

Teaching Guide

Enjoy the View at Insight

Goals

1. Learn the key elements of understanding your children better.
2. Identify specific ways to help children deal with strong feelings.
3. Make a plan to help your child grow.

Preparation:

Provide an Insight Travel Guide for each participant.

Study the Teaching Guide and Travel Guide. Consider stories you might share.

Make copies of the evaluation at the end of this Teaching Guide.

Introduction:

Each unit in the Parenting Journey can form a 30 – 90 minute lesson. This guide will provide you specific ideas for teaching Insight.

Welcome:

Welcome to Insight along the Parenting Journey!

[Give any necessary instructions for housekeeping tasks. You might add a get-acquainted activity, if you have the time and you want to build the relationships among your participants. Look for icebreaker activity ideas at www.cyfernet.org .]

Start by Stating the Main Idea:

How easy would it be for a giraffe to understand the life of a frog? The two lives are entirely different! The giraffe and frog would almost certainly have a hard time understanding each other's lives.

Many adults have long since forgotten what it was like to be a child. If we treat children as if they were little adults, we will make their lives worse. But there are things we can do to help them.

Discussion:

How easy is it for adults to understand the lives of children?

All of us were once children, but can you recall times when you felt small and afraid?

Can you recall times when you felt foolish?

Can you recall times when you felt confused, uncertain and unable?

Points of interest

1. Understand development

Often we expect children to do things before their bodies and minds are ready. We may want them to crawl, walk, talk, read, ride a bike, or do algebra long before they are ready.

How can you tell when children are ready?

There are two good ways. You can read about normal development. Or you can watch your child. You can notice his or her interests.

Children usually give us signals when they are ready. They start trying to crawl. They experiment with sounds and words. They want you to read them stories. We can show interest in their efforts and we can give them opportunities to explore, learn, talk to us, hear stories, play with toys, and experiment with the world around them.

We provide many opportunities for them to develop, but generally we should let them be in charge of their timetable. If a child seems to be very slow at something, we can check with a doctor; but, in general, it is good for us to give children opportunities to explore and then be patient.

Also, as we work with children, we can make allowances for the fact that they are just that—children! Most children do not remember to turn off the lights in their room, make their beds or feed the dog. To help our children, we patiently remind them of those things they are expected to do.

What is your child learning to do right now?
What can you do to support his or her learning?

2. Understand your child.

Each child is different from every other child. Just because one child walks sooner than another does not mean that child is smarter. It may mean that the child is a bit braver. So we can enjoy a child who is cautious or enjoy a child who is brave. But we should not try to force a cautious child to be braver than he is ready to be.

We can also notice the good things about each child. Even when something bothers us, we can look for the good in it. A child who is into everything in the kitchen pantry can be seen as energetic. A child who is shy can be seen as sensitive. A child who seems stubborn can be seen as strong.

What qualities have you noticed in your children?
What is a positive way of seeing those qualities?
What can you do to work with those qualities rather than fight your child?

3. Understand children's circumstances.

Often, we don't know very much about what is happening in our children's minds. By the time they go to school, we don't know much about what's happening in their lives.

We can be more helpful to them if we take time to notice what they are doing, saying and feeling. What are they succeeding at? What do they love to do? What do they worry about?

There are times when children will be hurt, angry or disappointed. We can yell at them to get over it, but that makes them feel worse! We can give them advice, but they don't want advice. One of the most helpful things we can do for children when they have strong feelings is to try to show understanding and compassion.

For example, when a child feels picked on at school, we will probably be tempted to tell them what to do. That might be like a giraffe telling the frog to reach for the higher branches. Instead of giving advice, a better thing to do is to show understanding.

Can you think of something that would show understanding and compassion?
Can you recall how you felt in a similar situation when you were young.

[Maybe we could say to the child who feels picked on, "You must feel very lonely."
"Probably you wish you didn't have to be around that person."
"Do you sometimes feel afraid?"]

There are several things we can do to show understanding.

[Lead participants through this activity/discussion]
Think of a situation when your child has been upset about something.

How did you react to your child's situation?

If you're a normal parent, you probably offered advice or ignored the child.

Use the following steps to think about what you could have done to be more understanding:

- a. Notice how your child feels.
- b. Try to remember a time when you were a child and you felt the same way. Don't tell about it; just remember in order to understand your child's feelings.
- c. Think of a word to describe how the child might feel. Maybe they feel sad, surprised, afraid, angry, hurt, lonely or humiliated. Ask them: "Did you feel humiliated?"
- d. Let them talk about their feelings as long as they want to talk about them. Be a good listener.
- e. When the child feels more peaceful, ask if he or she has a plan for solving the problem.

[Ask participants to share how they could have handled the situation differently.]

If you work at understanding what your little frog feels, you can be a more helpful parent. Insight is an important place to spend time in the journey of parenting!

Plan your stay.

[These questions could be answered by each participant directly on their Insight Travel Guide.]

After you have discussed the three points in Insight, think about the things you have learned. Here are some ideas for showing understanding to you children:

Notice how each of your children responds to stresses, disappointments and challenges. Remember some of the feelings you had when you were young. Listen and observe—but avoid too much talking. Study good resources on the normal development of children. Think about what it feels like to be that child. Notice what’s happening in your children’s lives. Rather than give advice, try to describe their feelings back to them. Invite your children to be problem solvers in their own lives.

Pick something to work on this week with one of your children. Maybe you want to notice how your daughter likes to be understood. Maybe you want to take time to listen to your son.

Map out the details of your plan. What exactly do you plan to do? When will be the best time? Do you need to do anything to prepare the child to take part in your new plan? Do you need to do anything to prepare yourself? For example, do you need to relax and think about your child’s qualities instead of faults so you are prepared to respond positively to your efforts?

Decide some small thing you can do this week and write out your plan:

What you plan to do:

The best time to do this:

Ideas to prepare my child:

How I can prepare myself:

People who can help me:

Insight is so important! We hope you will have a great time there AND become an expert at finding your way around. Maybe you want more help to explore Insight. If so, you might:

-Read ideas about ages and stages of development at www.arfamilies.org.

-Look for a class in your area on ages and stages or on showing compassion.

-Read a book about understanding children such as “*Haim Ginott’s Between Parent and Child*,” or John Gottman’s “*Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*.”

-Get ideas from another person who is very good at understanding and compassion.

-Get more ideas by going to the national extension family website, [www. cyfernet.org](http://www.cyfernet.org), and searching on understanding, empathy, listening or compassion.

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