



Activities, Tips, & Resources

For Saskatchewan's Nobody's Perfect Facilitators

September 2010

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Acknowledgements

Nobody's Perfect is an educational program for parents of children from birth to age five. The program targets parents who are young, single, low income, have low formal education, and are socially, culturally or geographically isolated. Facilitators in communities throughout Saskatchewan are trained to deliver the program using an adult education experiential learning method.

This booklet was developed to assist facilitators who are offering Nobody's Perfect parenting programs across Saskatchewan. It offers tips, activities and resources to enhance adult learning and group development. The booklet is organized into sections for ease of use. Feel free to photocopy information and activities as needed.

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This booklet is dedicated to Debra Edin, a longstanding and well respected Nobody's Perfect trainer, who committed her life to making this world a better place for families and their children.

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Table of Contents

• Program Preparation	5
➤ Promoting the Program & Signing Up Parents	5
➤ Location of the Program	5
• Running a Program	6
➤ When and How Long to Run Programs	6
➤ Helping Participants Feel Comfortable	6
➤ Encouraging Participation	7
• Challenging Issues	8
➤ Laying the Ground Rules	8
➤ Personal Disclosure	8
➤ Difficult Personalities	9
➤ Breaking Confidentiality	9
➤ Participants Reacting Strongly to an Activity or Topic	9
• Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC): What? So what? Now what?	10
➤ True Self Quiz	11
➤ The Pig Profile	13
• Activities for Introductions	14
➤ Ball Toss Name Game	14
➤ Challenges & Joys	15
➤ Flower Power	16
➤ Getting Started	17
➤ Puzzle Pieces	18
➤ Similarities & Differences	19
• Warm-Ups	20
➤ Orange, Red, Green	20
➤ The Betty Boop Game	21
➤ Other Warm-Up Activities	22
• Energizers	23
• Activities for Creating Small Groups	24
• Nobody's Perfect Books	25
➤ Introducing the Nobody's Perfect Books	25
➤ Nobody's Perfect Jeopardy	26

• The Mind Book	27
➤ The “E” Exercise	27
➤ Brain Activity	28
➤ Developmental Job Posters	29
• The Behaviour Book	34
➤ Children See, Children Do	34
➤ Agree or Disagree Game	35
• The Body Book	36
➤ Body Parts	36
➤ My Body	37
➤ Body Pictionary	38
➤ Childhood Illness Charades	39
• Using the Safety Book	40
➤ Homemade First Aid Kit	40
➤ First Aid Memory Game	41
➤ Product and Household Safety Activity	42
• Using the Parents Book	49
➤ What Type of Parent Am I...?	49
➤ Parents’ Rights Activity	50
➤ Parents’ Rights Poem	51
➤ My Three-Legged Stool	52
➤ Twenty Dollars	53
➤ The Jar of Life	54
➤ The Sense of a Goose	55
➤ Acknowledging Values	56
• Closing Activities	57
➤ Matchsticks	57
➤ What Kind of Flower?	58
➤ The Stone Sharing Experience	59
➤ Personal Cards	60
➤ We Are a Web	61
➤ On the Road Visualization	62
• Resources	63
• Poems	65
• Stories	72

Promoting the Program

When you are getting ready to offer a Nobody's Perfect program, it is important to think about the services that parents are already accessing in your community. For example, what family support service, health, food security, early childhood, and educational organizations are already working with parents in your community? What services are they providing? Would you be able to recruit participants for the program through these services? It is important to think about formal and informal services that are outside of the box as well. For example, are there recreational programs that families attend, library/literacy programs, or an elder who mentors young families?

Promotion is one key to the program's success. This means that you may need to go beyond the traditional ways of recruiting participants. Instead of waiting for participants to walk through our agency doors, actively engage potential participants in the community. For example, you could visit a program at your local library and talk to parents about the program. Promoting programs can be time consuming and difficult but it is important for effectively recruiting participants. Make sure to be positive and enthusiastic about the program. If you are not excited or motivated, how are you going to motivate or excite others?

"You can have the best program planning, the most highly qualified facilitators, the best snacks, the best door prizes. But if no one comes, you don't have a program."

When recruiting parents for the program, it is important to remember the title of the program "Nobody's Perfect". Reassure people that participation in the program does not mean that someone is a "bad" parent. Parenting is a constant learning process. Every parent can benefit from information and support. We're all learning together.

Location of the Program

The location of your program is very important. Try to host the program in a place where people will feel comfortable and can sit so that they can see each other. It shouldn't feel like a sterile, professional environment. You may also want to think about holding your program in a location that is easily accessible to parents. Churches, schools or libraries will often lend their space at no cost for community based organizations to run a group. Developing partnerships with other agencies may also create opportunities to use space outside of your agency.

When running programs for fathers, be conscious about the fact that a lot of men do not feel comfortable discussing their feelings. Try to include more physically interactive, hands on activities when working with men as this is engaging and allows for teachable moments and discussions without threat. Meet in a location where it will be easier to engage fathers, e.g., a school gym or a recreational facility, where they can engage in activities such as floor hockey or basketball.

When and How Long to Run Programs

Plan the program around the days and hours that work best for your parents. This should be something you ask participants while recruiting. Some people prefer day sessions while others would rather meet in the evenings. Take into consideration the work schedules of the participants, e.g., if you have participants who work shift work or block times (e.g., 1 week in and one week out of a mine), longer sessions over the course of a weekend may be more accessible. Some programs will hold two one-day workshops while others may run a group for 6-8 weeks in the evenings. It is also important to take into consideration the accessibility and safety of the location of the group at certain times of the day, the availability of child care, bus and taxi schedules, and school schedules.

The process of people coming together, feeling comfortable, participating and winding down generally takes one and a half to two hours. The length of the program is also somewhat dependent on the size of the group. The ideal number of participants is 8 to 10. Some facilitators will recruit 10-12 participants with the assumption that some will not finish the group. Keep in mind that in larger groups, individuals take longer to get to know and feel comfortable with one another and will have less opportunity to share.

“My favourite length of program is nine weeks; you have 8 sessions and then the 9th you celebrate.”

Helping Participants Feel Comfortable

It is important that participants feel welcome in the group...like they belong. Carefully planning the location of the group, the first day's activities, supporting participants to attend the group, e.g., providing funding for child care, and creating a welcoming environment, are all important factors that can help participants feel welcome.

The following list contains some simple ways that you can help create a welcoming environment.

1. Post inspirational thoughts and poems around the room.
2. Provide food. It gives people something to do and helps create a sense of comfort.
3. Remind people about the program a week before the first session.
4. Always tell people before they come to the group what bus route you are on, directions to the building, where the parking lot is located, and what door to enter.
5. Post signs from the entrance to the room where the program will be held so that parents can easily find their way to the group.
6. Orientate parents to information about the building as soon as you begin group, e.g., where the bathrooms are and where they can smoke.
7. During the first session, create the agenda for the program. Ensure that everyone is able to participate in the development of this plan.
8. Check in with participants halfway through the program to ensure that they are satisfied with the way the program is running. At this time, you may also want to ask if they have any additional topics that they want to cover during the group.

9. When planning the first introductory activities, create opportunities for participants to connect with a small group of people first (2-3) before connecting with the larger group.
10. Provide opportunities during each session for participants to get out of their seats.
11. Remember that laughter is important.
12. Before each group, post the session's agenda on the wall so that parents know what to expect during the session. Give parents a chance to add to the agenda if they want to.
13. Provide breaks as well as opening and closing activities. All of these increase feelings of closeness in a group, enhance relationships, and allow participants to be fully present.
14. Always talk slowly and clearly.

“Your most important session is the very first one. You need to be organized. You need to be in the room quite a bit ahead of time; a half hour or an hour ahead. Set the room up. Get yourself relaxed and go over what you have to do, because when people come, you want to give them your total attention. It's like they're coming to your home, so you want to make them feel welcome. If they feel good and have some fun, they will come back.”

Encouraging Participation

When parents are actively engaged and involved in the program, they are able to retain what they've learned. As a facilitator, it is important that you learn to balance the providing of information while encouraging discussion. Remember that messages from peers are often better received and have more impact than those delivered by a professional.

Discussions during the program should be parent driven. You may still need to bring the conversation back on track with the session's agenda, but you also need to provide parents with the opportunity to share and support one another. This way, participants will have opportunities to practice skills that will increase their parenting skills, e.g., negotiation, problem solving, listening skills, communication skills, and learning new perspectives.

When you are asking parents to respond or start a discussion, you don't have to go around in a circle. Ask if anyone would like to start. If no one starts, you can begin with an example or prompt with a question. It is alright if participants choose not to answer a question. By being in the room, they are actively learning, regardless of whether they are verbally participating.

Remember that all parents are unique. They have their own experiences and knowledge. Parent groups also have their unique dynamics and personalities that often change during the course of the program. Materials and activities from a variety of resources can be adapted to suit the unique circumstances of each group.

“The key to facilitation is not to direct the process, but to support the group, as they direct themselves. When I took my training, we were allowed to struggle and question. I tend to tell people by the second day or so that if they're feeling a bit grumpy, that's normal. They're feeling comfortable enough that it's a safe environment to tackle some difficult things. I let them know that's normal, but that we can all use a chocolate break!”

Laying the Ground Rules

Laying the ground rules establishes what is acceptable and what is not within the group. They are a useful tool when a difficult situation occurs or when you need to stay on track. As a facilitator, you can enlist the help of the parent group to determine the ground rules for respect and courtesy. Remember, you are modeling the kind of behaviour and attitudes you want to bring out in the parents who will, in turn, model that for their children. Encourage discussion in the group about issues such as confidentiality and turn taking. For instance, what does the group think is the best way to handle someone who may dominate discussions?

Once you have begun a group, it is important not to allow participants to join after the second session. The first two sessions are very important as they help to establish relationships, set ground rules and increase comfort levels and a sense of belonging. It can be difficult for both the new participants and the existing group members when a new member joins the group after the first two sessions. Be sure to keep a waiting list for the next group that you want to offer and this way you do not have to lose the participant who cannot join the current group.

“The training manual does an excellent job on how to help the group set up guidelines. I review the guidelines at the beginning of each session until the group has really come together and then I just post them. I’m not likely to point out a rule and say, ‘you guys said you’d do it this way’. Instead I discuss the feeling of the group. ‘I’m sensing a high level of emotion in the group around this issue. How do you guys want to handle this? Should we have a look at our guidelines?’”

Personal Disclosure

It is always difficult to know when to personally disclose information. Always ask, why am I disclosing? You may be disclosing to help discussion begin or continue. Some disclosure can help participants feel connected to you. For example, you might disclose how many children you have or mention a particular challenge you faced when raising your children. Make sure that your disclosures will not make you or any of the participants feel uncomfortable.

As a facilitator, it is important that you receive support. If you have been upset or triggered by a topic or situation in the group, make sure that you talk to your supervisor or colleagues. You may want to speak to a friend or support person (e.g., counsellor) if personal issues arise while facilitating a group.

“As a facilitator, it is a fine line between encouraging participation and stealing the limelight. If I want to stress a point, I will share an example from my own life, but I would rather have a parent share. If I start a warm-up activity and I want to set the mood for what will be shared, I may give an example, but for the rest, it comes down to making parents feel comfortable enough to share.”

Difficult Personalities

One of the joys of group work is that everyone in the group is unique. This is also one of the biggest challenges. Before you start a program, take time to think about how different personalities will interact. Do you have a participant that might dominate conversation? How do the different personalities make you feel and react? It is important to recognize personal reactions so that you can remain professional.

It is equally important to think about your personal biases, values, and prejudices. We are all judgemental. This is basic human nature. However, when we recognize our triggers, we can learn to separate personal feelings and professional actions.

Breaking Confidentiality

Remember that there are three reasons why you may need to break confidentiality:

1. If child abuse is disclosed.
2. If a person is going to harm themselves.
3. If a person is going to harm someone else.

It is very important to explain to the group during the first session that these are the circumstances under which you would have to break confidentiality and report the situation. If you have to breach confidentiality and file a report, your agency will have a policy to assist you. Breaking confidentiality is not easy. On one hand, you may feel that you are protecting people and on the other hand, you may also feel like you are betraying them. It is important that you inform the person that you will be breaking confidentiality. Be prepared that your need to report existing or potential harm to oneself or others may illicit strong emotions from the person.

Participants Reacting Strongly to an Activity or Topic

Sometimes a topic that is being discussed or an activity may illicit strong emotion in participants.

1. Accept the parent's feelings and allow some time for appropriate expression.
2. Help the parent identify the feelings.
3. Rely on the group to provide support. However, gently limit the length of time used. Remember that Nobody's Perfect is not a therapy group.
4. Be prepared to offer suggestions of services available in your community where the parents can seek additional support.

“The whole program is about parenting. So as a facilitator, if you sometimes feel that the group is getting too far down the road toward counselling and discussing how deeply their own inner child has been hurt, then you can always gently bring it back to parenting. You may say ‘so if you feel like that, because of what happened to you, can we think of how a child must feel in certain situations and what kind of resources are out there and what we can do as parents?’”

Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC): What? So what? Now what?

Simply put, ELC is about learning from experience. It is very difficult to learn from experience and this learning may be used at a later time. The goal of using the ELC is to assist individuals to learn from experience so that they can learn both now and in future situations. The ELC is a process of asking questions so the person can find the answer within himself or herself. Sometimes many ideas, issues, pressures and problems get in the way and obscure the answer. As a facilitator, your role is to ask questions to help a parent dig past whatever is covering the answer.

The key questions in the ELC are “**What? So what? Now what?**” What is the situation? What did you learn from it? What happened? Now that you’ve analyzed it, what are you going to do about it? This approach often works for people because it is a gentle process and not intimidating.

“It’s a very exciting process and I’ve seen [the moment] when the realization comes and a parent’s eyes open wide. Think about when you’ve talked over an issue or a problem with a good friend. You have this great conversation and at the end, you’re filled with this comforting, reassuring feeling and you say, ‘now I understand!’ In the same way, a facilitator will help the parent explore their unique situation.”

“It is important to learn to be comfortable with silence. For some people, speaking in front of others is a new experience and can be very intimidating. Try to remember that, just by being in the room, people are participating and taking in information. Allow participants to open up on their own time. Allowing time for silence also gives participants time to process a question or an issue.”

True Self Quiz

Purpose: This quiz is a fun way to get people laughing about the discovery of their “true self.” It helps liven up discussion. People love to do quizzes about themselves. You can find a lot of these on the Internet. The questions at the end guide parents through the Experiential Learning Cycle.

Materials: A sheet of paper and a pencil for each person.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Give each participant a piece of paper and a pencil. Alternatively, you can hand out papers that already have the animals listed below written out. This is a great idea if you have a group of parents and do not know their literacy levels. Make sure that whenever you give out written information, you still go through that information step by step with the group.

1. Write down the following five animals on a flipchart and ask the parents to write them on their piece of paper. Ask them to put a number beside each animal according to their preference with number one being their most favourite and number five being their least.
 - Cow
 - Tiger
 - Sheep
 - Horse
 - Monkey
2. Write down these words and ask the group to write one description word for each of them.
 - Dog
 - Cat
 - Rat
 - Coffee
 - Ocean
3. Write the following colours on the board and ask the group to think of somebody that reminds them of that colour. Don't repeat answers; name only one person for each colour.
 - Yellow
 - Orange
 - Red
 - White
 - Green

When everyone has finished, read out the associations. Go back to the list already posted to write the meanings on the board. Parents will likely want to write the answers on their papers.

1. The answers to the first part define life priorities:
 - Cow means career
 - Tiger means pride
 - Sheep means love
 - Horse means family
 - Monkey means money

2. The answers to part two describe others' personalities and your own views.
 - The description of Dog implies own personality
 - The description of Cat implies partner's personality
 - The description of Rat implies enemy's personality
 - The description of Coffee is how sex is interpreted
 - The description of Ocean implies own life

3. The answers to part three describe people in one's life.
 - Yellow = somebody who will never forget them
 - Orange = someone they consider as a real friend
 - Red = someone they really love
 - White = their soul mate
 - Green = a person they will remember for the rest of their life

Parents should share their answers. There is usually a lot of laughter and sometimes some thoughtful 'a ha!' moments as they share their answers. Then have a discussion as follows.

What? Invite parents to share what they noticed about this activity? What did they see, hear, sense? How was the chatter in the room at the beginning? At the end? What were people doing when the activity started? How were people sitting in their chairs? How did everyone look at the end of the activity?

So what? Has anyone done something like this before? When was the last time you felt this way? Laughed this hard? Thought of this person?

Now what? Did this experience teach you anything about yourself? About having fun? Do you believe any of it to be true to yourself or do you think it is just for fun?

The Pig Profile

Purpose: This is a good warm up exercise to help people loosen up and get to know each other. The questions at the end guide parents through the Experiential Learning Cycle.

Materials: A sheet of paper for each person. Markers.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Ask each person to draw a pig, however they like. They should not look at anyone else's drawing until they are done their own. Give people a few minutes and then explain that the pig serves as a useful test of their personality traits, so let's examine who we really are:

If the pig is drawn:

Toward the top of the paper, you are positive and optimistic.

Toward the middle, you are a realist.

Toward the bottom, you are pessimistic, and have a tendency to behave negatively.

Facing left, you believe in tradition, are friendly, and remember dates like birthdays.

Facing right, you are innovative and active, but don't have a strong sense of family, nor do you remember dates.

Looking at you, you are direct and enjoy playing devil's advocate.

With many details, you are analytical, cautious, and distrustful.

With few details, you are emotional, naïve, care little for details and are a risk-taker.

With fewer than four legs showing, you are insecure or are living through a period of major change.

With four legs showing, you are secure, stubborn, and stick to your ideals.

The size of the ears indicates how good a listener you are. The bigger the better.

The length of the tail indicates the quality of your sex life. Again, more is better!

Parents should share their answers. Then have a discussion as follows.

What? Invite parents to share what they noticed about this activity? What did they see, hear, sense? How was the chatter in the room at the beginning? At the end? What were people doing when the activity started? How did everyone look at the end of the activity?

So what? Has anyone done something like this before? When was the last time you felt this way? Laughed this hard? Thought of these characteristics in yourself?

Now what? Did this experience teach you anything about yourself? About having fun? Do you believe any of it to be true to yourself or do you think it is just for fun?

Ball Toss Name Game

Purpose: To help parents learn each other's names and learn to have fun with their children.

Materials: Several small balls. A rubber chicken (or other surprise at the end).

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Have parents sit or stand in a circle. As you start the ball toss, say the name of the person that you are tossing to. This person will then say the name of the person she received the ball from and the name of the person she will toss it to. For the first time around, go slowly. Go through this sequence twice with one ball. The second time it will follow the same sequence. Next add another ball and move through it faster. Continue to add balls until you have run out. At the end, throw the rubber chicken or other object that will make participants laugh.

Tip for Parents

"Parents can do an adaptation of the ball toss with their six month old, sitting on the floor. You can roll the ball to the child and say their name. Children love to hear their name over and over again."

Challenges and Joys

Purpose: As part of the introduction at the start of the first session, this encourages parents to share a little bit about their parenting experience. This also helps parents to connect with one another, as they share their parenting challenges and joys with other parents. This is one way that you can foster a feeling of belonging. Part of being human is finding comfort in being with others who have the same experiences.

Materials: Flipchart paper. Markers.

Time: Approximately 5 - 10 minutes.

Procedure: Ask parents to write one challenge and one joy on the flipchart related to their experience parenting and share it with the group. If parents are not able to write on the flipchart, you can have them share their challenge and joy and write them on the flip chart yourself.

Variation: Ask each participant to draw stick people pictures with names, ages of children. Have them share one joy and one frustration of being a parent.

Flower Power

Purpose: This warm up can be done in the first session to help participants get to know each other and get used to recording their thoughts and feelings on paper. This activity can be useful at any point during the program. It is especially good in the first group because it offers a non-threatening way to get to know one another.

Materials: Sheets of paper (one for each parent); Markers.

Time: Approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

Procedure: Give each participant a sheet of paper and a marker. Ask them to draw a large flower with six large petals, each big enough to write on.

In each of the petals, have them write their responses to the following:

1. Name three things you like.
2. Name three things you don't like.
3. Name someone you admire.
4. Write down where you live now and one other place you have lived.
5. Name something you are proud of.
6. Name something you would like to do.

Variation: During the discussion, in addition to these responses, ask parents to talk about how they decided to make coming to the program a priority? It helps them understand that you respect and appreciate their time and effort to attend the parenting sessions.

Getting Started

Purpose: This activity provides an opportunity for parents to introduce themselves to the large group and allows participants to share their expectations of the program. It helps participants recognize the qualities they bring to the group and worries that may interfere with them staying focused. It also provides the facilitator with information to help plan ahead.

Materials: Sticky notes, pens, and small envelopes. A flipchart sized paper with an illustration to represent your group (i.e., paper dolls holding hands in a large circle). A small box. Another flipchart paper with "Goals and Expectations" written at the top of the paper.

Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Procedure: After the group has done an activity where they have talked to at least three others and shared some laughter, give each person a stack of blank sticky notes and a pen.

Write these 3 questions on a flipchart:

1. What did you bring to the group?
2. What did you leave behind?
3. What do you hope to get out of this program?

Explain each of these questions in detail and give examples.

Prompting Questions

1. What is a quality in yourself that others will appreciate? What experiences do you have that will help us out as a group of parents? How would you describe your personality as a group member?
2. What is it that you had to leave behind that will make it hard for you to focus here together? What worries do you have?
3. What did you come here to learn? What did you come here to experience?

When the questions are completed, have people come forward one at a time and introduce themselves and answer question #1, placing those sticky notes on the flipchart with the illustration of "the Group". Have them put their worries (#2 sticky notes) in an envelope with their name on it and place it in the box. They can share their worries out loud if they want or they can just put them in the box. They should bring their sticky notes for #3 up to the other flipchart paper and put them under "goals and expectations". Explain that this is how you will plan for their needs throughout the program and that at the end you will re-visit all of these sticky notes to make sure their expectations were met.

Puzzle Pieces

Purpose: An activity that helps parents get to know more about one another and helps ease parents into speaking aloud in the group.

Materials: None needed, though some parents may wish to jot notes down as they learn about their partner so they can refer to them during the introduction.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Pair people off and ask each partner to find out this information about the other.

Give enough time for everyone to gather this information (it doesn't have to include extensive details). Examples of questions they can ask their partner are listed below.

1. Name
2. Where are you from?
3. If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
4. What is your favourite free time activity?
5. What is your job?
6. Do you have any children?

Once everyone has collected the information, then call on each pair to introduce their partner to the group.

Similarities and Differences

Purpose: This is a good activity to get people comfortable with one another, gives them some small group practice and helps everyone get to know each other.

Materials: Flipchart paper. Markers.

Time: Approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

Procedure: Break up the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4.

Each group makes a circle in the centre of their flipchart paper. Inside of the circle, group members list all the similarities that they have with one another. For example, we are women. We have brown eyes.

In the corners of the flipchart, they write their names and something unique about themselves. For example, I am Italian. I live in the North. I am a single parent.

Make sure you give people enough time in their smaller groups to come up with their similarities and differences.

Ask one person to share the similarities from their group. Allow the group to decide how they want to share their unique qualities. They can either have the same person talk or they can each speak.

Orange, Red, Green

Purpose: This is a good exercise at the first session to help parents get to know each other but works well at any point.

Materials: Three colours of M & Ms or Smarties. A bowl.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: After participants share some basic information, ask them to take an M&M or a Smartie from a bowl. Have questions ready according to what colour they selected (make sure you use only 3 colours).

Some suggestions:

Orange = If you could set up a perfect day with your kids, what would you do?

Red = If you had a completely free day, how would you spend it?

Green = What is something that you are proud of?

(From *Creative Training Techniques*, Lakewood Publications)

The Betty Boop Game

Purpose: This is a good activity to follow a heavy topic when the group needs to break the tension.

Materials: None.

Time: 5 minutes.

Procedure: Divide into three smaller groups and give the following instructions.

When Group 1 hears the name "Betty," they stand up and say "Boop Boop de Boop."

Group 2 will listen for the name "Popeye" and they will stand up and say, "Arrr Matey!"

Group 3 will listen for the word "wolf" and they will stand up and say "Ooowwooooo!"

Now read the following story:

Once upon a time, there was a charming young lady named Betty who was loved by a sailor named Popeye. Betty lived near a great forest in which there roamed a great big wolf. One day, Betty decided to visit her grandmother who lived in the heart of the forest. Popeye urged Betty not to go into the forest where the wolf lived, but Betty would not listen to Popeye. "I'm not afraid of the big bad wolf," said Betty as she walked into the forest. When she saw the beady eyes of the wolf gleaming at her from behind the trees, she was sorry Popeye was not with her. The wolf followed Betty, getting closer and closer, but he did not know that the powerful Popeye was right behind him. Just as the wolf was about to spring upon Betty, Popeye felled him with his trusty club and saved Betty's life. "Popeye, my hero! You killed the wolf and you saved my life!" exclaimed Betty. Then she threw herself into Popeye's arms. Thus ends the story of Popeye, Betty and the Big Bad Wolf.

(From Jean Buchanan, *Tupperware Games Book*)

Other Warm-Up Activities

- Participants take 3 objects from their purses or pockets and place them in order of importance. Have participants share their reasons with the large group.
- Select a number of pennies from different years. Have each participant take one penny. Once each participant has a penny, each participant shares something that happened in their lives in that particular year.
- Think of one person in your life that has made a strong influence in your life. Have participants share with the group why they chose that person.
- Word search: Write key words or phrases on slips of paper. Cut in half. Each person in the group takes one half and then tries to find the person with the other half of the word or phrase.
- Sketch the perfect day. First person draws one thing on a flipchart paper they think about when asked, "What would your perfect day look like?" Each participant takes a turn and adds one thing to the picture.
- Each person shares one thing nobody knows about them; something they normally wouldn't tell someone, like "I like reading and writing poetry."
- Tandem talking: Pair everyone up. Without preparation and in turn, each pair watches each other's lips and tries to say the same things at the same time. Other pairs watching can ask questions to get them going.
- In groups of 3 or 4, participants face each other with one hand behind their backs and the other in a fist in the middle. At the count of three, without talking, fling out 0 to 5 fingers. The objective is to have the combined fingers add up to a certain total. The facilitator will call out new totals.
- Have one person in the group start a scary ghost story and pause at an exciting point. By taking turns, the next person will continue the story, again pausing at a scary spot so the next person can take up the story. Go until everyone has a turn with the last person supplying the ending.
- Ask people to, in turn, tell something about themselves; two are truths and one is a lie. A parent might say, "I have 3 children. I have a trap line. I take ballet lessons." The others in the group guess which one is the lie.

“An Energizer is a way to perk people up. Maybe you break for coffee halfway and when you regroup, you do an Energizer. I choose them carefully so they lead into the next topic or activity. You want to maintain a flow especially if your session is very full.”

Energizers

- *Musical cushions* is just like *Musical chairs*, except the participants sit on their chairs and pass a cushion to the next person who then sits on it, then passes it on. Whoever is sitting on the cushion when the music stops is out. Keep going until someone “wins” the game.
- For *Crayon tag*, work in groups of three or four. Each group needs a flipchart size paper and a crayon or marker. Each person chooses a corner for his or her land and draws a line to create a space. This is their “home free” space. Someone is “it.” Keeping the marker on the paper, start racing around the paper and the others try to follow their path. Your land is your only home free space. When the “it” person touches you, you become “it” and must chase the others until you catch someone. Keep playing until you’ve created a lovely abstract drawing, have had at least one good laugh or until you’ve destroyed your paper!
- *I’m going on a trip* is a game that is fun and interactive. One person starts by saying, “I’m going on a trip...and I’m taking...” They add an item like, for example, “my toothbrush.” The next person says, “I’m going on a trip and I’m taking my toothbrush and...” They add something. Each person repeats what has been said and then they add their own item.
- *Lost in translation (AKA telephone)*. Have parents sit in a circle. Someone begins by thinking of a phrase or sentence and whispers it in the ear of the person next to them. That person whispers what they hear; they in turn whisper it to the next. When it comes around to the first person, he or she says what has come back and also what the original was. Sometimes the two have no relation to each other at all!
- *Group knot* reminds parents we are all connected and even if those connections are sometimes hard to figure out and tangled by our everyday lives, with care we can still discover where those connections lead. In a large group, everyone puts their hands into the centre. Each person grabs the hand of two different people; continue until everyone is holding hands. Untangle the knot and it will create one circle, two separate circles or two interlinked circles. Allow enough time to untangle and reveal the circles.

“The parent group will get more comfortable with each other over time. For people just getting to know each other, use energizers and activities with less body contact so there is less exposure and risk. As people get more acquainted, build opportunities for trust and disclosure. Once a group is familiar and comfortable, create opportunities for closer contact, feedback, and reassurance after heavy discussions.”

“Small group work is important as it allows people to discuss topics in more depth, get to know each other in a smaller intimate setting, and is more practical for some learning activities.”

Activities for Creating Small Groups

- Hand out pieces of paper with animal sounds written on them. Instruct participants to find their small groups by making the sound indicated on their paper.
- Ask participants to pair up with someone who is wearing similar or somewhat similar shoes.
- Group people by their favourite type of music (rap, rock, country, hip-hop) or by favourite recording stars (warning, this may produce a lot of groaning!)
- Group people by their favourite type of television program (reality TV, soap opera, sit com), or the actual name of their favourite program.
- Hand out pieces of paper with the name of commonly associated pairs written on them and ask participants to find their partner. Suggestions: day/night, sun/moon, wind/rain.
- Glue a number of magazine photos to cardboard. Cut into unusual shapes like a jigsaw puzzle. The number of pieces you use will depend on how many people there are and the number you'd like in the smaller groups. Distribute the pieces to participants and ask them to find their small groups by fitting the puzzle pieces together.

“When you ask participants to break into small groups, they will naturally gravitate to the same group each time they are asked to break into small groups. It is useful to have participants meet with different people each time they break into small groups.”

“Using the Nobody's Perfect books are a great way to encourage parents to read to their children. They're also great tools if you're working one-on-one. You can send a book home so it can be shared with other family members.”

Introducing the Nobody's Perfect Books

Purpose: This warm-up leads into all the Nobody's Perfect books and the additional materials including phone sticker, growth chart, pamphlets, invitations, developmental chart, safe sorry game and poster. The parents will become familiar with the content of the books. They will also experience the adult learning principle that indicates that you will retain 90% of what you teach. The participants will experience co-facilitation as they deliver their one-minute presentation. This activity will also encourage imagination and creativity.

Materials: You will need the Nobody's Perfect Parent books and the handout with instructions on it. Make other materials available as recommended, such as poster papers, flipchart papers, and markers.

Time: This activity takes about 45 minutes (1/2 hour to prepare and 15 minutes for all the presentations and time to answer questions).

Procedure: The facilitator should prepare a list of the names of the different books ahead of time and put them on a whiteboard. Put parents into pairs to create a one-minute advertisement for the book they have selected. Each pair then quickly decides which book to explore and facilitator puts their names up beside the book. Facilitator explains to the group that the pairs should try to convince others that their book is the #1 bestseller right now. This helps to create an atmosphere of fun and enthusiasm about the assignment.

Parents go through the book of their choice, taking note of the content, structure and their five senses as they explore the book. Parents decide what the key points are that are relevant for others to know or whatever resonates for them. Parent pairs create an ad to highlight these points to others; then they present their ad to the large group and answer any questions. The ads can be radio or TV interview, poster presentation, poem or song, whatever creative idea they have but they have only one or two minutes to present back to the group.

Nobody's Perfect Jeopardy

Purpose: This is a fun way to help parents begin to explore the books.

Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Materials: Ahead of time, get 5 different colours of sticky notes, 6 packages of each colour. Stick them on the wall or blackboard or white board with the same colour running in columns downward. On the top piece, write a book title and under the title, on each of the matching stick notes write a dollar value from 100 to 500. It should look like this:

Body	Mind	Parents	Behaviour	Feelings
100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500

Put one sticky of any colour on the bottom, in the centre, that says "Final Jeopardy"

Procedure: Parents are grouped into 3 teams and told that if they think they know the answer, they should say, "buzz," "beep," or "honk." There is no money taken away for wrong answers. You can flip a coin or roll dice to see who goes first. The team that answers the question correctly gets to choose the next category and dollar value.

An example of the process is:

The Beeps: "We chose **Body** for \$100."

Facilitator: "These tiny little bugs live in your hair."

The Honks 'honk' first: "What are lice."

Facilitator: "Correct, and you will find information on head lice on page ____." *Give them the sticky off the wall for that question (100). Now the Honks get to choose the category and dollar value (because they got the last answer correct).*

Honks: "Let's stay with Body for \$500." And the game continues along.

Play until all the questions are gone or when parents have had a chance to familiarize themselves with the books. Have them add up all their sticky notes (dollars) and announce how much they have for a total. The team with the highest score wins, OR you can have a *Final Jeopardy*.

Final Jeopardy: Each team secretly writes down their wager. The final Jeopardy question is then asked and they write down their answers. The team with the lowest amount of money announces its answer and its wager. The facilitator announces if they are right or wrong and gives them their total. This process continues with the second lowest team and finally the team with the most money. You may award prizes.

The E exercise

There are many different points of view in any situation. The way we see something may not be what others see or interpret.

Purpose: The “E” exercise demonstrates that in order to understand others’ points of view; we must stand in their shoes and see what they see.

Materials: Large sheet of paper with an E written on it.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Make a letter “E” on any sheet of paper, large enough for everyone to read.

- To start the exercise, place the letter “E” on the floor
- Ask for four volunteers to stand at each side.
- Ask them to tell the group what they see from their point of view (e.g. “M”, “E”, “W”, “3”).
- Ask the volunteers to convince each other that their point of view is the correct one.
- Ask the volunteers what is the best way to truly understand what the different points of view are.

Think of a time when you had a disagreement with another person (i.e. child, teen, parents, partner, friends, etc.).

- How did you feel?
- How did you see the situation?
- Now, from this exercise, can you see it differently?

Brain Activity

"I find that when I show parents the importance of brain development and how they can make a positive impact on their child's brain development, they become interested and participate more. When parents understand the mind, they are able to understand behaviour better."

Purpose: This is a visual exercise that highlights the importance of interacting with children and how stimulating their senses can make a big difference in their brain development.

Time: Approximately 20 - 30 minutes.

Materials: 5 sheets of paper with Smell, Taste, Touch, Hearing, Sight written on each. 2 large balls of yarn.

Procedure: First explain how 95% of the brain's growth occurs in the first three years of life. Brain growth occurs when the brain and its connections are used. Both the size of our brain, the way that each part functions and the connections between all of the different parts, and our body, impact the way children think, feel, behave, and learn throughout their lives.

Put the papers, one for each of the 5 senses, on the floor in a circle to symbolize the brain. Ask for volunteers to stand around the circle (1 or 2 at each sense). Read a story about a child that is cared for and stimulated. Ask the volunteers to hold a ball of yarn. Every time a sense is mentioned, such as, *'baby Gary smelled the orange his mom peeled for him,'* the volunteers throw the ball of yarn to the sense of smell person, while still holding onto the string of yarn. When the next sense is mentioned, that person still holds onto the yarn but throws the ball of yarn to the next sense person. The idea is to show that in about 15 minutes of a child's life a web of interactions takes place. If one thing is done over and over, the pathway is made even stronger. When the story is finished volunteers place the yarn down on the floor. It should look like a huge web going to every sense.

Next, another ball of yarn of a different colour is used. Read the second story, for example, "baby Sophia in an orphanage. Baby Sophia is changed and given a bottle in her crib and then left for three hours." Again, the volunteers toss the ball when they hear a sense mentioned. The different coloured yarn web shows the limited interaction between senses. When the story is over, that small yarn web is placed over the first web to compare.

Discuss how important we are as parents and caregivers and how our nurturing and interacting through play, using all the senses, can increase the brain capacity of our children. Discuss how alcohol and drugs can prevent the connections in brain activity and can disrupt the stimulation of the senses. Ask the parents which brain they would like to see all children have?

Developmental Job Posters *(adapted from Active Parenting 1234 by Michael Popkin.)*

Purpose: To increase parent's knowledge of the developmental stages of children (1 – 4 years). Parents will learn that certain behaviour is normal and is actually their job at that age. Parents give examples of the behaviour and make a plan for how they can help their child(ren) do their 'job.'

Materials: The four posters (on the following four pages), paper and pens.

Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Procedure: Facilitator presents using the posters. For example: "Part of our frustration as parents comes from not understanding child development and what is normal for each age and stage. Sometimes when we see a child being 'bad' what we are really seeing is a child trying to achieve an age appropriate task in the only way they know how. Once we understand the tasks each child *needs* to achieve at each step of their development, we can provide them with positive opportunities to accomplish it. When we do this, the child becomes more cooperative about other things. For example, a two-year-old has a job. The job is to be the boss! S/he needs to feel some kind of power in her/his life. They achieve power when we give them choices. The choices we give have to be acceptable to us. Let them choose between the red shirt and the blue shirt or, cereal or toast, or now or in five minutes?"

Show the posters. After each poster is reviewed, ask parents if they have an Explorer, Boss, Pal, or Adventurer. Remember to use the titles instead of specific ages because children develop at their own pace but they all have to go through the stage of exploring in order to get to the next stage and to eventually grow into adults. Have parents share examples of how their child fits into one of these. Explain that now the challenge to the parents is to create safe environments where their child can explore, be a boss, pal or adventurer. For example, one mother made a special drawer in her kitchen for her plastic bowls, spoons, and cups. That was the only drawer in the kitchen her "Explorer" was allowed to explore. All the others were locked with child safe locks.

Finally, give each parent paper and a pen and ask them to write down:

- the name of their child(ren) and a behaviour that challenges them as a parent.
- the job that the child may be trying to do when they behave that way.
- a plan for how the parent may create a way for the child to do the job so that they can avoid the challenging behaviour.

"An example I share about giving choices is when my son was a toddler. Once a day or so, he would march around the room drumming and his older sisters, my husband and I would march along behind him. Whenever he would stop, we would all stop. He would have the biggest grin on his face, because he could make all of us do what he was doing. That is giving a kid power! Fortunately, his attention span was about three minutes so we could all interrupt our day for a march and then carry on with our busy lives."

Age 1

THE EXPLORER



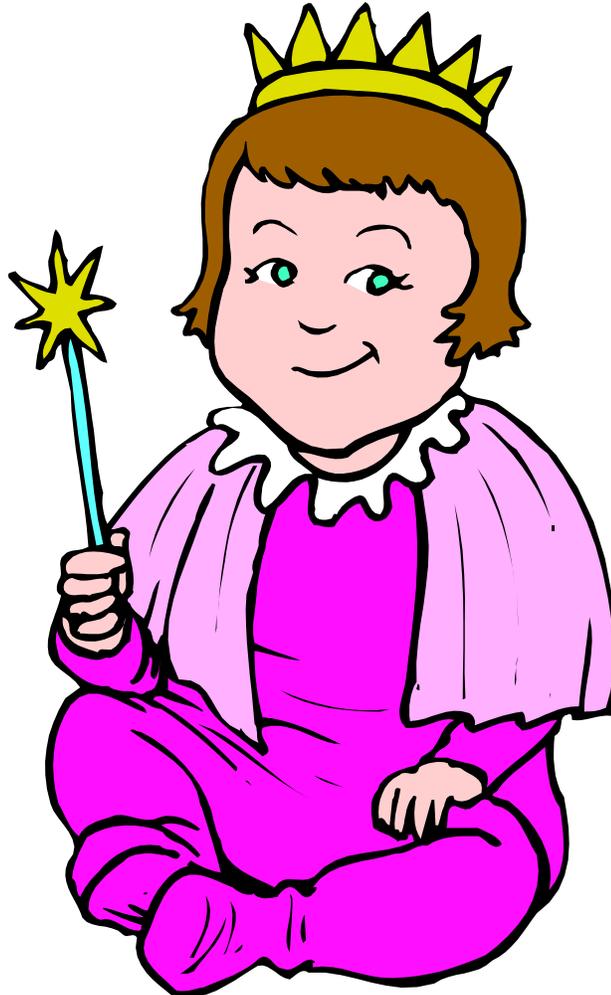
JOB: To get to know the world by seeing,
touching, smelling, and tasting everything!

SLOGAN: Check It Out!

PARENT'S JOB: To build on the child's natural
curiosity and intelligence by providing safe
places to explore.

Age 2

THE BOSS



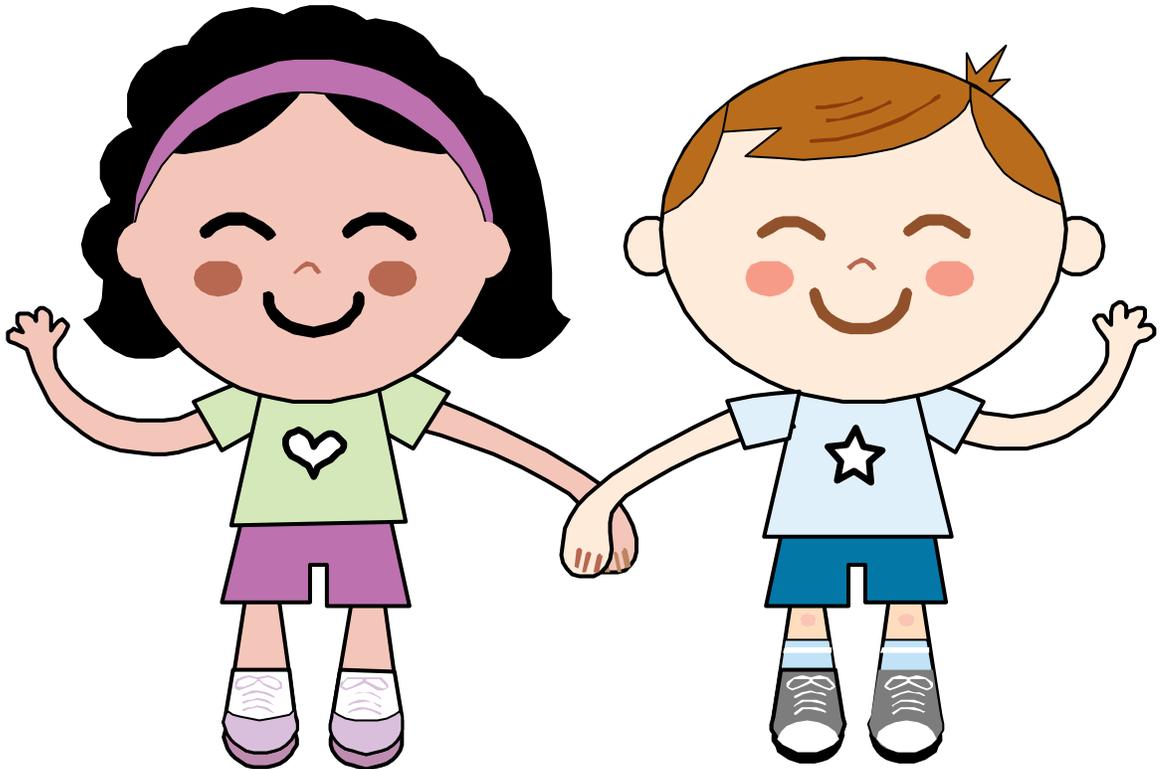
JOB: To test the limits of his/her abilities to affect the world.

SLOGAN: I want what I want when I want it!

PARENT'S JOB: To set limits firmly and calmly while allowing the child freedom within those limits.

Age 3

THE PAL



JOB: To learn how to be with others.

SLOGAN: You've got a friend!

PARENT'S JOB: To develop routines and provide opportunities for playing with others.

Age 4

THE ADVENTURER



JOB: To challenge him/herself and others.

SLOGAN: To boldly go where I have never gone before!

PARENT'S JOB: To build on a child's strengths while continuing to teach why some behaviours are unsafe.

Children See, Children Do

Purpose: This video and discussion helps parents to recognize that their behaviour is much more powerful than their words in influencing their children's decisions.

Materials: Computer, data projector, www.YouTube.com/watch?v=SJF50kwwRJE

Time: Approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

Procedure: Watch the YouTube video. Ask participants to look at the children's faces while they watch.

In the large group or in small groups, share what they observed. Were the experiences realistic? How did it affect you?

Ask parents if any of it reminds them of similar situations they have seen or experienced?

If children were present, what was their reaction?

Discuss the best ways to teach children about smoking, drinking, and how to treat others.

Ask the parents how can this experience be useful to you? What do you think you will do in the future?

“Children are remarkably perceptive. Their eyes ever observe, their ears ever listen, and their minds ever process the messages they absorb. If they see us patiently providing a happy home atmosphere for family members, they will imitate that attitude for the rest of their lives. The wise parent realizes that every day the building blocks are being laid for the child's future. Encourage parents to be wise builders and role models.”

“There are people who still believe in spanking. Nobody's Perfect does not support spanking. As a facilitator, you need to make sure that parents are not feeling judged, but also help them to find another way to discipline. Ask parents how they might discipline without spanking? Ask parents how they were disciplined as a child and how did it make them feel? Help them explore possible alternatives.”

Agree/Disagree Game

Purpose: This activity gets people up and moving while helping them to think about critical parenting issues. They get practice in explaining their thoughts and reasons for their actions. They also develop skills in listening to other people's beliefs and perspectives.

Materials: Masking tape.

Time: 10 - 15 minutes (depending on amount of questions and discussion).

Procedure: Draw a line on the floor with masking tape. Line needs to be a substantial length. Have the parents stand on the line side by side. If the parents agree with the statement, they step forward (Agree). If the parents disagree with the statement, they step backward (Disagree). The facilitator reads the statement aloud and the parents move to the Agree or Disagree side. Discuss reasons for parents' choices.

Here are some statements that might be used:

- Sometimes it's hard to know what to do about children's behaviour.
- Help children learn good behaviour by praising them. Praise and attention help children feel good about themselves and results in good behaviour.
- It takes time and practice for children to learn how to behave. No one gets it right the first time.
- Children copy what you do.
- It is better to childproof than to keep saying “No!”
- Children can only follow rules they understand.
- No matter how well you teach them to behave, all children act up sometimes.
- Spanking may seem to get you some peace, but in the long run, it will cause you more trouble. It can make children feel unsafe or even traumatized, and can also teach them to act out by hitting.

Choose statements that are relevant to the age of children of your parent group. Discuss people's feelings after each statement. For example, “Did you notice how for some things, people all agreed and for other things, people would split up with different opinions?”

“As adults we often neglect the needs of our bodies. It is so important to nourish our bodies with healthy foods, to enjoy regular physical activity and to get plenty of sleep. As parents we need to role model a healthy lifestyle for our children.”

Body Parts

Purpose: This activity, which can also be connected to the Safety Book, encourages parents in an active, fun way to talk about the body, healthy living, safety issues and responses to illness or injury.

Materials: Flipchart paper. Markers.

Time: Approximately 15 minutes.

Procedure: Divide group into 2s or 3s.

- On flipcharts: Group 1 – draw the head
- Group 2 – draw the body
- Group 3 – draw legs and feet
- Group 4 – arms

List positive things for each body part and share with group.

What can we do as parents to help our children develop healthy habits?

List injuries/illnesses you or someone you know experienced in that body part.

What did you or your parents do for it?

My Body

Purpose: This is an action song sung to the tune of *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean* and works well as an energizer when working on the Body book.

Materials: Song sheets with the lyrics so everyone can follow along.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Participants begin by standing in front of their chairs. As soon as they sing a word that starts with a "B," they sit down. At the next "B" word, they stand up, and so on. You can substitute movements by raising your arms (depending on parents' abilities). Create your own motions.

My Body Song

My Body lies over the sofa
My Body gets too much TV
My Body is soft as the sofa
Oh, bring back my Body to me.

Bring back
Bring back
Oh, bring back my Body to me,
To me!

Bring back
Bring back
Oh, bring back my Body to me!

My Body is off of the sofa.
My Body is active and free!
My Body has turned off the TV
I am active and that is the key!

I brought back
I brought back
I brought back my body to me!

I brought back
I brought back
I brought back my body to me!

Body Pictionary

Purpose: This is a good visual and physical activity that gets parents moving while they're learning about various illnesses or injuries, how to prevent them and what to do if a child or family member is sick or hurt.

Materials: Small cards (recipe cards) with names of illnesses or injuries written, one illness or injury per card. Paper and a pencil for each parent.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Give each person a card (or they can pull one out of a bowl).

Have each parent draw what is named on the card.

In turn, each parent holds up their drawing and the rest of the group is to guess.

Then discuss the illness or injury, how to prevent it and how to treat it.

Childhood Illness Charades

Purpose: This is a good game as a warm up to introduce the Body book or a good activity any time because people are always talking about illnesses. It gives them a good idea of what they can find in the Body book.

Materials: Paper/recipe cards prepared ahead of time. A hat or draw box.

Time: Approximately 15 minutes.

Procedure: Make up little slips of paper that describe a childhood illness. Each person reaches into the hat and pulls out a slip of paper. They have to act out the illness on the slip and other participants must guess what the illness is.

Variation: Print up the descriptions of the illnesses and what you would do if your child were sick with it on small cards. On another set of cards, print the names of those illnesses, one per card. Laminate the cards. Put the names up all around the room. Then the parents take the descriptor cards and try to match those to the correct name of the illness.

(From *in Motion*, Saskatoon, undated)

“Encourage parents to practice a ‘fire escape game’ with their children. Make a map so they understand how to get out of their house or the houses of family and friends. Encourage them to practice with their children because children learn through repetition what to do in an emergency.”

Homemade First Aid Kit

Purpose: This activity provides an illustrated discussion of the kinds of items parents should have on hand at home and creates an opportunity to talk about each item. If the facilitator can get items donated, parents who might not otherwise get these supplies will have them to take home.

Materials: Zip lock bags. An array of basic first aid kit supplies.

Time: Approximately 20 - 30 minutes

Procedure: Ask parents to list items to put in a first aid kit at home. Talk about each item. If you are able to get supplies donated, the parents can put them in their own zip lock bags while you talk about each item. If you are not able to get enough items for everyone, collect enough for a demonstration bag. Parents may want to write down what they should include in a home first aid kit.

First Aid Memory Game

Purpose: Parents will identify items commonly used in first aid and will have the opportunity to discuss how clearly they think when under pressure.

Materials: A tray with 12 -15 various articles on it from a first aid kit and covered with a cloth. A paper and pencil for each parent.

Time: Approximately 20 - 30 minutes.

Procedure: Tell parents they will have 1 minute to study the objects on the tray and then 4 minutes to write down everything they remember. Take the cloth off to reveal the items and name each item out loud. Then after 1 minute, cover the objects. The parents write down as much as they can remember. After 4 minutes (or less if everyone is finished writing), take the cloth off again and go over each item one at a time.

Guide a discussion of how it felt to try to remember each item and if the parents recognized any stress in their bodies while doing the exercise.

Ask parents to relate this to an experience they had where they had to deal with something urgent or emergent.

The group brainstorms for 5 minutes ideas that may help to reduce stress in the urgent/emergent situation; i.e., having a first aid kit stocked and ready, having emergency numbers nearby, using the sticker from the NP kit, advising the babysitter where the first aid kit and emergency numbers are, etc. It is important to debrief this experience to deal with the tensions in the participants' bodies/minds.

Product & Household Safety Activity

Purpose: Teach parents to recognize common household items and situations that pose a risk to the health of their child. Teach parents how to keep their children safe when dangerous products and situations exist in the home environment.

Materials: Solutions page; Photocopies of the Pictures. Product page. Scissors.

Time: 1 - 2 hours depending on size of group, amount of items discussed and knowledge of participants.

Procedure:

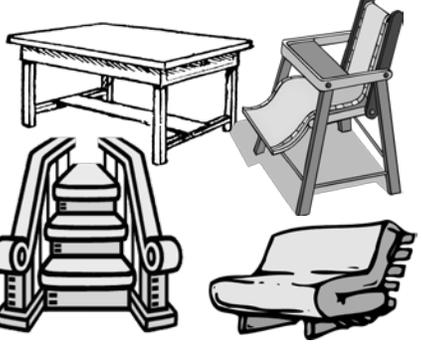
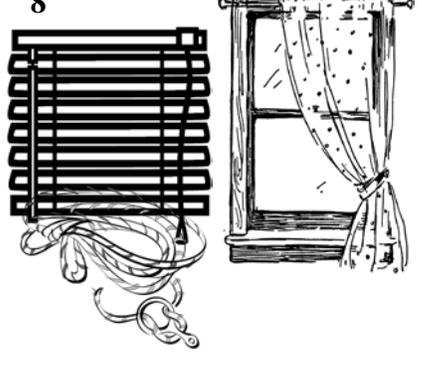
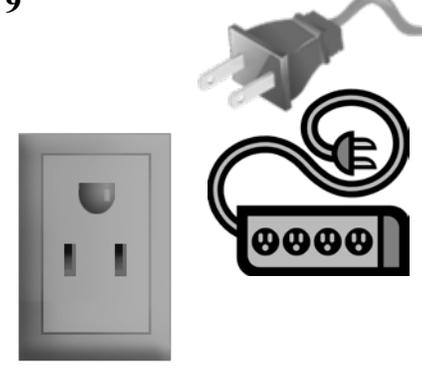
- 1) Cut the squares out of the picture product page. Divide parents into groups of 2-4 and distribute square cut outs to the parents (each group may be given more than one cut out).
- 2) Give the small groups time to identify dangers of the items in the cut out picture squares.
- 3) Invite each group to report, to the larger group, the items in the picture product squares and identify the potential dangers they pose to children.
- 4) Ask the groups to discuss additional dangers they may think of. As a leader, refer to the 'Solutions page' to make sure any and all dangers are discussed.
- 5) Have the parents return to the smaller groups to identify ways in which they could make sure their children are safe around these items or in these situations.
- 6) Invite each group to share with the entire groups how they would keep their children safe.
- 7) Ask the groups to discuss additional ways they may think of to keep their children safe. As a leader, refer to the 'Solutions page' to make sure all possibilities are discussed.
- 8) Allow time for general discussion and feedback from the activity. Invite people to discuss dangers in their home that may not have been in the picture squares but that they have come to think about.

Variations:

If you are able to bring in some of the actual items on the picture product page (an extension cord, a lighter, a kettle, scissors, razor, keys, coins, teddy bear, toy racing cars, etc) you can pass around the object to the group instead of or as well as the relevant picture product square.

Note: This safety activity was created by the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's Child Injury Prevention Coordinator, Joelle Schafer (2010). Please contact the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute for additional information and resources on child safety.

Safety Product Pictures

<p>1</p> 	<p>2</p> 	<p>3</p> 
<p>4</p>  <p>Baby Walker</p>	<p>5</p> 	<p>6</p> 
<p>7</p> 	<p>8</p> 	<p>9</p> 
<p>10</p> 	<p>11</p> 	<p>12</p>  <p>Putting Baby to Sleep</p>

Product & Household Safety Activity - Solutions Page

Product	Hazard	Solutions
<p>Food (Grapes, Hotdogs, Carrots, Nuts)</p> <p><i>Picture 1</i></p>	<p>Food is the main cause of choking for babies. Foods that are hard or are slippery and have a shape that could plug or block the airway are dangerous.</p>	<p>Do not feed children less than three years of age foods such as popcorn, hard candies, gum and nuts. Keep these foods out of reach.</p> <p>Chop into very small pieces, mash or grate foods such as grapes, carrots, hotdogs and others.</p> <p>Watch your children while they eat to make sure they do not choke.</p>
<p>Medication (Tylenol, Multivitamins, and Prescriptions)</p> <p><i>Picture 2</i></p>	<p>A small dose of medication can be very dangerous to children. Medication is the leading cause of poisoning in young children.</p>	<p>Buy medications and vitamins in child-resistant containers. Store all medications in original bottles with original labels. Store all medications in a locked cupboard out of reach of children. Never refer to medicine as candy.</p>
<p>Chemicals (Cleaning Products, Fertilizers, Pesticides)</p> <p><i>Picture 2</i></p>	<p>Poisons are very dangerous to a child even in small amounts. Children will drink these dangerous liquids because they are often brightly coloured and remind them of juice.</p>	<p>Buy chemicals in child-resistant containers when possible. Store all chemicals in original bottle with original labels. Store all medications in a locked cupboard out of reach of children.</p> <p>Teach older children to read the hazard symbols on chemical products.</p>
<p>Make-Up and Cosmetics</p> <p><i>Picture 2</i></p>	<p>Children place items in their mouth as a way of exploring their new world. These items can be harmful if swallowed.</p>	<p>Keep all make-up, hair products, bubble bath, lotion and other related products out of reach of children in a locked cupboard.</p>
<p>Matches/Lighters</p> <p><i>Picture 3</i></p>	<p>Children may burn themselves or start a fire.</p>	<p>Store matches and lighters out of reach of children in a locked cupboard.</p> <p>Do not place a candle within reach of a child. Never leave a candle burning in a room without an adult present.</p> <p>Make sure there are working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home.</p>

<p>Hot Beverages</p> <p><i>Picture 3</i></p>	<p>Babies and small children make sudden movements like reaching out to grab things. If children grasp or bump a cup or bowl with hot liquid they can be severely burned.</p> <p>A child's skin burns 4X more quickly and 4X more deeply than an adult's skin at the same temperature. Water can scald up to 30 minutes after it has boiled.</p>	<p>Never carry a child at the same time that you are carrying a hot beverage.</p> <p>Carry hot beverages, liquids and foods in containers with sealable lids.</p> <p>Consider not using a table cloth as children can pull on the cloth and pull hot items off the table and onto themselves.</p>
<p>Baby Walker</p> <p><i>Picture 4</i></p>	<p>Baby walkers are banned in Canada and should not be bought, sold or used. Baby walkers allow babies to travel faster than they should and allow them to get closer to dangerous areas such as stairs and hot appliances.</p>	<p>Never use, buy or sell a baby walker.</p>
<p>Latex Balloons</p> <p><i>Picture 5</i></p>	<p>If swallowed, a balloon or piece of a balloon can block off your child's airway.</p>	<p>Keep uninflated balloons and broken balloon pieces out of reach of children. Balloons are not appropriate toys.</p> <p>Plastic bags and plastic wrap should be kept away from children as it can suffocate them if swallowed or placed over the nose and mouth.</p>
<p>Stairs</p> <p><i>Picture 6</i></p>	<p>Stairs are a fall hazard for children as they develop their walking and balance skills.</p>	<p>Use safety gates that are wall-mounted on the top and bottom of all stairs. Remove safety gates when your child's chin is in line with the top of the gate, or when he/she is 2 years old (because he/she could crawl over the gate and fall).</p>
<p>Couches, Beds, Tables</p> <p><i>Picture 6</i></p>	<p>When children are placed at a height above the ground they are at an increased risk for suffering an injury if they fall.</p> <p>Falls are the most common injury that sends children to a hospital.</p>	<p>Always place a carrier or child seat on the floor. Babies can rock themselves off a table or counter edge and fall. Always use safety straps on high chairs, strollers and change tables.</p> <p>When using a change table, place everything you need within an arm's reach before you start. Babies learn how to roll and can easily fall. Always keep a hand on your baby when he or she is at a height. It only takes a second to fall.</p>

<p>Bath</p> <p><i>Picture 7</i></p>	<p>Babies are not able to keep their heads out of water. Small children can drown in as little as 5 cm (2 in) of water.</p> <p>Infants and children drown very quickly and silently because of their small lungs and inexperience in water.</p> <p>A child's skin is more sensitive than adults and can burn quickly if bath water is too warm.</p>	<p>Always be within an arm's reach of your children when they are in or near any water.</p> <p>Always keep a hand on your infant when he or she is in the bath. Before placing your baby in the bath, put everything you will need within an arm's reach.</p> <p>If you need to leave the bathroom (to answer the phone or door), take your baby with you. Never leave your child alone in the bath or in the care of an older child while in the bath.</p> <p>Do not use bath seats or bath rings. Babies have drowned using them.</p> <p>Lower the temperature of the hot water heater to 49°C (120°F).</p> <p>Test the temperature of bathwater with your elbow before placing your child in the bath. It should feel warm, not hot.</p>
<p>Paddling Pools, Bathrooms, Any Source of Water</p> <p><i>Picture 7</i></p>	<p>Children are attracted to water and do not understand the dangers of drowning. Children can drown in as little as 5 cm (2 in) of water. Infants and children drown very quickly and silently because of their small lungs and inexperience in water.</p>	<p>Always be within an arm's reach of children when they are in or near water. Make sure you can touch your child by reaching out your hand from where you are.</p> <p>Never leave a child alone in or near water, not even for a second. This includes paddling pools, lakes, rivers, troughs, barrels, ponds, dugouts, and bathtubs.</p> <p>Paddling pools should be completely emptied when an adult is not present.</p> <p>Enroll children in swimming lessons that emphasize safety.</p> <p>Children and adults should always wear a lifejacket when in a boat.</p>
<p>Window Blinds and Curtains</p> <p><i>Picture 8</i></p>	<p>Children can become entangled in the cords of blinds or curtains and strangle themselves.</p>	<p>Cords should be cut short and tied out of reach of children.</p> <p>Move furniture away from windows so they cannot reach blind and curtain cords.</p>

<p>Windows</p> <p><i>Picture 8</i></p>	<p>A child can be severely hurt from falling out of an open window.</p>	<p>Place window guards on all windows and screens above the first floor. A screen does not protect a child from falling out of a window as they can push the screen out from the inside.</p>
<p>Electrical Outlets</p> <p><i>Picture 9</i></p>	<p>Children copy adults in imaginary play and if children stick objects into an electrical outlet they can be severely injured.</p>	<p>Cover all electrical outlets with plastic covers or slide protectors.</p>
<p>Electrical Cords and Appliances</p> <p><i>Picture 9</i></p>	<p>If children bite electrical cords they could be electrocuted.</p> <p>If children pull on electrical cords they can pull a hot and heavy appliance onto themselves and severely hurt themselves.</p>	<p>Do not let electrical cords hang over counter or table edges.</p> <p>Be particularly cautious with the electrical cords or heated appliances (kettles, toasters, curling/straightening irons).</p>
<p>Sharp & Small Objects (Batteries, Magnets, Coins, Keys, Scissors, Tweezers, Nail Clippers, Razors, Knives)</p> <p><i>Picture 10</i></p>	<p>Children can severely hurt themselves or others with a sharp object.</p> <p>Small objects present a severe choking hazard for children under the age of three. Children put things in their mouths and can easily choke on small objects because they have a very small airway.</p>	<p>Keep all sharp objects out of reach of children in a locked cupboard.</p> <p>Small objects that can fit inside a toilet paper roll should be kept out of sight and reach of children in a locked cupboard.</p> <p>Magnets are very dangerous to a child if swallowed. They can cause severe injury or death. Keep toys with magnets away from small children.</p> <p>Do not allow a child to go to bed with a toy that has batteries. Adults should always put batteries in toys. Make sure batteries lock inside of toys so your child cannot access them.</p>
<p>Toys with Small Parts</p> <p><i>Picture 10</i></p>	<p>Toys with small pieces that can detach present a choking hazard to children less than three years of age.</p>	<p>Be aware of toys that have pieces that may detach. Smaller pieces that can come off and can fit inside of a toilet paper roll are choking hazards. These toys are not appropriate for children under three years of age or children that still tend to put non-food items in their mouths.</p> <p>If there are different ages of children in the house, store toys separately.</p>

<p>Car Seats</p> <p><i>Picture 11</i></p>	<p>All infants and children must be fitted in an appropriate car seat for their age, height and weight.</p> <p>Motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death in children. The use of a car seat reduces the risk of serious injury or death in a collision. In the event of a crash, a child who is not properly restrained in a properly installed car seat is in severe danger.</p>	<p>Ensure all infants are in a rear-facing car seat until they meet the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) minimum 1 year of age 2) 10kg (22lbs) 3) can walk. <p>Ensure children are then placed in a forward facing seat until they reach the maximum height and weight of the car seat.</p> <p>Booster seats help position children in the seat belt until they are old enough to fit a seat like an adult.</p> <p>Always follow car seat and vehicle instructions to install a car seat.</p> <p>Some things to remember:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chest clip should be level with armpits - straps should be tightened so that only one finger can fit between strap and baby - a tether strap has to be used with a forward facing seat - the seat should be tight enough in the car that you cannot move it more than 1 inch in any direction.
<p>Putting Baby to Sleep</p> <p><i>Picture 12</i></p>	<p>Babies are not able to roll away or move their heads away from things that may smother them.</p>	<p>Place baby to sleep in a crib that does not have any quilts, blankets, pillows, bumper pads, loose sheets or stuffed animals. These things can smother your baby.</p> <p>Always place baby to sleep on his or her back.</p> <p>A crib is the safest place for your baby to sleep at night and at naptime. Make sure the crib has been made after September 1986.</p> <p>Remove drawstrings from baby's and small children's clothing. Drawstrings may get caught around the child's neck causing strangulation.</p> <p>Do not attach soothers to a crib or clothing as the soother cord could strangle your baby.</p>

“You are a role model. How you treat the parents is much more powerful than the words you use. How a trainer treats a facilitator will show them how to treat a parent and that shows the parent how to treat the child.”

What Type of Parent Am I...?

Purpose: To raise awareness regarding the many different types of parents.

Materials: Soft marshmallows, pretzels, Monopoly money, and Hershey's kisses. Two plates.

Time: Approximately 20 minutes.

Procedure: Place the following objects on a plate in the centre of the group

- Marshmallows (soft)
- Pretzels (rigid)
- Monopoly money (provider)
- Hershey kisses (nurturer)
- Leave one plate empty with nothing on it (absent)

Ask the parents to choose the item(s) that best represents their parenting style and have them explain their decision.

After everyone had a turn to explain what these items meant to them, get the group to brainstorm all the different types of parents they can think of using their own words. Write them on the white board or flip chart paper.

Once the list has been developed, ask the group to give characteristics that would best describe that kind of parent. Write this in under the appropriate parent heading.

Once all the characteristics have been applied, ask the group to decide whether that type of parenting is positive or negative. Challenge them to look at the parenting styles from different points of view (i.e. children's, parents').

Discussion questions

- Looking at this list, what kind of parent are you?
- What was your father/mother figure like in your life?
- What kind of father/mother do you hope you become?
- How do you plan to become that father/mother?
- What kind of parent do you hope your children become?
- Is a positive/negative parenting style always black and white? Or can the parenting style be both positive and negative?

(adapted from Val Skiba, Public Health Nurse, Regina)

Parents' Rights Activity

Purpose: In this one-hour activity, parents will increase their understanding of parents' rights and will describe what it looks like when the right is being exercised and what it looks like when the right is taken away. Parents will choose which rights are most meaningful to themselves and create a take-home reminder.

Materials: Handout on Parents' Rights (suitable for photocopying on next page), 11x14 sheets of coloured paper, magazines, markers, clear mac-tac or access to laminator.

Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Procedure: Parents/facilitator share responsibility for reading the handout. Parents find a partner. The list is divided equally among the pairs.

Parents work with their partners for 15–20 minutes and report back to the large group. Their assignment is to describe what it looks like when the right is being exercised and what it looks like when the right has been taken away.

Once all have reported back to the large group, parents choose from the list the rights that they feel are most important to themselves and then each parent creates a placemat with these rights listed. They can decorate the placemat with their own art or with magazine pictures. Placemats are laminated by the facilitator between sessions or parents can use clear mac-tac to waterproof their artwork.

Variations: If you have access to scrapbook materials, the placemats can be decorated with that.

Parents can use smaller pieces of paper and create fridge magnets with the parents' rights on them. You would need magnets to glue on the back after the papers are laminated.

You can send the 'Parents' Rights' handout home as a take home assignment and have the parents come back to the next session ready to describe what it looks like when the right is being exercised and what it looks like when the right has been taken away instead of working in pairs. This would save some time.

Parents can be encouraged to bring pictures from home to decorate their placemats with.

The 'Parents' Rights' handout can be read as an opening or closing activity during a session on parenting. It can serve as inspirational reading hung on the wall by the coffee area. You could do the same activity (in making placemats/fridge magnets) for the Emotional fitness handout as well if the parents identified 'taking care of themselves' as a need.

Parents' Rights

- You have a right not to be perfect
- You have a right to put yourself first sometimes
- You have a right to your own opinions and convictions
- You have a right to be your own final judge
- You have a right to your feelings and to express them appropriately
- You have a right to change your mind
- You have a right to choose not to respond to a situation
- You have a right to say no
- You have right to set boundaries
- You have a right to ask for what you want or need
- You have a right to ask for help or emotional support
- You have a right to take time for yourself
- You have a right to have a social/romantic/sexual life
- You have a right to have private time with your partner
- You have a right to pursue your own interests/career
- You have a right to be happy.

(provided by Patti Dupuis, Dupuis Counseling and Consulting Services, North Battleford)

My Three-Legged Stool

Purpose: This activity encourages parents to take pride in themselves and recognize their good qualities by saying them out loud. It also gives them an opportunity to privately think of things that can be improved upon.

Materials: Paper and pencil for third part.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Have parents complete the first two questions. Discuss these before moving on to number 3.

1. What are three things that I do well?
2. What are three things other people appreciate about me?

Ask parents to think about the last question and write the things down, or keep them in mind.

3. What are three things I can do to better understand myself?

Twenty Dollars

Purpose: This activity will illustrate the fact that no matter what we have been through in our lives, we are still valuable human beings and worthwhile people.

Materials: \$20 bill.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Hold up a \$20 bill for the parent group to see. Ask, "Who would like this \$20?"

Hands will go up.

Facilitator says, "I'm going to give this \$20 to one of you, but first let me do this..." Facilitator crumples up the bill into a small ball and holds it up again. "Now who wants it?"

Hands will go up.

Facilitator says, "Well, what if I do this..." and drops the ball to the floor and steps on it. Holds it up again, "Now who still wants this even after it's been through so much?"

Hands will continue to go up.

Facilitator says, "Here's the valuable lesson. No matter what I did with the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It is still worth \$20."

Facilitator explains: "Many times in our lives, we may feel that we've been dropped, crumpled and walked on by the decisions we make and by circumstances that come our way in life.

"We may feel we are worthless. But know that no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value as a parent. Dropped, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who do love you.

"The worth in our lives comes not in what we do or who we know, but by who we are. Always remember...you are a parent...you are special...you are valuable."

The Jar of Life

Purpose: This activity demonstrates the value of establishing priorities and taking the time and effort to look after the important things in life.

Materials: A very large mayonnaise or similar wide-mouthed jar. Enough 2-inch rocks (or golf balls; adjust story if you use balls) in a container to fill jar. Enough small pebbles in a container to fill jar. Enough salt in a container to fill jar. 2 cups of coffee, but keep these out of sight.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Stand before parent group with these items in front of you. When the session begins, wordlessly pick up empty mayonnaise jar. Fill to the top with the 2-inch rocks. Ask the parents if the jar is full. They will say yes.

Pick up the box of pebbles and pour them into the jar and they will roll into place all around the rocks. Shake the jar lightly. This allows you to pour even more pebbles in until they are up to the top of the jar. Then ask the parents again if the jar is full. They will say yes.

Then pick up the container of salt and pour it into the jar. Of course, the salt fills the spaces between the pebbles. Then ask once more if the jar is full. The parents will wonder what the right answer is this time and what else could be poured into the jar.

Then bring out the two cups of coffee and pour their entire contents into the jar effectively filling the empty space between the rocks, pebbles and salt. People will laugh.

Explain: "Now, I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the important things: your family, your partner, your health, and your children. Things that, if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, and your car. The salt is everything else. The small stuff."

"If you put the salt into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks! The same goes for your life. If you spend all of your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children, take time to get medical checkups, take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, have a party, and wash the windows. Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter - then the pebbles. Set your priorities. The rest is just salt, all the little stuff."

Someone will usually ask what the coffee represents but even if no one asks, explain: "It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a cup of coffee with a friend."

- By Laura Bankston

Sense of the Goose Activity

Purpose: Parents will increase understanding of 'support' and discuss experiences where they have needed support, where they have found support, and what works best for them. Parents will identify ways they can support each other in their community.

Materials: 'Sense of Goose' story (below). This can be suitable for photocopying.

Time: Approximately 20 minutes.

Procedure: One or more parents read aloud the handout. Parents discuss their own experiences and what was helpful to them. Parents then brainstorm ways that they can support each other. If there are specific ideas (like a phone list or a childcare swap) then the activity may take longer to include photocopying a phone list or making tickets for a childcare swap, etc.

The Sense of the Goose

Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in V formation, you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way.

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in V formation the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they're going more quickly and easily because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

When a goose falls out of formation, it quickly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone. He quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.

If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those people who are headed the same way we are.

When the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the way and another goose flies point.

It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs, whether with people or with geese flying south.

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

What messages do we give when we honk from behind?

When a goose gets sick or is wounded and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies, and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group.

If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that. - Author unknown

Acknowledging Values

Purpose: This activity will allow the group to examine and acknowledge each other's values.

Materials: CD player or tape recorder. A CD or tape of music.

Time: Approximately 20 minutes.

Procedure: To music, have people moving around and when the music stops, get together with 2 or 3 other people. Think of one or two things you truly value, be specific and share this with small group.

1. What are one or two things that you value most in life? Be specific. For example, instead of "I value my culture" or "I value my family," think of something specific about what is vitally important to you about your culture or about your family. Share with small group.
2. The music is turned back on, people move around, and when the music stops again, they find 2 or 3 new people. It's not necessary to repeat what values are identified, but the question is: where did those values come from? What people and events may have contributed to values being formed? Share with small group.
3. Again the music is turned on, people move around, music stops and they find new group and this time people sit down. The question is: What would it take to change your thinking, or let go of those values? What words, actions or events would have to happen? Share with small group.
4. Now the facilitator asks everyone: Think of these values and allow yourself to think of a time when you did not follow your own values. What effect did this have on you? How did it feel?
5. What impact might these values have on your parenting? What issues might be easier or more difficult to discuss due to your values? What implications are there for your children? How can you handle differences in values with others (i.e., partners, friends, relatives, service providers, etc.)?

"Do this one in a well-formed group when you believe there is potential for the parents to become a support group for each other. There is stress in our lives, and some of the stress we experience is because we live outside our values. We want to talk about why we hold our values so dearly. Parenting decisions are often value-based. As facilitators, we can't always change people's values but we can influence people to open their eyes to new ideas."

Matchsticks

Purpose: This helps discuss the importance of support from others.

Materials: Enough wooden matchsticks so each person has one. Also enough bundles of matchsticks tied with a rubber band for each person.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Give each parent an individual wooden match. Ask them to snap it in half, which is done quite easily.

Then take a group of matches about 1 inch in diameter that you've bundled with elastic.

Hand them out and ask the parents to try to break those. The message is 'alone there is weakness and together there is strength.'

Ask what they notice so they come to that conclusion themselves.

What Kind of Flower?

Purpose: This activity is mainly used as a closing. Tell parents that they need to take some time for themselves to unwind. This is a relaxation activity to close a session before they go back to the normal routine of business with little ones.

Materials: none needed. You may dim the lights if you choose.

Time: Approximately 30 - 40 minutes.

Procedure: Introduce this as a visualization exercise. Visualization is one tool that can be used in relaxation. Sometimes when people are relaxing and participating in visualizations, they have a flashback to something in their lives. If you tell them what the visualization is going to be about, people generally do well even if they flashback to something in the middle of it. Let them know they are free to leave the visualization at any time if they choose.

To prepare, explain that we will be closing our eyes and letting our bodies relax in the chairs and then we will be thinking about what kind of flower we would like to be, where we would be growing, who would come by to admire us or pick us and then what happened to the flower afterwards.

When everyone is ready and relaxed, ask the following questions, giving time for each person to jot down or think of their response. Allow time for sharing.

If you were a flower...what kind would you be?

Where would you be growing? Describe the environment.

Describe the person who would stop to admire you or pick you?

Where did they take you or what did they do with you if they picked you?

What? Ask the parents to share their answers. When they have all finished sharing this part, invite them to describe what they noticed about the whole experience. What did they see, smell, hear, taste, and feel?

So what? Ask them if they think there was any connection between the answers and their real life. Did this experience remind them of a previous one, perhaps a different relaxation exercise or visualization they had done?

Now what? Invite them to share if they think they might use visualization as a tool to help them relax or if they think an activity like this at the end of the day would help them sleep or unwind.

The Stone Sharing Experience

Purpose: Designed to help parents get in touch with 3 aspects of life that contribute to health and wellbeing: a right relationship with ourselves; a right relationship with all living things; and a right relationship with the earth. It is also a good closing for the last day.

Materials: Enough small colourful stones so everyone in the group will have one.

Time: Approximately 20 - 30 minutes.

Procedure: Seat the group in a circle, close enough to hand off and receive stones easily.

Explain that after everyone has selected one stone from the basket passed, each person will share briefly with the group. The following list provides some examples of things participants can share with the group:

1. Our full name and some mention of its possible meaning or significance to us, its family or ethnic origin (this is an expression of a right relationship with oneself).
2. An animal that has been special in our life as a pet or as an object of fascination and interest in some way (this is an expression of right relationship with all other living beings).
3. A place on earth that is special to use as a place of beauty, comfort, good memories, inspiration, relaxation (this is an expression of right relationship with the earth).

When each person is finished sharing they pass their stone to the person on their left and receive the stone from the person on their right. This is the process after each sharing. By the time the exercise is finished, everyone will have had their stone touched by everyone in the group and each will have touched everyone else's. Each will end up with their own original stone in the end.

Explain the stone may be kept or may be given back to the universe. It can be kept to serve as a reminder of each person connected with during this experience. It can serve as a reminder of everything learned and can serve as a touchstone to rub in a stressful time.

Variations:

- 1) *Right relationship with oneself:* "My name is and.... I was born in..., or what gives me great joy in life is..."
- 2) *Right relationships with all living things:* "My partner/children/grandchildren/friend are special to me because...", or "my child is special to me because..."
- 3) *Right relationship with the earth:* "What I do to care for the earth is...", or "one way that the earth nourishes me is..."

A good variation on this activity so that it is a closing exercise is the following:

- 1) "My full name is.... And my greatest learning this week/session has been...."
- 2) "What I value most about being in a relationship with this group is..."
- 3) "The contribution I hope to make to this earth is..."

Personal Cards

Purpose: Creates a positive attitude and encourages parents to notice and acknowledge what they like about other people. Also creates a personalized souvenir of the program and a feel-good reminder of the participants.

Materials: Enough greeting cards for everyone. Basket or box.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes. This activity can be done as other items are being discussed throughout the session.

Procedure: Pass out the basket or box filled with cards. Each person picks out a card that means something to him or her. Each card is passed around the room for each person to write something positive about that person to serve as a reminder of the time spent together.

We Are a Web

Purpose: This helps people see how we are all connected by the experience of being a parent and how interconnected community can be.

Materials: A large ball of yarn.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Sit in a circle. Use a large ball of yarn. Have one person start by holding the end firmly and then toss the ball to someone else. Each person holds a point on the string and then throws the ball to someone else. Keep going, back and forth. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, it will look like a web.

Ask one participant to pull his yarn and see how the web changes shape, but still remains a web. Explain how everyone holding a piece of yarn is different and brings different filters and experiences to the group, yet they are all together like a web.

On the Road Visualization

Purpose: This is a good activity to do with a group after the second or third session when personal information has been shared, or if the discussions have been emotional. This helps people relax and prepare to leave on a positive note. It can be used early on once people know each other's names.

Materials: None.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure: Make sure people are comfortable and relaxed. Ask participants to close their eyes. Read the following story slowly, allowing time for everyone to follow:

- You are walking down a country road...look around and see the area.
- You are carrying a cup...what does it look like? Is there anything in it?
- You come to a house...what kind of house is it? What does it look like? What do you do?
- You leave the house and continue down the road...you come to a lake. Look at the lake...what do you do?
- You are now back on the road...you meet a bear on the road...what do you do?
- You continue along the road until you come to a fork in the road...you stop and decide which way to go.
- You are on the road and there is a wall across the road...what does it look like? What do you do?
- Open your eyes.

The associations:

The road is to see if it was someplace you'd already been or a new imagined place.

The cup represents your friendships.

The house represents your family.

The lake represents your attitude to sex.

The bear represents how you deal with problems or stress.

The fork in the road is to see if you turn back or how you go on.

The wall represents death.

What? Invite parents to share what they noticed about this activity? What did they see, hear, sense? How was the chatter in the room at the beginning? At the end? How were people sitting in their chairs? How did everyone look at the end of the activity?

So what? Has anyone done something like this before? When was the last time you felt this way? Laughed this hard? Thought of this person?

Now what? Did this experience teach you anything about yourself? About having fun? Do you believe any of it to be true to yourself or do you think it is just for fun?

“As materials are collected, it may be helpful to keep resources in specific binders for easier access: families and parenting, just for laughs, warm ups and energizers.”

Parents love to get handouts that they can refer back to after group or that expand on the information that they have been given during the group. Handouts also create excellent communication tools for parents who were not able to attend or for other supports in the participant's life. Sometimes stories can be given out that parents can read with their children.

A Word about the Internet

Whatever did we do before the Internet? If you're looking for a particular resource, you can search for that specifically and it will usually be at your fingertips within seconds. Are you working on issues around Safety? Search for “simple first aid” and you'll have tons of results, including images of basic first aid kits for the home.

- www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca has a wide variety of resources, fact sheets and downloadable information for you to use in your parenting groups.
- www.teenparent.tv has some excellent resources and video clips to use regarding pregnancy and parenting. The clips fit nicely with the Nobody's Perfect program sessions.
- YouTube is also a good source for finding short clips to enhance topics and discussions.

Do remember that many materials on the Internet, while simple enough to download, are copyrighted and aren't meant to be used without permission or at least without acknowledging the source of the information.

Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability: www.ala.ca.

Active Parent. www.activeparenting.com. This is the site for Active Parenting, founded by family therapist Dr. Michael Popkin.

Activities and Resources for Nobody's Perfect Facilitators. Adaptation of Nobody's Perfect Manitoba 2007. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2008. For downloadable activities and resources, visit: www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca. Click on Program Areas, then Parenting Education for Activities and Resources for Nobody's Perfect Facilitators. This *collection is courtesy of Nobody's Perfect Manitoba*.

Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca (A variety of child health and safety resources in both English and French including Canada's Food Guide, food safety, nutrition labelling, prenatal nutrition, infant feeding, food allergies, and more).

Nobody's Perfect Resource Manual for Facilitators, Third edition. Ritch, Adele. Vancouver: B.C. Council for the Family, 1995.

Structured Exercises in Stress Management. N.L. Tubesing and D.A. Tubesing. (1983). Duluth, MN: Whole Person Press. <http://wholepersonpress.org/>.

The Public Health Agency of Canada, Nobody's Perfect link: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/family_famille/nobody-eng.php. Also on this site is a variety of health-related resources for children, youth, adults, seniors and Aboriginal peoples.

Working with Nobody's Perfect: A Facilitator's Guide, Third edition. Ottawa: Health Canada Publications, 2000.

The Garden of Daily Living

Plant three rows of peas:

1. Peace of mind
2. Peace of heart
3. Peace of soul.

Plant four rows of squash:

1. Squash gossip
2. Squash indifference
3. Squash grumbling
4. Squash selfishness.

Plant four rows of lettuce:

1. Lettuce be faithful
2. Lettuce by kind
3. Lettuce be patient
4. Lettuce really love one another.

No garden is whole without turnips:

1. Turnip for meetings
2. Turnip for service
3. Turnip to help one another.

To complete our garden, we must have:

1. Thyme for each other
2. Thyme for family
3. Thyme for friends.

Water freely with patience and cultivate with love. There is much fruit in your garden because you reap what you sow.

- Author Unknown

If you think you are beaten

If you think you're beaten, you are
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you'd like to win but think you can't
It's almost a cinch you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost;
For out in this world you'll find
Success begins in a person's heart –
It's all in your state of mind.

If you think you're outclassed, you are.
You have to aim high to rise;
You have to be sure of yourself before
You can ever win the prize.

For the game doesn't always go
To the stronger or faster man.
Sooner or later the victory goes
To the one who thinks he can.

- Walter D. Winte

Blue Flowers

I ran into a stranger as he passed by.
"Oh, excuse me please" was my reply.
He said, "Please excuse me, too; I wasn't even watching for you."
We were very polite, this stranger and I.
We went on our way and we said goodbye.

But at home a different story was told,
How we treat our loved ones, young and old.
Later that day, cooking the evening meal,
My daughter stood beside me very still.
When I turned, I nearly knocked her down.
"Move out of the way!" I said with a frown.
She walked away, her little heart broken.
I didn't realize how harshly I'd spoken.

While I lay awake in bed, a small voice came to me and said,
"While dealing with a stranger, common courtesy you use.
But the children you love you seem to abuse.
Look on the kitchen floor; you'll find some flowers by the door.
Those are the flowers she brought for you.
She picked them herself, pink, yellow and blue.
She stood quietly not to spoil the surprise,
And you never saw the tears in her eyes."

By this time, I felt very small and now my tears began to fall.
I quietly went and knelt by her bed.
"Wake up, little girl. Wake up!" I said.
"Are these the flowers you picked for me?"
She smiled, "I found 'em out by the tree.
I picked 'em because they're pretty like you.
I knew you'd like 'em, especially the blue."

I said, "Daughter, I'm sorry for the way I acted today.
I shouldn't have yelled at you that way."
She said, "Oh, Mom. That's okay. I love you anyway."
I said, "Daughter, I love you, too. And I do like the flowers, especially the blue."

- Author Unknown

Children learn what they live

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,

he learns to find love in the world.

- Dorothy Law Nolte

Hugs

It's wondrous what a hug can do,
A hug can cheer you when you're blue.
A hug can say, "I love you so."
Or, "Gee! I hate to see you go."

A hug is, "Welcome back again!"
And, "Great to see you!" or
"Where've you been?"
A hug can soothe a small child's pain
And bring a rainbow after rain.

The hug! There's just no doubt about it,
We scarcely could survive without it.
A hug delights and warms and charms,
It must be why God gave us arms.

Hugs are great for fathers and mothers,
Sweet for sisters, swell for brothers,
And chances are some favourite aunts
Love them more than potted plants.

Kittens crave them. Puppies love them.
Heads of state are not above them.
A hug can break the language barrier,
And make the dullest day seem merrier.

No need to fret about the store of 'em.
The more you give,
The more there are of 'em.
So stretch those arms without delay
And give someone a hug today.

– Author Unknown

Walk a little plainer, Mommy

“Walk a little plainer, Mommy,”
Said a little girl so frail.
“I’m following in your footsteps
And I do not want to fail.

Sometimes your steps are very plain,
Sometimes they’re hard to see.
So walk a little plainer, Mommy,
For you are leading me.

I know that once you walked those ways
Many years ago.
And what you did along the way
I’d really like to know.

For sometimes when I’m tempted
I don’t know what to do.
So walk a little plainer, Mommy
For I must follow you.

Someday when I’m grown up,
You’re like I want to be.
Then I will have a little girl
Who will want to follow me.

And I would like to lead her right
And help her to be true.
So walk a little plainer, Mommy
For I must follow you.”

- May Lightfoot

Nobody's Perfect

Healthy children grow

Healthy children learn to know
What's good and what's bad from head to toe.

No two children are the same.
Every boy and girl has their own name.

Kids learn from what you do, so do it right.
Be active with your kids, and do not fight.

Make sure your home is always smoke-free.
You don't want them having asthma at age three.

Brush your baby's teeth every single day.
Let them have a nice white smile to have 'n stay.

Feed your baby colourful, bite-sized snacks.
You don't want to give them junk food, too much sugar or bad fats.

How do you know if your child might be getting sick and not feeling well?
Encourage rest and fluids and feelings to tell.

All children get sick, grow, cry 'n laugh. That's why all parents have to work it
And so that's the meaning of Nobody's Perfect!

- By Krystal Potts

Are You a Carrot, Egg, or Coffee Bean?

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved, a new one arose. Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil, without saying a word. In about twenty minutes, she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out into a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Tell me what you see." "Carrots, eggs and coffee," she replied. Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, "What does it mean, Mother?" Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water. Each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water. "Which are you?" she asked her daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean?"

Think of this: Which am I? Am I the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity, do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength?

Am I the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and hardened heart?

Or am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavour. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you.

When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, do you elevate yourself to another level? How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean?

- Author Unknown

The Old Grandfather's Tale

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and four-year-old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. The family ate together at the table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, milk spilled on the tablecloth.

The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about Grandfather," said the son. "I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor." So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner together. Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. When the family glanced in the grandfather's direction, sometimes he had a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food.

The four-year-old watched it all in silence. One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked his child sweetly, "What are you making?" Just as sweetly, the boy responded, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up." The four-year-old smiled and went back to work.

The words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening the husband took Grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table. For the remainder of his days, he ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither husband nor wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled or the tablecloth soiled.

- The Brothers Grimm