessions at school for parents of teenagers. 'Broaching the topic of "the birds and the bees" can be fraught with tension and awkwardness for parents and children alike. A few years on, discussing parenting and families with adolescents can be even harder. In this course, ETP goes to the next level and provides parents with the skills and tools to confidently, openly discuss parenting and families with their teenage children.' The feedback's remarkable. 'All participants agreed it would be very likely they'll talk to their children within two weeks; 91 percent agreed the workshop helped them a lot in giving strategies and information. Most parents (UK/US) support the idea of school-based parenthood education, putting the case well:

I wish all high schools would make this a mandatory program. None of us grew up making a conscious choice of when and how to become a parent and what kind of parent to be. The forethought that goes into your program and what kids learn are a boon to society.'..... 'ETP has recognized we have to teach kids about what strong families look like, to nurture their dreams of a better life, and show them they have control over their decisions and destinies.'

**Work with under-11s:
evidence, evaluation, feedback**

Roots of Empathy (ROE)

ROE's mission is to 'change the world child by child,' to 'build caring and peaceful citizens through the development of empathy in children and adults.' There's a great deal of evidence since 2000 from several countries (Australia, Canada, Isle of Man, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Switzerland) by independent evaluations that in the short term at least, children who have experienced ROE tend to have changed in several ways, compared with control groups.

- They 'perceive a more positive classroom environment': e.g. an increased sense of belonging and acceptance by their peers, perception of the classroom and teachers as a caring environment;
- More, and often much more, pro-social behaviour such as sharing, helping, kindness and including;
- Most studies report less or much less direct and indirect aggression such as bullying and physical fighting: about half the ROE children were less likely to fight; children in the control group became more aggressive as the year went on;
- More social and emotional understanding and knowledge;
- More knowledge and understanding of infant development and parenting, such as an understanding of why babies cry, how to comfort them and keep them safe;
- Both Scottish studies reported increased emotional and/or cognitive empathy, whereas a control group showed less empathy as the year advanced;

- More responsible attitudes to pregnancy and marriage, said the university of British Columbia study;
- The Ontario study reported a significant increase in resilience;
- Ontario also reported happier children with less difficulties in life such as ‘emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity’ and poor relationships with peers;
- The study in Perth, Western Australia, reported an ‘enhanced ability to manage emotions positively.’

It’s particularly interesting that children in control groups became more aggressive as time went on. ROE and similar projects help to prevent children from descending into worrying behaviour.

How long lasting were the results?

Some studies showed the decrease in aggression lasted for one year or even up to three years after the program. The follow-up study in Manitoba (2001) found improvements in pro-social behaviour, physical aggression and indirect aggression immediately after the program, but three years later, better pro-social behaviour had not lasted. The university of Missouri study (2005) concluded that ROE showed ‘particularly strong evidence for its potential to reduce aggression and violence.’

Research on ROE on the Isle of Man (2009-10) was carried out by Dr Tamara Russell of the Institute of Psychiatry, London. She studied 700 children in ten schools. A children’s centre was also involved. 84-to-100 percent of teachers ‘agree or strongly agree’ that pupils are now more able to understand other people’s point of view. And 94 percent of students now said that if they saw a friend being bullied or treated meanly, they’d help them.

Two longitudinal research studies are cited:

- *Canada:* This ‘accelerated’ study showed that the beneficial effects were ‘mostly’ maintained or continued to improve throughout the follow-up years. There is no mention of how many years were followed-up;
- *Northern Ireland:* Belfast/South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts hosted ROE 2010–11. Trudy Brown researched its success in 28 classrooms. Her longitudinal randomised controlled trial showed ‘some evidence that the effects in relation to reducing difficult behaviour may have been sustained for three years beyond programme participation.’ Academic benefits are specified. ROE can help ‘raise grades and test scores, bolster enthusiasm for learning, reducing behaviour problems and enhancing the brain’s cognitive functions.’ It’s not clear how much this happens nor for how long into children’s school career.

A meta-analysis of 29 evaluations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Switzerland, done in Northern Ireland (Public Health Research 2018) showed that:

- ROE is significantly associated with an improvement in pro-social behaviour and with a decrease in aggressive behaviour;
- At this stage (possibly due to lack of effective measurement tools), there is insufficient evidence to indicate that ROE improves child-reported empathy or emotional regulation.

A report *Ten Years On*, about ROE in Scotland (Nugent 2021) commissioned by Action for Children, showed that:

- There were not only the immediate benefits but long-term benefits as well. The emotional literacy and empathy which ROE develops fosters a culture of kindness. That in turn leads to a

reduction in aggression and bullying amongst participants years on from the delivery;

- There have been significant academic benefits Teachers have consistently reported significant improvements in the behaviour and engagement in class which has established an environment more conducive to learning, helping to close the attainment gap in the areas that need it most, with ROE reaching over half of the most deprived schools in Scotland;
- Young people, interviewed about their experience of ROE up to seven years later said it has had a life-changing impact. They were all able to recall in detail the key messages and themes. Many said a similar service would benefit them as teenagers as they navigated the mental health issues of adulthood;
- ROE is cost-effective - only £30 per pupil.

B.A.S.E.®Babywatching

Research reports from Germany, Austria and London found:

- B.A.S.E.®Babywatching improves behaviour, empathy and sensitivity, and reduces fear and aggression;
- Teachers' feedback show that they benefit too. They 'seemed to develop more sensitive and empathic behaviour,' a great advantage since empathic teachers 'respond more adequately to children's developmental needs and can form an alternative attachment for children with family problems' (Brisch 2009);
- It is vital for the teacher/group leader and mother to form a harmonious, trusting relationship. 'The feel-good effect which results from such a relationship has a positive effect on all the participants in every session and ensures that the mother can relax and concentrate on her baby in the classroom setting';
- Two afternoons of giving feedback by all the teachers and mothers involved were seen as very positive and helpful;

- Only a few teachers describe the ‘expected tranquillity’ during sessions. Sometimes children disturb the peaceful mood. In some cases, a very disruptive child can be removed from sessions. But ‘even an unusual reaction on the part of the pupil to the mother-baby interaction can still be seen as a reaction to the programme and interpreted as an effect of the programme’;
- B.A.S.E.®Babywatching is not sufficient for very violent, aggressive children who need other help;
- Children’s vocabulary and ability to form sentences improve;
- Mother’s empathy with the baby increases, as does awareness of the baby’s boundaries. Mother make less insistent demands and becomes more sensitive towards her baby;
- More research is needed to see if the results last, and if and how they are transferred to other areas of children’s social life.

B.A.S.E.®Babywatching was evaluated by the department of Biological and Experimental Psychology, Queen Mary College, London (Pluess et al. 2017.) The team studied 88 children aged four-to-ten who took part (September 2015 - June 2016) and 73 others in a control group. Questionnaires were given to teachers and parents three times. The team concluded that B.A.S.E.®Babywatching ‘could be a promising programme to promote positive change in pro-social competence, conduct and emotional problems over time. Further studies are required.’ More research could show effects on children of different ages -whether these are stronger in younger or older children.

This mother’s feedback is anecdotal evidence that B.A.S.E.®Babywatching is excellent for everyone concerned: ‘My son had Babywatching classes and absolutely loved them. He would look forward to these visits, talk about them more than anything else at school, and his enthusiasm was particularly delightful for us because we were hoping to have another baby. For my six-year-old boy with a penchant for maths and Lego, they

really did seem to make a huge difference. He wondered about this little girl and her mother, reported all the stages of development that he witnessed, and took in all the minutiae of babyhood wide-eyed with wonder.'

She became the B.A.S.E.®Babywatching visitor after her next pregnancy. 'I found the sessions incredibly valuable to me as a mother. H. is my third child. I was very busy and tired on my third maternity leave. This time each week gave me the chance to stop and reflect on my baby, his development and our relationship. The analysis of a reception class constantly surprised and delighted me. Watching 30 children grow their empathy and understanding of emotion is a massive privilege. They also taught me things: when he started teething, they didn't assume he was in pain, but that he must be excited about getting big teeth (not an assumption many adults make): eye-opening and lovely.'

'I would recommend taking part in B.A.S.E.®Babywatching to any parent, though I would suggest it would be easier for a second or third-time parent than a first. My husband took H. for a couple of sessions too, as it felt very important the class should see a father interacting with his baby and how subtly different his ways of showing love and security are. I cannot go to the library or the park without bumping into one of those children and they cry out **"It's baby H!"** and race over to see him. As the third child in a big family, it's really lovely that Babywatching has already carved out a role for him in our community and school - he certainly doesn't sit in his older siblings' shadows! We've all benefited: our baby, his parents and the whole class of children.'

Circles of Learning

Let's look at quotes by two primary teachers, as reported by Alison Waterhouse, about her Circles for Learning programme whereby a parent and baby visit a primary class once a month:

- 'I have seen the children really grow. They have become more engaged in their learning, are far more able to put language around how they are thinking and feeling. As a class they are far more able to think about each other and are much more willing to help problem-solve and sort out differences. I have learnt so much more about them as individuals and I can't wait to undertake it again next year;'
- 'For me the most important thing is that they are more supportive of each other. They work together in a far more thoughtful and positive way. It has really been a great project.'

Alison, a graduate from the Tavistock and Portman Clinic and the Caspari Foundation in London, an educational psychology training body, and founder of a therapeutic special school, knows her theory, linking her project in a scholarly way with insights from, for example, Melanie Klein ('every child is born with an epistemological instinct – a desire to find out about the world,') Goleman who emphasises the unique role of schools to develop emotional learning, Bion and his work on container/contained, and Bowlby, with his work on attachment and how this affects the teacher-child relationship. She argues convincingly how these theorists and practitioners underpin the reasons her work is effective. Evaluation in 2019 showed that as a result of a whole school approach, as practiced in two rural primary schools, 74 percent of students had better emotional literacy and 69 percent better self-awareness. As for the work in secondary schools, 41 percent of students achieved better self-esteem, 46 percent more self-awareness, 46 percent better emotional literacy, and 57 percent better emotional regulation.

We end with the most convincing evidence of all: 'Joseph, a child with social communication difficulties, held their class baby. After a few moments of looking at her, she smiled up at him. His face lit up as he turned to his teacher to say, "I think she really likes me." This moment stayed with him for weeks following the visit, and built his self-confidence in a range of ways, enabling him to manage friendships and other challenges more positively.'

Flour Babies

Reports of flour babies at a Tower Hamlets primary school indicate that carrying around a bag of flour 24 hours a day for a week was a vivid experience for many of the Year 6 children. It put some of them off parenting, boys and girls alike.

- 'I got fed up with my baby in the first three days,' said Gabriel. 'I didn't know it would be so hard';
- 'I thought they were going to be all cute and cuddly but when I started to look after it, it really wasn't,' said Crystal;
- 'After the project I definitely don't want a baby,' said Elliot, 'you get tired carrying it around but with a real baby when it cries in the night you have to feed it and change it too.'

Journalist Harriet Swain reported: 'The difficulties of arranging childcare seemed to make a particularly big impression. Many confessed they kept forgetting the babies when they went out and had to run back and fetch them.' It also evoked unexpected fatherly concern. 'One of the most apparently reluctant young fathers supplied his with a buggy and turned up one day with a tin of baby milk.'

The children's diaries show how deep an impression the experience began to make on them. Such a simple, inexpensive project can make a big difference to 10-and-11-year-olds' understanding of what it's really like to care, day in, day out, for a

baby. Children who observe a parent and baby for a year would have their learning reinforced if they then carried a flour baby around for weeks. And these projects are spot on with the government's teenage pregnancy strategy which 'explicitly recognises the importance of learning about the responsibilities involved in parenting while at primary school.' We end this chapter by quoting a few leading experts in this field.

Parenting is not about techniques. Parenting is about relationships. It's as simple as that. Dr Gabor Maté

Parenting is the one job that you have to keep on doing, whether you are any good at it or not. *Margaret Bonfiglioli, parent and lecturer*

The child's first relationship, the one with the mother, acts as a template. It permanently moulds the individual capacity to enter into all later emotional relationships. Dr Allan Schore

A developing personality needs to know that to someone, it matters more than other children; that someone will go to unreasonable lengths, not just reasonable ones, for its sake. John and Elizabeth Newson

Prof Urie Bronfenbrenner, famous developmental psychologist, when asked at a US Senate meeting what his 40 years of research reveals about the key ingredients of successful development, replied, 'Someone's gotta be crazy about the kid.'

1 Never do for a child what he can do for himself – otherwise you are teaching him he is weak.
2 If you praise a child, you are conditioning her to depend on other people's evaluation. Instead of: 'What a lovely picture!' say something like: 'You painted that picture just the way **you** wanted it.' With thanks to Professor Garry Landreth,

Part Eight
Resources to use

Chapter Thirty-two

Role-plays, poems, songs, facts, quizzes, myths etc.

Resources and teaching materials

Parenthood quotes for older teenagers

True and false statements

Role-plays with whole class

Eight short plays for teenagers to act

Treasure baskets for babies

Crying babies

A parent and baby visit the classroom

Breastfeeding quiz

True and false statements about breastfeeding

What does a baby aged 0 – 6 months need?

Hitting children: ten reasons not to hit your kids

Ten alternatives to hitting

21 myths and truths

Anonymous confidential questions box

Songs

Poems

Books for young children

Films about parenting

Welcome to Holland – about having a child with a disability

Some facts to discuss and think about

Homework (optional): observation in public places

Attitudes to having babies and children

Positive and negative scenes about being a parent

Children and childcare can be... (positives and negatives)

Quotes to take home

Adult attachment interview (for school staff and other adults)

Parenthood quotes for older teenagers: Put each on a card and get student to read it out as if it is them.

For some people, becoming a parent does change them, but it never changed me. *Vinnie Jones*

Becoming a parent erased many of my negative childhood feelings and filled them in with something new. *Mariska Hargitay*

I like kids but I also like the option to close the door. Becoming a parent is a whole other life, and it doesn't stop. *Jon Hamm*

A moral society will not set standards for becoming a parent, but will establish irreducible minimums for maintaining that sacred status. *Andrew Vachss*

Becoming a parent has completely changed me, & made life so beautiful & given me such a center, a focus and such joy. *Angelina Jolie*

Becoming a parent is actually terrifying. A lot of people have that feeling about their dogs. And if you're the kind of person who's going to have that feeling about a dog, you're definitely going to have that about a child. *Joan Didion*

The amazing thing about becoming a parent is that you will never again be your own first priority. The gift of motherhood is the selflessness that it introduces you to. I think that's really freeing. It allows you to put yourself in other people's shoes, the empathy that it slugs you with, being a mother & I think it makes you a better storyteller. *Olivia Wilde*

I think there comes a point in probably most father-son relationships where the son kind of starts becoming the parent. *Francois Arnaud*

Being a father of three children and grandfather to nine, I think this thing called 'parenting' is becoming increasingly difficult. *Craig T. Nelson*

My parents were intelligent and encouraging, but they were displeased at me becoming a wandering troubadour and wire walker. *Philippe Petit*

Since becoming a single parent, I have found it difficult, if not impossible, to write anything of length. *Dirk Benedict*

Becoming a parent expands you as a human being. I am having the most wonderful time. You've married, but the addition of a child strengthens and deepens everything. *Kyle MacLachlan*

I truly believe there will always be more people who want to have children than who don't. *Meghan Daum*

I wasn't against becoming a dad: I'd had a good childhood, as childhoods go, and as role models, my imperfect parents were as good as or better than most. *Michael Redhill*

Becoming a parent gives you access to a whole world of feeling. It gives you a much stronger sense of life and death: becoming a father made me realise my own mortality. *Laurence Fox*

My parents had a difficult divorce. My dad had to take a backseat for a few years, and my grandfather came in. He was also my inspiration for becoming an actor. I really respected him. *Christian Camargo*

My father said that being a parent is the only thing you do that needs a long period of learning. By the time that you are becoming competent, you don't need those skills anymore. Despite this modest assessment of their parenting skills, they were wonderful parents. *Michael Spence*

To be a visionary parent, we need to keep working on ourselves, becoming forever new and improved. *Mark Victor Hansen*

I think that becoming a parent kind of made me try to be more responsible. And it made me much more stressful. *Etgar Keret*

Seven years after becoming a lone parent, I feel qualified to look anyone in the eye and say that people bringing up children single-handedly deserve, not condemnation, but congratulation. *J. K. Rowling*

We never know the love of a parent till we become parents ourselves. *Henry Ward Beecher*

True and false statements

Fifty statements to discuss over the weeks, months and years. Type each in large coloured type on a separate piece of coloured card, and laminate. Students take one from a potluck bag, read it out and the class say what they think – and why.

- 1 People who don't have kids always feel lonely, unfulfilled and sad
- 2 You can't get pregnant if your periods haven't started yet
- 3 You can't get pregnant if you're having your period at the time
- 4 You can't get pregnant if you wash straight after sex
- 5 You can't get pregnant if you have sex standing up
- 6 You can't get pregnant if it's your first time
- 7 You can't get pregnant if you've just had a period
- 8 You can't get pregnant if you are about to have a period
- 9 HIV and AIDS only affect gay people
- 10 Breastfeeding is better for babies and mothers than bottle feeding
- 11 Girls who carry condoms around with them are slags
- 12 The best way to discipline a child is to say, 'Do this (or don't do that) because I say so'. There's no point in giving the child any reason
- 13 Having kids is something that just happens to most people and not something you can enjoy very much
- 14 Babies are so sweet, the more you have, the happier you'll be
- 15 Dads are just as important to kids as mums
- 16 Every mum & dad falls in love with their baby as soon as they see it
- 17 Having a first baby often leads to couples splitting up
- 18 Having kids is for life. They're a huge responsibility and will need you for years and years
- 19 Having a baby can change your relationship with your partner and give you problems
- 20 Raising kids is the most difficult job you'll ever have to do
- 21 Having kids is natural. Anyone can bring them up well
- 22 Having kids can be exhausting, boring, annoying, non-stop hard work and stops you sleeping and going out whenever you want and having fun
- 23 It's impossible to spoil a baby
- 24 If you get pregnant in your teens, it's fine because your mum can look after it and then you can get your own flat when you're a bit older
- 25 The best way to raise your kid is how you were brought up yourself
- 26 If you want to go out, it's OK to leave your kid with a friend
- 27 Very few babies sleep through the night. It's not what babies do!

28 You need to be mature and have self-control to be a good parent
29 You have to make sacrifices when you have kids – you have less money, less freedom, your sex life probably suffers....
30 You must be really patient and kind to bring up a baby or child well
31 There's no point talking to your baby before it can talk or understand what you're saying. You'd be better off talking to your friends on your mobile while you're with your baby
32 If you're not getting on well with your boyfriend or girlfriend, having a baby together will bring you closer and help sort things out
33 Hitting a kid when it's hit someone else teaches it that violence is wrong and will help it to not be aggressive
34 Not everyone is cut out to be a mum or dad. You don't have to have kids if you don't really want them. There's lots of other things to do with your life
35 If you leave a baby to cry itself to sleep, it can damage its growing brain and make it likely to become depressed and anxious as an adult
36 If you let your child play a lot, it will help its brain develop well, so it will cope with stress better for the rest of its life
37 If your child clings to you, it's not being naughty. It needs to feel safe and needs to be comforted
38 It's best to show your baby as soon as it's born who's the boss
39 Kids love TV and computers, so if they want to watch them all the time, that's all right. It gives the parents a quiet life
40 When a kid is naughty, you need to shout at it or slap it
41 It's hard to love your babies and kids all the time – sometimes you'll probably hate them and resent them and wish you'd never had them
42 Ignore your baby when it cries. It's only doing it to annoy you.
43 Best to have at least two children, because the older one will love having a new baby in the family.
44 To keep your toddler quiet, give it a sweet on a stick to suck.
45 It's good to go to mother and baby groups so you don't feel lonely
46 Make your toddler learn to read, whether it wants to or not.
47 Take your baby and toddler to groups so it gets used to other kids.
48 You must always guide your baby and choose what it plays with
49 If your child struggles with something, do it for him at once.
50 Your baby has its own personality from day one. Accept its nature even if not like yours. Don't try to make it what you want it to be like.

Role-plays with whole class

Here are a few suggestions. Students need to take them seriously and feel themselves into the parts for them to have any impact. Try to involve the whole class as actors. Those who don't want to act are given responsibilities as observers and commentators.

1 You are a fetus inside your mother's womb. You hear your parents having a long enormous row, shouting, screaming at each other. Then your mother gets drunk. How do you feel?

2 You are a baby. You wake up crying on your own in the dark night. You are ignored. No one comes.
You don't know if anyone will ever come. How do you feel?

3 You are a baby. You wake up crying on your own in the dark night. Your mum or dad comes into the room.
You are picked up, fed and put back to bed. How do you feel?

4 You are a baby. You wake up crying on your own in the dark night. Your mum or dad comes into the room.
You are picked up, cuddled, sung to and rocked back to sleep.
How do you feel?

5 You are a baby. You wake up crying on your own in the dark night. Your exhausted unhappy mum comes into the room and shouts at you to shut up. She leaves the room. How do you feel?

6 You are a baby. You wake up crying on your own in the dark night. Your drunk dad comes in the room, picks you up and shakes you. He leaves the room. You hear him shouting in the room next door. How do you feel?

7 You are a toddler You wake up hearing your parents hitting each other. Your mother screams. How do you feel?

8 Daddy – please!

In pairs, one student is the father (standing on a chair), the other a small child.

The child puts out his hands and says, ‘Daddy - please!’

The father says ‘No!’ This is repeated several times.

Then the father turns his back. The child repeats the plea. The father repeats ‘No.’ *With thanks to the Hoffman Institute.*

Eight short plays to act

1 Getting pregnant – first time?

2 Getting pregnant standing up?

3 Slag - or sensible?

4 If she loves me.....

5 It’s my right, it’s your duty

6 The mobile phone mum

7 Where’s my daddy?

8 Where’s my dinner?

- Copy them on two A4 cards (one colour for each play).
- Laminate them and each week invite two volunteers for each play to read it out in front of the class.
- In order for actors to feel themselves into the parts, prepare the volunteer actors in advance so they act the plays with feeling which will get picked up by the class and have an impact. Otherwise there will be hurried, superficial acting with giggling and embarrassment.
- Invite discussion after each play.
- Repeat at end of course to reinforce learning.
- Change names/language/other details to suit your students.

1 Getting pregnant: first time

Ahmed: Come on, don't be like that.

Candy: It's my first time. I've never done it before.

Ahmed: You can't get pregnant first time!!

Candy: Really?

Ahmed: Yeah, my mate told me.

Candy: I dunno if that's true actually. I read something somewhere....

Ahmed: Calling me a liar eh?

Candy: No but I'm scared. My dad would kill me if I got pregnant.

Ahmed: I told you, you've got nothing to worry about!

Candy: Haven't you got ayou know.... on you?

Ahmed: Blimey, I never use THEM! Can't stand them. You'll be all right I promise.

Candy: OK then. I trust you.

Ahmed: That's better, you're my girl, come on then....

..... and off they go.....

2 Getting pregnant: standing up?

Kieran: I really fancy you. I've always fancied you since year 7. Let's get together eh? Know what I mean?

Anna: I'm not a slag, you know.

Kieran: Don't you like me then?

Anna (*giggles*): I do actually!! But.....

Kieran: Well then, let's do it.

Anna: But you know I could get pregnant.

Kieran: Rubbish! Not if we stand up!

Anna: How's that?

Kieran: Well, it's gravity, innit? My stuff can't go up you if we're upright. Stands to reason. It's science.

Anna: I once heard someone say that's nonsense!

Kieran: People say all sorts of things but I'm telling you, you'll be safe. I've been around, I know what I'm talking about. Have another drink.

Anna (*getting a bit drunk*): If you say so!!

Kieran: Come here then...

.....*and off they go*.....

3 Slag..... or sensible?

Jodie: I'm going out with Jason on Saturday night!

Karen: JASON?? You must be mad. He's only after one thing. Everyone knows that.

Jodie: Yeah, but I like him as it happens. I really fancy him.

Karen: Well, you know he got Chanelle pregnant? She had an abortion.

Jodie: I didn't know, as it happens, but he won't make ME pregnant!

Karen: What makes you so sure?

Jodie: I'll get him to use a condom, of course, that's what.

Karen: You'll be lucky! Someone told me he never has any. Can't be bothered.

Jodie: That's OK because I'll have some with me.

Karen: YOU??!!

Jodie: Yeah, why not?

Karen: Everyone will think you're a right slag!

Jodie: They can think what they like. It's better than getting pregnant and being chucked out of home!

..... *and off she goes....*

4 If she loves me

Jason: I'm really pissed off with Abigail. I saw her again last night and she wouldn't do it. Wouldn't go the whole way.

Pete: Has she done it with you?

Jason: NEVER! We're supposed to be going out but she says she wants to wait till we know each other better.

Pete: That's fair enough, innit?

Jason: All right for you, mate! Your Debra's up for it, isn't she? You're lucky.

Pete: Yeah but we're serious. We want to get a place together when we leave school and all that. Have kids, you know.

Jason: Crikey! Aren't you a bit young for all that? I just want to have fun.

Pete: Fair enough but maybe Abigail doesn't just want to be used.

Jason: If she loves me, she'd do it.

Pete: What's love? D'you mean fancying?

Jason: Well, it's the same thing, innit? If she doesn't agree next weekend, I'll go out with someone else instead. There's loads of girls around who'd do it.

..... and Abigail gets dumped.....

5 It's my right, it's your duty

Jason and Cherise are married and are in bed at night.

Jason: Come on then.

Cherise: What d'you mean, come on?

Jason: You know what I mean. I'm feeling dead randy tonight.

Cherise: I'm sorry, Jason. I don't feel well. I'm exhausted. I was up half the night with the baby crying. It was all right for you. You just slept through it. I've had a headache all day and I've got to be up early to take him to the baby clinic.

Jason: You're always making excuses. I'm getting fed up with it. We live together and it's my right to have sex when I want it.

Cherise: I still fancy you, I do really but you don't seem to get it. It's the last thing I want at the moment - maybe at the weekend.

Jason: I can't wait till then!! It's only Tuesday! Other women are up for it. Anyway, it's your duty. We're married!

Cherise: That may be or may not be but not just whenever YOU feel like it! What about how I feel?

Jason: You were never like this before we had that brat. It shouldn't make any difference if there's a baby in the house. I'm a normal man and I have my needs. *(Grabs her roughly.)*

Cherie: *(screams)* Get off me, get off! There's something called rape even if we do live together. *(Baby screams without stopping.)*

Jason: SHUT UP! Both of you, just shut up. *(Gets out of bed.)* I'm off to my night club. There's women there who don't have a headache.

He leaves the flat, banging the front door hard.

Cherise: He wasn't like this when we were going out. Is he ever gonna change? *(Sobs.)*

6 The mobile phone mum

Leila and her little boy Darren sit on the bus.

Leila (*speaking into her mobile phone*): Hi, is that Gary? We had a good time last night, didn't we? When are you free again? (giggles)

Darren: Mum.....

Leila: Wait a minute. (*To phone*): Not till Sunday? Can't you make it sooner? I'm getting some new clothes tomorrow and I want to show them off to you.

Darren: MUM...

Leila: I said wait a minute, didn't I? (*To phone*): OK, I'll have to wait till Sunday if you really are busy. Got another girlfriend then?

Darren: MUM MUM I want to tell you something!

Leila: Be quiet, can't you, I'm on the phone, can't you see? (*To phone*): Yeah, I love you too. Can't wait to see you. How did the match go?

Darren: MUM MUM I need a wee!

Leila: You'll just have to wait Just be a good boy and let mummy talk. (*To phone*): My sister? Oh, I don't get on with her didn't you know? She's always trying to nick my boyfriends. She even said she likes you!!

Darren: MUM I'm desperate and I'm hungry!

Leila: Well, there's nothing I can do about it now, is there? Just wait till we get off. (*To phone - shouts*): WHAT? She phoned you up? Why? Why happened? Did you see her?

Darren: I've done a wee. I couldn't help it. (*Cries*)

Leila: Oh, not again!! (*Smacks Darren*)

Darren (*shouts in anger*): Why are you always talking to someone else?

7 Where's my daddy?

Melanie comes home from infant school with her little son Dwayne

Melanie: I've made some tea for you. Then we'll go to the park again.

Dwayne is silent and looks sad.

Melanie: What's up with you? Don't you want to go to the park? You love it there.

Dwayne: I don't want to go.

Melanie: Why on earth not? It's a lovely day. It'd be a shame not to go.

Dwayne: I just don't want to.

Melanie: But can't you tell me why?

Dwayne (*tearful*): All the other kids are there with their daddy. My daddy is never there with me. It's always you.

Melanie: Well, you know dad doesn't come here anymore. It's just you and me. We get on OK, don't we? We love each other a lot.

Dwayne: I do love you but I want my daddy. What's wrong with me that he never wants to come and see me?

Melanie: There's nothing wrong with you, darling.

Dwayne (*shouts*): But there must be, otherwise he would come and see me, wouldn't he? I can't bear it when I see my friends with their dads.

Melanie: Well, I'll try to phone him again but he never returns my calls. I don't even know where he lives now. Someone told me they heard he's got a new baby.

Dwayne: NO!!! (*breaks down in sobs*).

8 Where's my dinner?

11pm. Leshaye is ironing. The children are in bed. She's tired but wants to get all the ironing done before she goes to work tomorrow. Her husband needs a clean shirt. The children need fresh clothes for school.

Leshaye *(to herself)*: I wonder where he is? *(Looks at her watch.)* It's eleven o'clock. *(Yawns and carries on with the huge pile of ironing)*

At midnight the front door opens, slams and Matthias comes in.

Matthias *(drunk)*: Where's my dinner?

Leshaye: It's in the oven. It might be a bit spoilt now. It was ready at seven o'clock.

Matthias: What do you mean, spoilt? What sort of wife are you?

Leshaye: I thought you'd be back by seven, didn't I, so that's when I got it ready for, after I'd fed the kids. You never said you'd be in late.

Matthias: That's no excuse! I don't have to account for myself to you. I'm starving, I need a good meal. Go and cook me one.

Leshaye: Can't you see I'm busy and I'm really really tired. I can't face going to the kitchen again and doing even more cooking today.

Matthias: You're no use! My mum used to cook decent meals for **her** husband! Take that. Let it teach you a lesson!! *(Hits her hard on the head)*

Leshaye falls to the floor unconscious. A child is heard crying. He comes in the living room and sees his mother on the floor.

Boy *(in panic)*: Is she dead?

Matthias *(shouts)*: Get back to bed NOW!! or I'll clout you one.

Treasure Baskets:

‘What *is* this something I have never seen before?’

Tom Shea points out: ‘Frequent users of the Treasure Basket have been observed sifting through and discarding all the items until they find their favourite object, proof of the vital connections taking place in the brain.’ When babies learn to sit, they view the world from a new perspective, observing much that was previously invisible: exciting but also frustrating, as they notice objects and activities that are out of reach. This is the stage when the treasure basket is so helpful, providing scope for exploration in spite of the child’s lack of mobility. It is a simple yet profound idea, opposing the trend to give commercial plastic toys to babies by providing them instead with a richer sensory experience plastic offers very little sensory stimulation; even if plastic items vary in size and colour, they still smell, taste and feel like plastic, whereas natural objects possess a wide variety of sensory properties, and many therefore are perfect for the treasure basket. As a baby notices a seashell or a lemon, then picks it up to explore with gums and tongue, she simultaneously catches its texture, colour, scent and flavour. Many everyday household articles also afford a variety of sensory experience and can be popped in the basket too. As a baby shakes or bangs a whisk or a bunch of keys, he notices the sounds he has produced as well as the sensations in his arm and hand. Such actions strengthen cognitive development and motor control. Regularly check for safety and cleanliness of objects, as well as replenishing the basket to maintain the baby’s interest.

A baby who can sit up can explore objects which give experience of touch (textures, shapes, weight), smell (variety of scents), taste (limited scope but possible), sound (ringing, banging, scrunching) and sight (colour, form, length, shininess). Students can have fun selecting from these and putting them in a basket for the visit of the next baby: The class can create a Treasure Basket from a few of these things which develop a sense of touch (texture, shape, weight); smell (variety of

scents); sounds (ringing, tinkling, banging, scrunching); and sight (colour, form, length, shininess.)

Natural objects: Fir cones (different sizes)/shells/big feathers
natural sponge/large corks/avocado stones/large chestnuts /large
pebbles/pumice stone/piece of loofah/lemon/dried gourds/apple

Objects of natural materials: Woollen ball /shoe brush /wooden
nail brush / bone ring / cane bag handle / shaving brush / small raffia mat /
little basket / paint brush / toothbrush / bone shoe horn.

Wooden objects: Small boxes/small box velvet lined /small drum rattle
(various types)/bamboo whistle/castanets/clothes pegs (two types)/coloured
beads on string/cubes: short length of wood/cylinder bobbin (cotton
reel)/curtain ring/wooden spoon/eggcup/small bowl.

Metal objects: Spoons (various sizes)/garlic squeezer/lemon
squeezer/bunch of keys/bottle brush/small metal frame mirror small ash
tray/toy trumpet/tea strainer/triangle/large scent bottle/metal beaker/closed
tins containing rice etc/chain/small egg whisk/small tins with smooth
edges/small funnel/bulldog paper clip/brass curtain rings/small
harmonica/bunch of bells/bicycle bell/metal eggcup.

Leather/textile/rubber/fur: Puppy 'bone'/small teddy bear/length
of rubbing tubing/leather or beaded purse/small cloth bags containing
herbs/small zipped leather bag /tennis ball/high bouncer ball/velvet powder
puff/bath plug + chain/fur ball/bean bag/rag doll/marble eggs/golf ball

Paper and cardboard: Little notebook with spiral rings/ greaseproof
paper/small cardboard boxes/tin foil/inside of kitchen paper towels.

Crying Babies

Tell students:

- 1 A brand-new baby that has just been born is called a newborn.
- 2 Ask what kinds of things do you think newborn babies can do? (cry, go to bathroom, drink breast milk or formula, etc.)
- 3 Today, we're going to pretend we are real parents of newborn babies!

Activity:

- 1 Have all students stand in a circle, each holding his/her doll, stuffed animal, etc. (If you don't have enough dolls, be creative! Use a shoe, eraser, plant, etc.)
- 2 Play the crying baby tape. Instruct the children to try different strategies to help the baby stop crying (cuddling, feeding, changing, talking, etc.). (You may need to demonstrate with one or two children at first.)
- 3 The leader should walk among the students, commenting on what the children are doing. For example: 'Aaron is changing his baby's nappy.' 'Chelsea is bouncing her baby,' 'Jeff is feeding his baby,' etc.
- 4 Have the children try each action they observe other 'mums' and 'dads' are performing. Stop the tape after the students have tried at least three strategies or appear to be frustrated.

Ask students:

- 1 Why was the baby crying? (something was wrong; the baby needed something; to communicate a need -be sure to define communicate!)
- 2 How do you communicate to someone that you're hungry, thirsty, tired, etc.? Do you cry? (no -talk)
- 3 Can newborn babies talk? (no)

- 4 But they can cry, so that's how they communicate - or tell us - that they need something! Should we just let the baby cry, or should we go and try to see what the matter is? (go to the baby)
- 5 Why? (because it helps the baby to feel safe; babies who feel safe are happier and learn better)
- 6 What kinds of things did you do to help the baby feel better? (holding, singing, talking, feeding, rocking, changing nappy, etc.)
- 7 How did you feel as the mummy or daddy when your baby kept crying? (angry, sad, frustrated, scared. etc.)
- 8 Is it OK to have feelings like that? (yes)
- 9 Would it be OK to hurt the baby when you have feelings like that? (no)
- 10 So what would you do if you were helping to take care of a newborn baby that wouldn't stop crying, no matter what you did? (find someone else to help, put baby gently down in crib for a few minutes, etc.)
- 11 How did you feel when the baby stopped crying? (excited that I could help, tired, etc.)
-

Why is that baby crying? Parent/child activity

Activity:

- 1 Invite children to partner with their parents. (If parents are not available, they can partner with another student.)
- 2 Tell student/parent pairs that they will take turns playing a newborn baby. When playing the baby, they have to act exactly like a baby (i.e., no talking, pointing, gesturing, walking, etc.). The 'baby' has to let his partner know he needs something (e.g. to communicate a need) such as:
- 'My nappy's wet --change me'
 - 'I'm hungry'
 - 'I'm lonely'
 - 'My ear hurts'
 - 'My tummy hurts'

'I'm tired'

'I'm scared'

'This is uncomfortable. Please move my body so I'm not so cramped in this car seat'

'Ow! This nappy rash is killing me!'

3 The 'baby' may only cry or use facial expressions to communicate this need. The partner has one minute to figure out what the 'baby' wants.

4 Important! The 'baby' must have some specific need and must stop crying when that need is met. Often, preschoolers will need a visual aid, such as a picture of the 'need' or the leader can whisper a 'need' into each participant's ear.

5 Repeat activity, having partners change roles.

Discussion - Ask children/parents:

1 How did it feel to be the baby? (frustrating, silly, hard, helpless, etc.)

2 How did it feel to be the parent? (frustrating, made me angry, made me feel helpless, etc.)

3 What did you learn doing this role-play? (to help us understand how hard it is for babies to tell us what they need: to help us understand how frustrating it can be for a parent to try to figure out what a baby needs when it cries; to help us understand that crying is the only way for a baby to tell us what it needs.)

Alternative activity: if parents are not available, this activity can also be conducted as follows:

1 Provide pictures of the baby's different needs, or plan to whisper 'needs' into children's ears.

2 Gather children into a circle.

3 Let one child select a picture, show it to the leader, and then lay on the floor. Or, leader whispers a 'need' into child's ear, then child lays on floor.

4 Child then 'cries': rest of students try to figure out what 'baby' needs.

5 What can you do when you get too frustrated with a crying baby? (get someone else to help you. put the baby down gently in a crib. etc.)

Closure: Ask students:

1 Why do babies cry? (to let you know they need something; to communicate)

2 What should you do when a newborn baby cries? (go to it; see what you can do to help, etc.)

3 Why? (helps baby feel safe: babies who feel safe are happier and - learn better)

4 What kinds of things can you do to help a baby feel better and stop crying? (rock, sing, talk, look in eyes, hold close, swaddle, change nappy, feed. etc.)

5 What can you do when you get too frustrated with a crying baby? (get someone else to help you. put the baby down gently in a crib, etc.)

A Parent and Baby Visit the Classroom: The Caring Paradigm

Caring is knowing, feeling and acting in the interests of others.

Harriet Heath

Dr Harriet Heath has provided this vivid description of a parent/infant visit, illustrating the caring process.

The Visit

At the beginning of the day in grade 5 (ten-year-olds), Mrs. Scott, the teacher, asks, "Today who is coming?"

The students shout joyfully, 'Ovidio.'

Mrs. Scott nods. 'What do you think he will be doing this month he wasn't doing when we saw him last month?'

'Walking.'

Another student contradicts the first, 'No, crawling.'

Mrs. Scott: 'Why do you think so?'

Student: 'Because he almost was when he was here last month.'

Mrs. Scott: 'Should the possibility that he may be crawling affect how we plan for his visit?'

There is silence before one student speaks:

'He will be able to move around the classroom and get into stuff. Is our classroom safe for him?'

Again, the students' heads nod in agreement. The students begin listing things that are not safe.

- The floor is dirty from all their feet
- The shelf where there are scissors and pencils might be within his reach
- Their backpacks on the floor

'So what shall we do?' asks Mrs. Scott.

Students brainstorm ideas which Mrs. Scott writes on a large piece of newsprint:

- Clean the floor

- Put things away or up so he can't get at them?

A student breaks the brainstorming: 'How are we going to be able to do all that?'

Mrs. Scott: 'Remember we are brainstorming'.

Students continue brainstorming:

- Build a block wall to keep him in
- Get a playpen
- Let him roam but follow him to keep him safe
- Tell him, 'No,' anytime he reaches for things he shouldn't have
- Sit so we make a tight circle around him so he can't get out
- Not have him come ('Oh yah,' some of the students comment sarcastically)
- Have plenty of toys in the middle to keep him busy.

Silence. The students seem to have run out of ideas. Mrs. Scott breaks into the brainstorming. 'You have come up with a large number of very different ideas. Which ones shall we implement? Remember we value Ovidio's curiosity. We also want him safe and to feel at home here. Based on those expectations, which ideas should we implement?' (These values the students have agreed to in earlier planning sessions.)

The students look at the list for a moment.

One speaks up: 'Well, he won't be comfortable here if we are telling him 'No' all the time.'

Mrs. Scott: 'So is that off the list?' Heads nod.

Another student: 'I like the idea of sitting so close he can't get through. That would keep him from all our stuff that might not be safe.'

And another: 'If we did that and had lots of toys in the center, he might stay inside.'

'Oh yes,' says another, 'we have those toys we've gathered for previous visits.' (During an earlier session the students discussed what makes a good toy for an infant and had collected plastic food containers of

different sizes, each nestling inside of a larger one. They had also made a Raggedy Ann doll and raccoon puppet.)

Students speak up:

‘I brought my brother’s truck, as I promised.’

‘And I brought the salad spinner again.’

‘Here is my collection of matchbox cars.’

Mrs. Scott: ‘So have you made a plan?’

As the students nod, she continues, ‘Does it fit your values and objectives?’

Again, the students nod.

‘About Ovidio’s mother. Do we want her to be comfortable too?’

Student: ‘She always sits on the floor with us. She can be part of the wall.’

The other students nod.

And turning to the chart, Mrs. Scott notes that it is Irene’s turn to measure Ovidio, Marcus’s turn to show him a book and Lucinda’s turn to show him a ball.

Mrs. Scott: ‘Are we ready for the visit?’

The students nod a yes and turn to the next task of the day.

Later in the day, the students have their desks moved back against the walls and have taken their place making a rather large circle when Mrs. Moser comes in carrying Ovidio who is beaming ear to ear. She says, ‘Good morning’ as she goes to the open place in the circle and, laughing, says, ‘This looks like our place.’ She sets Ovidio down on the floor in a sitting position. He immediately turns himself around in a crawling position and heads for the toy truck.

The students laugh and point. ‘He is! He is crawling like we predicted.’

Mrs Moser bends over and moving toward her son, asks him, ‘Don’t you want your jacket off? You will be able to crawl easier without that bulky

jacket.' As she reaches for him, Ovidio sits up on his knees and lets his mother pull the sleeve of his jacket off, one arm and then the other. As soon as the jacket is off, he is crawling and pushing the truck along again.

Mrs Moser settles herself on the blanket that the students had put out for her. 'Yes,' she says, 'he started crawling the week after we were here. He is competent and fast now. He likes to move.' Mrs. Scott notes on the class chart for this month that Ovidio is crawling.

Mrs. Scott to her students: 'Did you notice what Ovidio did when his mother talked about taking off his jacket?'

There are several quiet moments before one student speaks up. 'He stopped pushing the truck, didn't he?'

'Yes,' says another, 'he sat up on his heels while she took off the jacket.'

'Can we conclude anything about Ovidio's ability to understand language?'

'He seemed to understand what his mother said to him.'

Mrs. Scott persists. 'Is Ovidio talking?'

The students turn to Ovidio's mother for an answer.

'No, he's talking his language but not words, but he does seem to understand a lot especially when in context with what we are doing.'

'So,' Mrs. Scott turns to Mrs. Moser, 'do you try and talk with him about what you are doing?'

'Of course,' she confirms, 'that is how he learns language.'

Mrs. Scott charts that one of the things Ovidio's mother does for him is talk to him.

The conversation between the students and Mrs. Ovidio continues as they ask her what else he is doing and what her day is like.

They measure Ovidio to see if he has grown. He has. They also record his weight which Mrs. Ovidio tells them. Marcus shows him the book and Lucinda the ball, neither of which he is interested in as he's found the toy cars and is busy trying to see if he can pull each of them. Mrs. Scott records on the chart Ovidio's lack of interest in the book and ball.

After about 30 minutes, Ovidio's mother tells him, 'You certainly seem to be having a good time here today, aren't you Ovidio?' from whom she gets no response. He's found the plastic containers and is trying to get them all out. 'It is time to go.' She gets up, goes over to him and starts putting on his coat. He starts to whine and wiggle away. 'Yes,' his mother says, 'it's always hard to leave.' She gets the coat on as he resists, picks him up and her bag. 'Can you say goodbye to the children?' He waves and they all wave back to him. 'We'll see you next month,' as she walks to the door.

'Before we leave the circle,' Mrs. Scott turns to her class, 'let's just take a few minutes to review Ovidio's and his mother's visit. What are your thoughts about the visit?'

One student volunteers:

'I think our plans worked. Ovidio was safe and he seemed happy. He was certainly busy.' Heads nod in agreement.

Others volunteer:

'Mrs Moser seemed comfortable. She gave us lots of information.'

'I hadn't thought about how much she had to rearrange her house for her crawling son, just like we had to do with our classroom.'

'Ovidio liked the cars and trucks the best.' Heads nod.

Mrs Scott: 'Am I hearing correctly - you feel the plan worked?' Again, there is agreement.

'We'll talk about our plans for the next visit later. It is time for math now. Let's get our room back in order.' The children begin moving their desks back into their usual position.

Breastfeeding quiz

1 Why do babies breastfeed?

- Hunger
- Thirst
- Comfort
- Fight illness

- All of the above

2 Breast milk contains antibodies that pass through the milk which reduces the chances of a baby getting ill.

- True
- False

3 How much water is contained in breast milk?

- 67%
- 77%
- 87%

4 How many calories can a breastfeeding mother burn in a day?

- 200 cal
- 400 cal
- 500 cal

5 Every drop matters! Just one teaspoon of breast milk contains:

- 1,000 germ killing cells
- 10,000 germ killing cells
- 3 million germ killing cells.

Put your answers in the box with your name for a chance to win a special prize.

Breastfeeding – true or false?

As soon as you have a baby, your breasts produce colostrum which helps the baby keep well if you breastfeed.

You can't get pregnant if you breast feed.

A woman who adopts a baby can produce her own breast milk to feed it.

A breast-fed baby is less likely to get gastroenteritis.

Breastfeeding gives you a close bond with your baby.

Any woman is able to breastfeed.

It is free to breastfeed.

Breastfeeding is one of the most natural things in the world. If other people are offended to see you breastfeed, that's their problem.

If your baby wakes at night and cries, it's easy to breastfeed it and send it to sleep.

Some babies wean themselves.

Breasts exist mainly to attract boys.

Your tummy gets flatter sooner if you breastfeed.

You need not feel guilty if you bottle feed your baby while you cuddle it.

In poor countries, some babies die due to bottle feeding encouraged by baby milk produced by Nestle.

Women who breastfeed are less likely to get breast cancer.

There are ways of giving breast milk to a premature baby in intensive care (Special Care Baby Unit.)

It's easy to express your breast milk if you want to go back to work.

Your baby is calmer and happier if it is breastfed whenever it wants.

There are groups you can go to where mothers who breastfeed support each other and make friends.

Mothers are often confused by conflicting advice about breastfeeding.

It's easier to go on holiday or go out with your baby if you breastfeed.

Bottle feeding is just as good for babies as breastfeeding.

What does a baby aged 0 – 6 months need?

© *Betty Hales*

Dummy
High chair
Warm clothes
Cot
Crib/basket
Cuddly toys
Duvet
Playpen
Sweets

Blanket
Fruit juice
Expensive toys
Fizzy drinks
Rocking chair
Baby food
Bottles and sterilizer
Potty
Nappies

Dolls
Skin contact
Discipline
Daily bath
Kept clean
Feeding bowl and spoon

Play
Strict routine
Calm environment
Bonding
Crying
Time alone
Bright colours
Security
Two parents
Loud music
Scolding
Shouting
Children's TV
Soft music
Strong contrast of colours

Picture books
Nursery rhymes
Talking
Singing
Bibs
Muslin cloths
Laughter
Smiles
Human interaction

Hitting Children:

Ten reasons not to hit your kids *by Jan Hunt*

One Research shows that hitting children teaches them to become hitters themselves.

Two In many cases of so-called bad behaviour, the child is simply responding in the only way he can, given his age and experience, to his basic needs being neglected.

Three Punishment distracts the child from learning how to resolve conflict in an effective, humane way. When we make a child afraid, we stop learning dead in its tracks.

Four A punished child becomes preoccupied with feelings of anger and fantasies of revenge.

Five Punishment interferes with the bond between parent and child. It is not human nature to feel loving towards someone who hurts us. Many parents never learnt in their own childhood that there are positive ways of relating to children. When punishment does not achieve the desired goals and if the parent is unaware of other methods punishment can escalate to more frequent and dangerous actions against the child.

Six Anger and frustration which cannot be safely expressed by a child become stored inside. Angry teenagers do not just happen for no reason.

Seven Spanking on the bottom, an erotic zone in childhood, can create in the child's mind an association between pain and sexual pleasure and lead to difficulties in adulthood.

Eight Even relatively moderate spanking can be physically dangerous. Blows to the lower end of the spinal column send shock waves along the length of the spine and might injure the child.

Nine Physical punishment gives the dangerous and unfair message that might is right, that it is OK to hurt someone else provided they are smaller and less powerful than you.

Ten Because children learn through how their parents behave, physical punishment gives the message that hitting is an appropriate way to express feelings and to solve problems.

See *End Corporal Punishment* website with information about most countries in the world.

Ten alternatives to hitting your kids

One Breathe slowly and deeply. Count to ten before dealing with a child in a gently assertive, firm, kind, non-violent way. ‘No.’

Two Use compassion and empathy. Look for the meaning in the child’s actions. Difficult behaviour is often a sign of your child having difficult feelings that he or she can’t cope with. It’s not just naughtiness. Say, ‘I know you feel angry and really want to kick the TV but the TV’s not for kicking. Here’s a big cushion. You can kick that instead and pretend it’s the TV.’

Three Make sure the child is safe, then go out of the room.

Four Find another adult, if you can, to calm things down. Phone a friendly neighbour. Beforehand, discuss with your partner, if you have one, how the two of you will deal sensitively in the same ways with difficult behaviour.

Five If your child is old enough, explain as kindly as you can why the behaviour isn’t acceptable in words that she/he can understand. Discuss with your child what a solution might be. For example, together calmly repair any damage to people or things.

Six Have simple, consistent rules. Don't make empty promises or threats. Don't leave breakable or dangerous items around.

Seven If your child is old enough, make eye contact and explain that he or she has a choice and there are consequences to choices. E.g. if you choose to go on pulling the cat's tail, you are choosing to go without television today.'

Eight Pick your battles. Avoid power struggles. If it's safe to do so, and your child isn't hungry, tired or in pain, ignore the behaviour. Don't stifle the child's curiosity. S/he might just be exploring the world. Don't be petty or over-controlling, or insist on a spotless home. Cheerfully get on with something else. This might distract the child if it looks interesting enough.

Nine Scrape the bottom of the barrel for something positive to say, however hard that is. E.g. 'It's great that you haven't run out of the front door' (if the child keeps doing it and nearly has done it again.) Focus on the positives, not the negatives.

Ten Stand back and reflect on why you are so angry and why you are tempted to hit. Were you hit yourself as a child? Is the child doing something that is especially annoying for you? Why? Are you feeling tired, miserable or angry with someone else and taking it out on your child? Is the child copying your own behaviour or your partner's? Make sure you are a good role model. Apologise if you think you have acted badly. This will teach your child about sincere (not insincere) apologies.

A research project about physical punishment

Ten happiest countries in the world:

***Australia / Canada / Denmark / Finland / Holland /
Iceland / New Zealand / Norway / Sweden / Switzerland.***

Research *End Corporal Punishment* on the internet to see whether parents are allowed to hit their children in those ten.

Ten unhappiest countries in the world:

***Burundi / Guinea / Haiti / Liberia / Rwanda / South
Sudan / Syria / Tanzania / Togo / Yemen.***

Research if parents are allowed to hit their children in those ten.

**Twenty-one Myths & Truths: What do YOU think?
And why?** (Consider using drama techniques) © *Betty Hales*

Myth One: Spare the rod and spoil the child

Truth: There's always a better choice than physical chastisement to help a child learn appropriate behaviour. In many countries it is illegal. We need to build a positive and respectful relationship with our children.

Myth Two: It's OK to hit your child in anger because it relieves the adult's stress.

Truth: If an adult becomes so stressed that they may physically hurt a child, they have the responsibility to make sure the child is safe, then remove themselves from the situation to calm down.

Myth Three: Children should be seen and not heard.

Truth: Just like adults, children need time to be noisy, laughing, singing, playing and making music. There are also times when they need to be quiet. Adults must teach them by example and talking calmly to them as they grow up.

Myth Four: ‘Good’ babies sleep through the night by three months.

Truth: Most newborn babies sleep about 17 hours in 24. They start to tell the difference between night and day between 4 – 6 months and often sleep through the night by about 9 – 12 months. There is no need to worry if it takes longer. Just like adults, some seem to need more sleep than others.

Myth Five: Babies and toddlers should be left to cry so they learn not to demand attention, or they’ll become spoilt.

Truth: You can’t spoil a baby or child by meeting their needs. No baby cries without reason and no baby under six months should ever be left to cry for more than a few moments. At this age it is vital they feel safe and secure if they are to develop properly. From six months they can be left a bit longer once they have learnt that they can rely on you and trust that their needs will always be met. They are beginning to ‘problem solve’ and need to work things out for themselves, but no longer than five minutes.

Myth Six: Don’t use baby talk or your child won’t learn to talk properly.

Truth: All adults in all cultures speak to babies in a lilting sing song fashion and simplify the way they talk even using specific baby words. This helps young babies to understand the pattern and the meaning of speech, adults naturally change the way they speak as the child grows and responds differently to language.

Myth Seven: you must be very quiet when the baby is asleep or he or she will wake up.

Truth: In the womb there's always background noise from the mother's body and the environment. Babies are used to this, feel secure and sleep better when there is natural noise around them.

Myth Eight: The younger a child learns to walk and talk, the more intelligent he or she will be.

Truth: Each child is an individual and their bodies and brains develop at different rates. Talking depends on the development of the jaw and mouth as well as the brain. Babies understand what you say to them before they start to talk in recognisable worlds. Walking depends on muscle and balance development.

Myth Nine: All babies get ill and irritable when they're teething. It goes on for months which is why they cry so much.

Truth: Teething is a natural process and it hurts, you probably remember the pain of cutting your adult teeth but it is only for a day or two and should never be used to explain crying and irritability over a longer period. Teething coincides with the baby sitting up, starting mixed feeding and putting everything they can get hold of in their mouth. This probably explains their tendency to get ill more often rather than simply because they are teething.

Myth Ten: Bi-lingual families should stick to one language while the children are growing up or they'll become confused.

Truth: Babies are born with the ability to learn every language in the world. But if they don't hear the distinct sounds, this ability is lost so it's much better to introduce them naturally to as many languages as possible as young as possible. They have a fantastic ability to absorb many languages and distinguish between them.

Myth Eleven: Children thrown tantrums and show off in order to manipulate adults and get their own way.

Truth: Children are not mini-adults. They don't think like that. Tantrums and showing off are a sign of frustration. They need help to understand and sort out how to deal with their feelings. Remain calm and offer distractions and alternative choices. Give them space but let them know you are there for them.

Myth Twelve: All children go through the terrible twos. There is nothing you can do, just live through it and hope they will grow out of it soon.

Truth: Between 18 months and 30 months, toddlers enter a new stage of development towards independence. It is a very exciting age to be enjoyed by parents and child, but they need you to remain calm and help them to gain self-control.

Myth Thirteen: Children need the latest designer toys and electronic gadgets otherwise they will look silly in front of their peers and grow up to hate you.

Truth: Children need you to accept and respect them as individuals. They need your time far more than your money. By all means buy them what you can afford and believe they need but don't be drawn into spending more than you can afford out of a sense of duty. Be honest and explain your situation and views simply and clearly.

Myth Fourteen: Your child must do lots of organised activities keep very busy, otherwise you've failed as a parent.

Truth: Each child is different. Some are very outgoing and need to be involved in lots of activities but they don't need to cost more than you can afford. But don't overdo it children also need time to rest and reflect. If your child doesn't want to join in with anything, don't be pushy rather gently encourage them to find something they would like maybe that you can do with them.

Myth Fifteen: TV is the best way to occupy a child while you are busy in another room.

Truth: Try to avoid more than a little TV with a child up to about 2. Even this should be when you are there watching and talking with them. Better for them to be in the same room with you, safely away from danger.

Myth Sixteen: Children should always eat what they are given and clear their plates, otherwise they will grow up to become fussy eaters.

Truth: Mealtimes should be as calm as possible. Offer a range of healthy foods and let children eat what they want. If there is no stress, toddlers will eat a balanced diet over a few days. Their tastes change over time probably depending on what their body needs. Some weeks it is mostly protein, corresponding perhaps to a growth spurt. Sometimes mainly carbohydrates for energy.

Myth Seventeen: Parenting is the hardest and most stressful thing you will ever have to do.

Truth: Parenting is a great responsibility and should always be taken seriously but it is also fun and very rewarding. It is the adult's job to find ways of working with their child to help them mature into a well-adjusted young person. Nobody can do this well if they are always worried and stressed. In an ideal world every child would be wanted and born when the parent(s) are ready but anyone can be a good parent at any age if they have a positive attitude.

Myth Eighteen: You must have firm rules and stick to them rigidly otherwise your children will grow up to be unruly and anti-social.

Truth: Too many rigid rules can often get in the way of forming a good relationship. Honesty and mutual respect are very important. It is the quality of the relationship with your child that matters not your parenting style.

Myth Nineteen: Children need strict routines if they are to develop properly.

Truth: Some families have strict routines particularly if they are very busy. Children thrive if the family is calm. BUT children can thrive without routines as long as they feel secure and the adults feel comfortable. Children need enough sleep, good food, warmth, safety, security and of course unconditional love.

Myth Twenty: Babies and children need expensive, sophisticated toys to stimulate their brains, otherwise they won't reach their potential.

Truth: As babies go through their stages of development, they need to play and develop their skills and imagination. They need stimulation and interaction but can achieve this just as well with cardboard boxes plastic bowls and spoons etc as with expensive flashy toys. Many excellent toys can be found in charity shops and car boot sales. You don't need loads of money to raise a healthy, balanced child.

Myth Twenty-one: It's fine for an adult to be looking at their phone for long periods while with a baby or child. They can amuse themselves and won't notice.

Truth: When they are awake, babies and young children need to be interacting with an adult and later with each other as much as possible. You can't do this as well as looking at your phone. Keep it only for emergencies until the child is asleep. You are the role model for your child.

.....
Anonymous Questions Box

Suggested label:

ANONYMOUS

CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONS BOX

Type this out very large, each letter a different colour. Stick it on an attractive container, e.g. a gold cardboard box with a lid. Make sure all questions are answered, unless they are provocative and scurrilous! Have the box available at every lesson.

.....

Songs

Breastfeeding baby in the park © Janet Russell

Tune on YouTube. Easy guitar chords if you can accompany it.

Chorus (and after each verse)

Breastfeeding baby in the park
You'll have to go and do it after dark
There are parts of you & me that other people don't want to see,
You can't breastfeed your baby in the park.

There is a lovely park in Brighton town
With a café where you can go and sit down,
I went to take a rest and drink some orange juice fresh pressed
When my baby's face screwed up into a frown.

Well, I wasn't exactly looking like page three
As I unhitched my denim dungarees.
My baby soon went quiet but the staff began to riot
At the sight of this working part of me.

Well, the manageress's face became quite red
As angrily she came to me and said,
'You're a public disgrace, will you please leave this place
And don't come back until your baby's fed.'

Why is it in the papers every day
That soft porn on page three is still OK,
But if you don't stick them out with a wriggle and pout,
You're told in no uncertain terms 'Put them away.'

Well, when I thought this, it made my anger rise.
I said to myself, 'Go out and organise.'
What this café is needing is a mother and baby feed-in,
We'll get rid of some values I despise.

Well, the press and local councillors were there

And a nursing mother sat in every chair.
Well, it really makes me smile cos I took revenge in style,
It was a satisfying moment fine and rare.

Now there's a byelaw says in places selling teas
You can breastfeed your baby when you please
Brighton cordially invites you to feed the little mites
And we won't treat you as if you were diseased.

Last chorus

Breastfeeding baby in the park,
You don't have to do it after dark,
Be it breakfast, tea or lunch, any time you need to munch
You've a right to breastfeed baby in the park.

.....

.

Rue the day I married *(how does this man feel?)*

I am a young man from the town of Ciandra,
I married a young woman to comfort my home,
She goes out and she leaves me and cruelly deceives me
And leaves me with a baby that's none of me own.

Oh dear, rue the day ever I married,
How I wish I was single again.
With its weeping and wailing and rocking the cradle
And rocking a baby that's none of me own.

Lullaby: Rockabye baby *(what wish is in the parent's mind?)*

Rockabye baby on the tree top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock,
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
Down will come cradle, baby and all.

On children

As sung by Sweet Honey in the Rock (watch and listen on YouTube)

Your children
Are not your children
They are the sons and the daughters
Of life's longing for itself

They come through you
But they are not from you
And though they are with you
They belong not to you.

You can give them your love
But not their thoughts
They have their own thoughts
They have their own thoughts

You can house their bodies but not their souls
For their souls dwell in a place of tomorrow
Which you cannot visit
Not even in your dreams

You can strive to be like them
But you cannot make them just like you
Strive to be like them
But you cannot make them just like you...

Adapted from Khalil Gibran's poem

Poems

Children learn what they live © *Dorothy Law Nolte*

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to be shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good
to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration,
they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in
themselves and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is
a nice place in which to live.

Bringing up babies *by Roy Fuller*

If babies could speak, they'd tell mother or nurse
That slapping was pointless and why,
For if you're not crying, it prompts you to cry
And if you are - then you cry worse.

Mummy *by Chris Peaskin*

Mummy did I tell you
I grazed my knee today
Teacher gave me a plaster
I suppose it'll be OK.

Mummy I am so happy
I made a friend today
Mummy are you listening
Don't look the other way

Mummy I want to show you
What it was I made today
It's just a little present
For you on Mother's Day

Mummy you know my teacher
She said I'm doing well
I got the higher test result
For the words we had to spell.

Mummy can you hear me
Do you know I'm here
While you're holding my hand
You seem to be elsewhere

Mummy have I told you
That I wish I was a phone
Then you could talk to me all day
And I wouldn't feel alone.

Baby-Sitting *by Gillian Clarke*

I am sitting in a strange room listening
For the wrong baby. I don't love
This baby. She is sleeping a snuffly
Roseate, bubbling sleep; she is fair;
She is a perfectly acceptable child.
I am afraid of her. If she wakes
She will hate me. She will shout
Her hot midnight rage. Her nose
Will stream disgustingly and the perfume
Of her breath will fail to enchant me.

To her I will represent absolute
Abandonment. For her it will be worse
Than for the lover cold in lonely
Sheets; worse than for the woman who waits
A moment to collect her dignity
Beside the bleached bone in the terminal ward.
As she rises sobbing from the monstrous land
Stretching for milk-familiar comforting,
She will find me and between us two
It will not come. It will not come.

Granny *by Grace Nicholls*

It so nice to have a granny
when you've had it with yuh Mammy
and you feeling down and dammy

It so nice to have a granny
when she brings you bread and jammy
and says, 'Tell it all to granny.'

Two o'clock

It almost two o'clock, this is where it begins.
Bang goes the door, in he walks, tall and thin.

He looks all around, looks me up and down,
Then he grabs for a drink, not making a sound.

Within a second, that drink has all gone
'Get me another or else!' is his song.

I get up from the chair, look at the floor
But before I can get it, he's there at the door.

Thump! That's the first punch, followed with a clip.
'Get me a drink!' I do, with blood flowing from my lip.

'Where is my dinner, you stupid fat cow?
Get rid of that baby, put her to bed right now.'

.
This is the time I plan our escape.
I should never have met him. It was such a mistake.

I walk back in the room. He's standing in wait,
He punches and kicks me. My face is a state.

I rise from the floor, room spinning around.
I walk to the kitchen, not making a sound.

I cook his dinner, I get him a drink,
Then I stand and wait at the kitchen sink.

'Take out this plate and get me a drink!'
I walk towards him, not daring to blink.
I grab for the glass to replenish his needs.
But before I can touch it, I'm down on my knees.

A slap round the face, a punch on the head.
Sometimes I think I would rather be dead.

He calls for another and another again.
He says that he drinks to kill the pain.

What pain? I think, I'm the one who's bruised,
I'm the one who's battered and abused.

At last he's asleep, I can now go to bed.
I don't sleep, though, too many thoughts in my head.

It's almost two o'clock. He's awake. Now it begins.
Bang goes the door, in he walks tall and thin.
Another slap to the face, then 'I love you' with a grin.

I wait till tomorrow when a new day begins.

When you

cut it for me
write it for me
open it for me
set it up for me
draw it for me
find it for me
all I learn is:
that you do it better than me.

by Upstart, Scotland

Books for young children

Good picture books about feelings and situations can be used both with young children at school to complement their baby observation sessions, and with adolescents learning how to read to young children on placements. Here are a few. Letterbox Library is an excellent source of more. The books might ring bells in teenagers' minds about their early or current lives, opening up discussion and enabling insights.

It's okay to be different by Todd Parr

Acceptance, understanding, confidence. Bright colours.

Do you sing twinkle? A story about remarriage/ new family Sandra Lewis
Adjusting to stepfamily after parents' divorce.

Clive and his babies by Jessica Spanyol

Clive loves his dolls and shares them with his friends.

Cyril Squirrel finds out about love by Jane Evans

What is love? Can I find it? Keep it? Do I need it?

The huge bag of worries by Virginia Ironside

Jenny's worries follow her everywhere. But who can help her?

I feel angry by Brian Moses

Amusing and reassuring, with notes for parents and teachers.

Now we have a baby by Lois Rock

Helps prepare child for the impact a new baby may have.

Tough guys have feelings too by Keith Negley

Shows various 'tough guys' showing emotion.

Films about parenting

Many very short film clips are free via Youtube. They can have a huge impact and promote discussion. We have used:

The Still Face: mother and baby: three minutes

The Still Face: three fathers and their babies: four minutes

Kids' thoughts on their parents' mobile phone use: two minutes

Harry Harlow's Monkey Love: Studies on dependency in monkeys: six minutes

Help me love my baby. The parent-infant therapist, Dr Amanda Jones, successfully works with a woman who has post-natal depression. A two-part documentary on Channel 4 (2007.) Highly recommended.

Living in harmony by Michael le Moignan and Tim Kahan (1999). CEDC video

Parenting. Donald Winnicott's broadcasts on BBC Radio (1956)

Circle of Security video on its website: charming animated short film about meeting children's attachment needs

If you type in the subject you want, you will find many more. Concord Media stock a good variety of relevant films.

Film Club

You might consider setting up a film club during lunchtime (short clips), after school (longer films, half term tasters, during school holidays or during Drop Down Days. Free popcorn might draw the crowds.

Welcome to Holland

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The flight attendant comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!" you say. "What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around....and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills.....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy.... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away.....because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But.... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things..... about Holland.

© 1987 by *Emily Perl Kingsley*

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Some facts to discuss and think about

FACT One in eight mothers sees her GP because of post-natal depression. The number is even higher if they also have money or relationship problems.

FACT One million girls in the USA have a baby every year.

FACT Britain has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in western Europe despite widespread use of contraception.

FACT It can cost between £1,600 and £7,200 to bring up a baby in the first year, according to the Money Advice Service.

FACT One in 34 girls in Britain has a baby.

FACT The most likely murder victim in Britain is a child under the age of 12 months.

FACT 30 percent of women aged 16 or over have been victims of domestic violence, stalking, family abuse or sexual assault.

FACT Teenage dads often feel left out of the picture.

FACT Half of teenage boys say they have been emotionally abused by their girlfriend.

FACT Most children under the age of nine who have been excluded from school have been bereaved.

FACT At least 16 percent of children in the UK and the US live in poverty.

Homework (optional): Observation in public places

Students are invited to discreetly observe a parent or other adult or couple with baby and/or child in the street, bus, train, public space such as park or supermarket. They will all role-play this exercise in class to help them realise what it means to observe discreetly. Things to look out for and possibly record in their journal later on, and report to the class next week, could be:

- Are there smiles and laughter?
- Does the adult hold child's hand? Wrist? Does the child walk near the adult?
- Is there smacking?
- Is there shouting by adult?
- If a couple of adults, how do they get on?
- Is the baby or child ignored?
- Does adult try to control the child's play or activity?
- Is the adult on the phone? If so, for how long? What is the child doing/ what do you think it is feeling?
- Does the adult look bored? Angry? Resentful? Worried? Depressed? Sad? Absent? Poe-faced? Exhausted? Anything else?
- Is the baby or child crying? If so, what does the adult do? With what results?
- Is there eye contact?
- Does baby/child have anything to do? Toy? Book?
- Does adult talk to baby or child? If so, what about?
- If adult is father, how does he behave?
- Does baby/child seem to need more attention?
- Is adult in a hurry? Does adult walk too fast for child?
- Does adult show positive interest or delight in baby or child?
- Do you think the adult is parent / grandparent/ childminder/ other?
- How do you feel when you look at the family?

Attitudes to having babies and children

Put each on a card. Students pick one and talk about it.

- I'm addicted to watching my baby or child, fascinated
- A mistake but let's go through with it
- A mistake. Get rid of the pregnancy or have it adopted
- It's what you do when you're married or live with someone
- It's what I've always wanted to do
- I'd better do this before I get too old
- I'm expected to do this by my partner parents and friends
- Most people have kids and I don't want to miss out
- I can't think of anything else to do with my life
- I want someone to love and to love me for a change
- I could get a flat and benefit money if I have a baby
- If I have a baby, my boyfriend might stay with me
- I want my girlfriend to have a baby so I feel like a real man
- I'm going to have babies but they are not going to change my life. I'll still see my friends, go out as much as I want
- I love babies they are so sweet so I'll have one
- I'd like to have a baby to dress it up in all those lovely clothes you see in the shops
- They will all envy me if I have a baby. They haven't!
- I'll have a baby and my mum or boyfriend can look after it
- It's really boring looking after babies and kids.
- I can't wait for my child to grow up and be off my hands
- I don't like my baby being a girl. Wish I had a boy instead.
- I hate every minute of being a parent
- I'm fed up when my girlfriend wants me to look after the baby. All my mates are out every night.
- Sometimes I love them, sometimes I hate and resent them.
- My baby deliberately keeps me awake. It's a bad baby. Wish I had a good one. Best to ignore it when it cries
- People who don't have kids are sad and lonely so I'd better have some.
- If a dad beats up a mum or says he's coming to see his child and then doesn't turn up, it really upsets the child.

Positive and negative scenes

Photos or drawings can be looked at in class or given for homework. An excellent source of pictures is in Margot; Sunderland's book *The Science of Parenting*. Students can suggest scenes. They might include:

Positive scenes

- Father holding baby affectionately;
- Two fathers walking down the road together, each pushing a buggy;
- Parents from various countries and cultures with their babies or children;
- Parent smiling at baby or child, making eye contact;
- Parent plays with child, messy play; bubbles/balloons;
- Parent walks down the road holding the child's hand;
- Parent being attentive to child and baby together;
- Parent reading a book to a child who is ill in bed;
- Parent gives a big hug to a child as it comes out of school;
- Young man showing positive interest in his pregnant partner's bump;
- Parent pushing a toddler in buggy and parent point to a dog or flower;
- Child crying with parent holding it close.

Negative scenes

- Child looking at parent who looks out of the window with back to the child;
- Child looking scared as an adult hand is about to come down on it;
- Child tugs at parent's sleeve while parent is on phone;
- Baby crying in a room in its own.

Children and childcare can be: Write each on a card.

Students pick one and talk about it. 'Do you know anyone who seems like this?'

Positives

Pride

Joy

Happiness

Achievement

Someone to love

Someone to love me

A wonder partner and I

created

Sweet

Thriving

Clever

Slows me down

Developing well

A real family

Confidence

Joy for others e.g

grandparents /extended

family

Cousins

Healthy

Healthy food

Looks like me or him

Bright

Curious

Boy/girl: got what I

wanted

Friends with other parents

Holidays

Next one?

Xmas

Closer to my parents

Play

Toys

Books

Visits

Outings

Nice clothes

Hobbies

Photos

Same as my friends

Got one at last

Dream fulfilled

Speech

Protectiveness

Negatives

Disappointing	Unpredictable
Sleep depriving	Changing all the time
Exhausting/draining	At my wits' end
Relentless	Intolerable/unbearable
Rebellious	Responsibility
Disobedient	Pressurised
Unresponsive	Going mad
Repetitive	Contempt
Lonely	Bored
Poor	Unsupported
Resentful / rows/ argue	Regretful
Restricted	Sacrifice
Long-term / endless	24/7 52 weeks
Confusing / unprepared	Challenging
Difficult / wilful	Frustrating
Demanding	Jealous
Special needs	Envious
Ill	Withdrawn
End of my tether	Unsupported, no help
Persecuted	Impatient
Hitting	Murderous
Comparing	Rude
Disbelief	Dangerous / risk-taking
Shocked	Angry
Aggressive	Shy
Upset	Needed
	Suffering

Quotations to take home and keep: one a week

Every student can be given something to take home and keep after each session: a quote about parenting, poem, photo, drawing, news cutting, piece of prose. Each can be laminated on coloured card and put in a box for students to have a Lucky Dip. Suggest they keep it in their bag and see what comes to mind as they look at it or read it. They can swap with classmates in the week. Quotes might include these. You/students can add more.

- The best thing a dad can do for his baby is love its mum.
- It's never too late to have a happy childhood. *Richard Bandler*
- You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversations. *Plato*
- In the happiest of our childhood memories, our parents were happy too. *Robert Brault*
- It's easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. *Frederick Douglas*
- Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed. *Maria Montessori*
- It takes courage to grow up and become who you are. *e e cummings*
- People forget what you said and what you did. But they never forget how you made them feel. *Maya Angelou*
- Every time you smile at someone, it's an act of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing. *Mother Teresa*
- The violent children of the future are babies now. *Sue Gerhardt*
- Parents, by the kind of life they build within the four walls of the home, are largely responsible for the future social and public life of the country. *Franklin Roosevelt*
- I don't fear becoming a parent, but I fear taking care of a newborn; they're so tiny and vulnerable. *Lindsay Price*

Adult Attachment Interview for teachers and other adults from *Handbook of Attachment* pp 552-598, Guilford Press

This is designed to elicit your recollections about relationships with parents and other attachment figures during childhood: experiences with parents, significant separations and losses during childhood, and the current state of your child/parent relationship. Please note not only your answers but your sense of coherence, emotions, confusion, rigidity/openness and so on.

The questions

Could you start with your early family situation, where you lived and so on. If you could start with where you were born, whether you moved around much, what your family did for a living at various times.

Please describe your relationships with your parents as a young child. If you can start from as far back as you can remember.

Please choose five adjectives that describe your relationship with your mother. This might take some time. Then I'm going to ask you why you chose them. Now do the same about your father.

To which parent did you feel closer and why? Why isn't there this feeling for the other parent?

When you were upset as a child, what did you do?

What is the first time you remember about being separated from your parents? How did they and you respond? Are there any other separations that stand out in your mind?

Did you ever feel rejected as a young child? (Of course, looking back on it now, you may realise it wasn't really rejection.)

Were your parents ever threatening you in any way, maybe for discipline or maybe just jokingly?

How do you think these experiences with your parents have affected your adult personality? Are there any aspects of your early experiences that you feel were a setback to our development?

Why do you think your parents behaved as they did?

Were there any other adults with whom you were close as a child or any who were especially important to you?

Did you experience the loss of a parent or other close loved one when you were a young child?

Have there been many changes in your relationship with your parents since childhood, from childhood through to the present?

What's your relationship with your parents like for you now as an adult?

Is there any particular thing which you feel you learned above all from your own childhood experiences?

If you are a parent

How do you respond now, in terms of feelings, when you separate from your child or children?

If you had three wishes for your child or children twenty years from now, what would they be? What kind of future would you like to see for your child or children?

What would you hope your child or children might learn from their experiences of being parented?

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Some relevant organisations concerned with the emotional wellbeing of babies, children, parents/carers; upbringing; parent education. A few are interested in preparing youngsters for parenthood.

UK

Action for Children
 ASDAN
 BASE Babywatching UK
 (started in Germany)
 Before Becoming a Parent
 Bounce Forward
 Childline
 Children's Society
 Children's rights alliance
 Circle time
 Concord Video & Film council
 Donor Conception Network
 Early Years Alliance
 Education Support
 Empathy Museum travels the world
 Explore(marriage) till 31 12 23
 Family Nurse Partnership
 Family Rights Group
 First Music
 Gentle Parenting
 Growing2gether

I CAN

International Federation of
 Parent Education
 La Leche League
 Letterbox Library
 Mumsnet
 National Childbirth Trust
 Netmums
 Newpin
 NSPCC
 Nurture Network
 Parent Infant Foundation (ex
 Pipuk)
 Philosophy for Children
 Place2Be
 PSHE Association
 Power2 / Teens Toddlers
 Roots of Empathy UK
 Values-based education
 Video Interaction Guidance
 Watch and Wonder
 WAVE Trust
 Young Minds

USA 'Prepare Tomorrow's Parents' Clearing House

Baby Think It Over Connecticut CCD
 California Dept of Education: Statutory requirements
 'Child Development, Parenting & Parent Development' course, NY
 'Educating Communities for Parenting' Anita K. info@ecparenting.org
 'Educate Tomorrow's Parents' R Rubenstein qu
 'The Caring Project': Harriet Heath and Dana McDermott
 and 'Learning How to Care: Education for Parenthood' Harriet Heath
 'p.a.p.a.' ('Parenting and Paternity Awareness') Texas. papa@
 'Parents Under Construction' Janet Pozmancier www.childbuilders.org
 'Dads Make a Difference' jan@dadsmakeadifference.org

Elsewhere B.A.S.E@Babywatching, Germany. Servol, Trinidad

Index

A

absent

B

Bronfenbrenner, Urie

C

childcare

D

dance

E

Education Reform Act

F

film

G

Growing2gether

H

How to teach

I

insensitive

J

jealousy

K

Kulick

L

love

M

Miedzian, Myriam

N

nature

O

olives

P

parents

Q

questions

quizzes

R

resilience

S

secure

T

twins and triplets

U

useful

V

Video interaction

Y

Young

Z

Zander

Parenting needs to be inculcated early in life. Just as citizenship has been in the past, departments of education have to start offering classes in valuing and preparing for parenting and family life. These should take place as early as middle school, and a secondary course should be required for a high school diploma. Too many of us have taken the role of parent for granted and used trial and error and parenting-on-the-run as our process, often at the expense of the children. The more parents believe in the importance of their job, the more information they will seek.

Jim R Rogers, US Parent and Family Life Educator

Attention to improving an individual's general ability to cope with life should be a primary objective of schools. To the extent that it is achieved, it will help pupils to cope better in the future as parents. The programme cannot be confined to the period at school: opportunities must be found to improve understanding when the parents are actually meeting the problems of childrearing.

The Court Report on Child Health Services 1976

