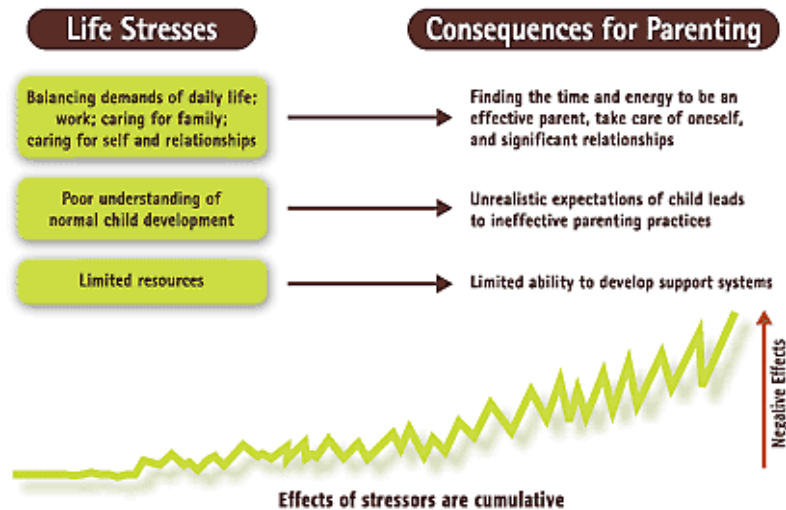


Parenting in the Real World:

Kids Don't Come with Instructions

Stress is a timeless problem, magnified many times by the conditions and realities of life in the 21st Century. One of the more insidious and long-lasting effects of stress is its impact on a person's ability to be a good parent, and therefore on the well-being of children. When the effects of parental low income and education are added to the usual stress factors, the result often cascades into more stress for parents and worse outcomes for children.



Nearly 19 percent of African American mothers who work full time and have children less than 6 years of age have incomes below the poverty level. (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2002) However, few parenting education products focus on this population's needs.

Parenting in the Real World: Kids Don't Come with Instructions is an interactive parenting workshop designed to help parents of children from birth through 3 years cope with stress so that they can be better, more effective caregivers. The 7 sessions of Parenting in the Real World are created specifically with the stressors of low-income African American parents in mind. The sessions focus on:



- Increasing parent's understanding of normal child development
- Developing and improving skills for stressful situations such as discipline
- Highlighting the importance of forming a bond with your child
- Discussing ways to balance work, school, and family
- Reminding parents to take time to nurture themselves
- Forming a community of support for parents

Parenting in the Real World is:

- Needed: These parents want help. A report from the Commonwealth Fund, Child Development and Medicaid: Attitudes of Mothers with Young Children Enrolled in Medicaid, indicated that mothers want simple and easily accessible materials about their child's development and on easing the pressures of child-rearing. Focus groups in Atlanta, Tallahassee, Los Angeles, and

Philadelphia conducted by the Center for Child Well-being found that parents want to learn about child development and how to deal with parenting stress, such as balancing work and family, taking care of one's own needs, disciplining, and finding quality child care.

- Scientifically based: The Center for Child Well-being formed the Parenting Network, a group of child development experts from around the country, to help create this product. Findings from focus groups led the development of the approach. Sessions are designed to foster connections between the participants so that they can help each other learn and acquire practical skills, at the same time they hear science-based information about child development.
- Culturally relevant: With the help of MEE Productions Inc., the Parenting in the Real World video captures real-life moments from parents in Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles who discuss their lives frankly as single parents or couples trying to balance the burdens of financial stress, difficulties with discipline, and finding quality child care. The Parenting in the Real World kit was tested in three Early Head Start centers around Atlanta and revised according to suggestions from parents in the class and the facilitators.
- Easy-to-use: The sessions are designed to take 90 minutes, and they can be adapted to many situations.



- The kit comes with a Facilitator's Guide that has both a script to follow and an outline of key points to discuss, a list of background resources, overheads, handouts, discussion suggestions, and class activities.
- Each session begins with a short (8- to 10-minute) video segment to introduce the topic and to prompt discussion among the parents.
- Parents receive resource manuals with handouts, take-home items (such as a pen, magnets, key chain, and child development chart).
- Since all necessary information and resources are within the kit itself, the class can be put on by any interested organization, such as a child care center, church group, or community group.

The complete kit includes:

- One Facilitator's Guide: a binder with step-by-step directions for the facilitator, key points to address, a script to follow, all handouts, lists of resources, overheads, a pen, key chain, and three magnets
- One Parent Resource Manual: a binder with handouts for each session, lists of resources, pages for taking notes, a pen, key chain, and three magnets
- Parenting in the Real World video: each session begins with a short (8- to 10-minute) video segment. All segments are on one video.
- Extra Parent Resource Manuals are available separately.

For more information, contact:

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